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OFFICIAL REPORT

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AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-NINTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

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DEPUTY PRINCIPAL TRANSCRIBERS—Mrs. M. J. Harding, Miss J. L. Brown

PRINCIPAL HANSARD ASSISTANT—Miss R. Washington

SENIOR HANSARD ASSISTANT—J. Brake

ANNUNCIATOR SUPERINTENDENT—G. Carpenter

REFRESHMENT DEPARTMENT

GENERAL MANAGER—W. J. J. Smillie, FHCIMA, FCFA, ACF

DEPUTY GENERAL MANAGER—E. J. Nash, MCFA

ASSISTANT MANAGER—P. Gale, MHCIMA

PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATOR—Mrs. S. M. Nicholls, FHCIMA, MIPM

PERSONAL ASSISTANT TO GENERAL MANAGER—Mrs. A. G. Lunn

BANQUETING MANAGER—C. J. Griffiths

CATERING ACCOUNTANT—D. R. W. Wood, FCA

ASSISTANT CATERING ACCOUNTANT—Mrs. B. A. Langley

EXECUTIVE CHEF—I. Gabay

HEAD CELLARMAN—D. Balcombe

HEAD STOREMAN—A. E. Edmond

SHORTHAND WRITER TO THE HOUSE—Mrs. E. M. C. Holland

PARLIAMENTARY WORKS OFFICER—B. C. Sewell

HEAD OF SECURITY—Chief Superintendent A. J. Coxon

COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER—A. Blake

POSTMASTER—J. Arnold

TRANSPORT MANAGER—R. H. Hyde

THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE THIRD SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 25 JUNE 1987]

THIRTY-NINTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES — VOLUME 175

FOURTEENTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1989-90

House of Commons

Monday 25 June 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

DEATH OF A MEMBER

Mr. Speaker: I regret to have to inform the House of the death of Sean Francis Hughes Esquire, Member for Knowsley, South, and I desire, on behalf of the House, to express our sense of the loss we have sustained and our sympathy with the relatives of the hon. Member.

Oral Answers to Questions

ENERGY

Gas Turbines

1. **Sir Trevor Skeet:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the number and location of gas turbine projects for the production of electricity in England and Wales.

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. John Wakeham): There is substantial interest in using gas both by existing generators and by those wishing to enter the generating market. I will arrange for the list to be published in the *Official Report*.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Is my right hon. Friend aware that because of the low growth in electricity consumption, many of the 10,000 MW projects will not be required. unless there is a massive closure of coal-fired power stations? Is he further aware that a gas generator producing 350 MW will emit 1 million tonnes of CO_2 per annum and that coal is even worse? Is not that a good argument why we should now have a further nuclear power station, as nuclear power is the cleanest of the lot and will keep the industry together?

Mr. Wakeham: I listen to my hon. Friend with considerable interest because of his expertise. In the new regime, it will be for the owners of power stations to determine what they see as the market. Electricity demand is forecast to rise over the next 10 years. All commentators seem to agree on that, although they differ on the rate of increase. The current surplus of capacity is likely to come to an end within the next few years. Net capacity needs to be ordered soon if it is to meet the forecast increase in demand. Capacity is also needed to replace existing capacity. Power stations may come to the end of their life, they may be less efficient or more costly than new power stations, or the cost of reducing emissions may be too high compared with the cost of a nuclear plant.

Mr. Lofthouse: Does the Secretary of State agree that to follow the line of his hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet), which is to sterilise millions of tonnes of coal by closures in the coal industry, would be a short-sighted medium-term policy? Once gas was not available and the millions of tonnes of coal were sterilised, we should have to rely on competitors. Would that be a wise policy?

Mr. Wakeham: The Government's policy is to encourage a diversity of fuels, but combined cycle gas turbine power stations are friendly to the environment. For every unit of CO_2 emitted from a coal-fired station, just over half a unit is emitted from a CCGT station.

Following is the information:

The following combined cycle gas turbine generating (CCGT) stations have been given planning consent under section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989:

National Power plc	Killingholme, South Humberside
PowerGen plc	Killingholme, South Humberside

The following applications for consent for CCGT generating stations are still being considered:

National Power plc	Little Barford, Bedfordshire
PowerGen plc	Rye House, Hertfordshire

I have also been notified by Deeside Power Development Co. Ltd. of its intention to submit an application for consent for a CCGT generating station at Shotton, north Wales.

The following projects have been given approval under section 14(1) of the Energy Act 1976, that is, to establish an electricity generating station to be fuelled by natural gas, or for the conversion of an electricity generating station with a view to its being so fuelled:

Berisford Bristar plc	Brigg, South Humberside
Hawker Siddley/ Eastern Electricity plc	Peterborough
John Brown Engineering Ltd.	Rugby, Warwickshire
Midlands Electricity plc	Hereford
National Power plc	Killingholme, South Humberside
National Power plc	Little Barford, Bedfordshire
Nat West Bank plc	London
PowerGen plc	Rye House, Hertfordshire
Ranger Oil/PowerGen	South Denes, Great Yarmouth
Shell UK Exploration and Production	Shellhaven, Essex
Thames Power	Barking, London

The following projects have received approval under both sections 14(1) and 14(2) of the Energy Act 1976, that is, to establish an electricity generating station fuelled by natural gas and to enter into contractual arrangements for obtaining a supply of natural gas as fuel for an electricity generating station, or to extend any such arrangements:

British Sugar Ltd.	Bury St. Edmunds
British Sugar plc	Wissington, Suffolk
BP Chemicals Ltd.	Baglan Bay, West Glamorgan
The Boots Company plc	Beeston, Nottingham
Hawker Siddley	Corby, South Humberside
ICI plc	Winnington, Cheshire
ICI plc	Wilton, Cleveland
Kodak Ltd.	Wealdstone, London
Lakeland Power	Roosecote, Cumbria
Leicester Energy	Leicester
London Transport Executive	Lots road, Chelsea
London Transport Executive	Greenwich generating station
PowerGen plc	Killingholme, South Humberside
Slough Estates	Slough
Thames Board Ltd.	Workington

Electricity Privatisation

4. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next proposes to meet the chairmen of the area electricity distribution companies to discuss privatisation.

Mr. Wakeham: I meet regional electricity company chairmen regularly to discuss a range of matters.

Mr. Mullin: In the light of recent precedents, will the Secretary of State give an undertaking that, should he in the near future find himself out of a job, neither he nor any senior members of his Department will go running to take places on the boards of any distribution companies?

Mr. Wakeham: I have two answers to that question, neither of which will be satisfactory to the hon. Gentleman. First, it is a hypothetical question, and secondly, I have nothing to add to what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has already said on the subject.

Mr. Andy Stewart: When my right hon. Friend next meets the chairman of East Midlands Electricity, will he ask him how the new project at Bilsthorpe colliery in my constituency for a high-efficiency, mini power station is getting on and when East Midlands Electricity, together with British Coal, will be able to announce a starting date with Government help?

Mr. Wakeham: I have met the chairman of that regional electricity company on several occasions, and I have no doubt that he will raise that subject when I next meet him. We are looking at the figures, and it is important to examine the economics in particular.

Mr. Skinner: When the right hon. Gentleman meets electricity company chairmen in the east midlands and elsewhere, will he point out that there is serious concern about the high cost of nuclear power and about the revelation today that Sizewell will cost another £1 billion, making the total cost £2·6 billion? Will the right hon. Gentleman also point out that it would be better to use coal because it is very difficult to get rid of nuclear waste? That is especially true of low-level nuclear waste, as the right hon. Gentleman experienced when he was Patronage Secretary and had to get Tory Members to stand up in protest about nuclear waste being dumped in his own constituency.

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman's recollection of history is not very accurate. Nor should he believe everything that he reads in the newspapers, even the headlines of some of our better-known journals. I suspect that the question of nuclear costs will come before the House before long.

Mr. Moss: Does my right hon. Friend accept that privatisation has been a success for many industrial users because it has introduced price competition between distributors and generators? Does he agree that the only reason why Labour opposes privatisation is that it would like to see industrial users pay more for their electricity?

Mr. Wakeham: I hope that better reasons will be given in this afternoon's debate for the Opposition being against privatisation, but we shall be able to deal with all that they have to say.

Mr. Morgan: I suppose that the Secretary of State realises that one electricity-rated company now in the state sector from which he cannot expect a job offer is Nirex. Does he agree that if the privatised area distribution boards are compelled to abide by normal stock exchange rules, which say that a company's audited accounts must be available going back five years or more, and which, with restructuring, the new companies do not have, it will be impossible to flog those companies? The only way of persuading the "Sids" to buy shares in them would be by a mass advertising campaign that would make the Albanian dictatorship at its Stalinist height or even Lord Young when at the Manpower Services Commission blush.

Mr. Wakeham: There were a lot of words in that question, but getting down to their fundamentals, I assure the hon. Gentleman that all the stock exchange rules

necessary for the flotation of the regional electricity companies will be obeyed to the satisfaction of the people who have responsibility for those matters. Of course, there will be an element of advertising, as there has been in all privatisations. That will be beneficial in ensuring that the taxpayer gets value for money.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Marshall. I call the hon. Member because I thought that I saw him rising to his feet. If he does not want to ask a question, we shall move on.

Mr. John Marshall: I am always happy to oblige, Mr. Speaker, by asking a question. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that previous privatisations have been followed by increased investment and effective control of prices than before, and that electricity consumers can look forward to a good future under privatisation of that industry?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend is right. Not only will customers benefit from privatisation but so will taxpayers and those employed in the industry.

Mr. Speaker: I apologise to the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) if he was merely taking his place.

Global Warming

5. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last discussed with his colleagues in the European Community the implications of global warming for energy policy.

Mr. Wakeham: I last discussed with Community colleagues the implications of global warming for energy policy at the Energy Council on 21 May.

Dr. Howells: Does the Secretary of State agree with the statements made last week by Mr. Jim Smith, chairman of Eastern Electricity, the largest of the distribution companies soon to be privatised, that the industry should concentrate less on cutting back and conserving and far more on winning markets from British Gas? Is that any way to contribute to attempts to reduce global warming? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree with that statement as an example of the initiative that is needed in modern Britain?

Mr. Wakeham: I am in favour of the chairman of Eastern Electricity looking after the interests of his employees, his customers and his shareholders——

Mr. Dobson: You are the only shareholder.

Mr. Wakeham: At the moment it happens to be me, as the hon. Gentleman points out, although shortly there will be a lot of shareholders. I approve of the chairman—he is a first-class person.

Sir Ian Lloyd: My right hon. Friend will doubtless be aware that a fortnight ago the House was well represented at a conference in Ottawa of 23 Council of Europe countries, the Soviet Union and Poland, about global warming. However, he is probably not aware that that conference took the decision that the subject is so important and it is so essential to reach a global solution, that every Parliament represented there should, if possible, hold a two-day debate on the papers discussed at the conference with a view to reporting back to a further conference to be organised by the Council of Europe. Will my right hon. Friend lend his considerable influence to support such a request when he receives it?

Mr. Wakeham: For a long time I had some responsibility for organising debates in the House. I no longer have it, but I shall pass on my hon. Friend's request to those who do. I agree with my hon. Friend this far—the conference in Ottawa and the conferences that seem to be taking place regularly in all sorts of places around the world at the moment are important if we are to deal with global warming. He is also right to say that it is necessary for us to have international agreement if we are to deal effectively with those problems. That is why the Prime Minister announced on 25 May that, in the context of international agreements, the United Kingdom is prepared to stabilise CO_2 emissions at the present level by the year 2005. That target depends on other countries being able to play a full part in an international response.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Is the Secretary of State embarrassed when he meets his European colleagues that we are so half-hearted about our commitment to dealing with the problems of global warming? Why do our Government always say that we shall act if others act first? Is not the reality that we have a problem that we share with the world, which is so urgent that the target of doing a little by 2005 is too little far too late? Is not he embarrassed, and does not he want to be more effective as our Energy Minister?

Mr. Wakeham: I am very far from being embarrassed. The Prime Minister has taken the lead, with a demanding target. It is easy for those without responsibility here or in other countries with different problems to make forecasts and targets that they probably will not be able to meet. Our target is realistic, and if we can get international agreement on that level, we shall have done well.

Sizewell B

7. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the most up-to-date estimate of the final construction cost of the Sizewell B nuclear power station; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: Nuclear Electric has undertaken a thorough review of progress with the Sizewell B project, including the estimated cost to completion. The outcome of the review will be announced soon.

Mr. Illsley: The Secretary of State must be aware that recent estimates have put the final cost of Sizewell B at about £3·8 billion, taking into account the cost overruns, delays and lack of economies of scale due to the cancellation of the pressurised water reactor programme. It was also calculated that £2 billion can be saved by cancelling the project now. Does the Secretary of State agree that the time to cancel Sizewell B is right now?

Mr. Wakeham: I am not prepared to comment on speculation about the costs of Sizewell B. Nuclear Electric has recently reviewed the cost of Sizewell B, and I understand that it will publish its figure tomorrow. However, I shall seek to give the House an idea of the Government's consideration of Nuclear Electric's review during this afternoon's debate, if I should catch your eye, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Michael Clark: If it is true that Sizewell B is costing considerably more than first envisaged, does my right hon. Friend share my disappointment that the nuclear industry, like so many others, cannot get construction costs right? Does he concede that Sizewell B is more than merely one additional power station? It is the forerunner of a series of power stations that are environmentally desirable, and an insurance policy for the future. When fossil fuel declines we shall still need electricity.

Mr. Wakeham: I am not prepared to confirm the speculative figures that I read about this morning.

Mr. Benn: Is the Secretary of State aware that every penny of the overrun will have to be paid by the taxpayer and that it amounts to a subsidy to nuclear power on a scale that the Government have never accepted in respect of the mining industry? Has the Commissioner with responsibility for energy in the European Community, which has taken an interest in the sweeteners that were paid for the purchase of Rover, asked the Government to make a full disclosure in this case?

Mr. Wakeham: I have clear responsibility for taxpayers' money, of which I am well aware. That is why I am not prepared to comment on or to accept the speculative figures that appeared in this morning's newspapers. We shall make our comments at the proper time and in the proper way. That will be after Nuclear Electric has published its review. As for the coal industry, the right hon. Gentleman once had the honour to hold the position that I now hold. The financial assistance and grants that have been made available to British Coal under this Administration exceed, in real terms, the total assistance from all previous Governments since the industry was nationalised.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Will the Secretary of State bear it in mind that behind Sizewell B is a nuclear industry that must not be allowed to disintegrate? Will he also bear in mind the long-term view that the nuclear industry will be essential to the United Kingdom when coal and natural gas run out?

Mr. Wakeham: Those are some of the many considerations that I have to take properly into account when considering those matters.

Mr. Dobson: Will the Secretary of State make a statement after Nuclear Electric has published its figures and will he confirm now that the figures that he says Nuclear Electric is to publish tomorrow will cover the whole of the extra costs, including those that must fall on Sizewell as a result of the cancellation of the other three pressurised water reactors? Will he also confirm that the costs of the £200 million nuclear research write-off will fall on Sizewell? Finally, can he confirm that if Sizewell is to continue, electricity users will have to pay at least twice as much for their electricity from Sizewell as from any other electricity generating station?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman would have been well advised to accept my advice not to press his questions at this time. I do not believe that the answers that he will receive a little later will be entirely to his liking. The best plan is to allow Nuclear Electric to publish its report and then decide what is the best thing to do.

Energy Efficiency

9. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he proposes to review the 90 per cent. upper limit on the grant available under the homes energy efficiency scheme.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Tony Baldry): A number of representations have been received about the 90 per cent. limit as part of the consultation process. They are being considered.

Mr. Flynn: Does the Minister agree that the 10 per cent. shortfall is a formidable disincentive to the most needy families in Britain to take up this environmentally and socially valuable scheme? How can the Government be so miserly with those people and yet so profligate? Is not it true that there would be enough fuel efficiency grants for almost the entire population if Sizewell B were cancelled? Is not it acknowledged now that Sizewell B and the whole PWR programme was the worst, the most futile and the most wasteful civil investment decision since the Pharaohs decided to build the pyramids?

Mr. Baldry: The 90 per cent. grant is a continuation of the home insulation project. However, the levels of individual grant will be determined in the light of the comments received by means of consultation. I shall make sure that the hon. Gentleman's comments are taken into account as part of the consultation process. The principal aim of the new scheme is to bring about a further increase in the uptake of home insulation measures among low-income households. The scheme will, I believe, be successful in doing just that.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Does my hon. Friend agree that loft insulation is the most cost-effective way of reducing energy consumption, so, when the Government are willing to give low-income households a 90 per cent. grant, that is an extremely good deal, which they should be encouraged to take up?

Mr. Baldry: Energy efficiency in the home extends beyond that scheme, and the promotion of energy efficiency in buildings generally is extremely important. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister recently presented the first national home energy rating certificate in support of the methodology and principles of energy labelling as endorsed by the Building Research Establishment. It is a welcome step in the development of the voluntary energy labelling of homes. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State recently spoke at the opening of the one millionth new home to be built with mineral wool cavity wall slab insulation. Such initiatives will greatly help promote energy efficiency and energy savings in Britain's households.

British Coal

11. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next proposes to meet the chairman of British Coal to discuss the future of the coal industry.

15. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of British Coal; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Wakeham: I meet the chairman of the British Coal Corporation regularly to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

Mr. Patchett: After meeting the chairman of British Coal, will the Minister be prepared to issue a joint statement with him assuring redundant and retired mineworkers that their concessionary fuel rights will be guaranteed unless they choose another option in future?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that the hon. Gentleman has raised the matter before with me and certainly with British Coal. It is a matter for British Coal, but I shall certainly ensure that any further representations that he wants to make are put to the chairman of British Coal.

Mr. Hardy: Is the Secretary of State aware that currently nods and winks suggest that even if the country had the unlikely misfortune to have a Conservative Government after the next general election, they would not privatise the coal industry? Will the right hon. Gentleman discuss the matter with Lord Haslam and explain to him whether that change of heart is because the Government are to maintain the policy of contraction so that there will be nothing left to privatise, or because wiser counsels have prevailed?

Mr. Wakeham: I think that the whole House would wish me to congratulate Sir Robert Haslam on his recent peerage. He has been a distinguished leader of industry for many years and is a distinguished chairman of British Coal. Certainly I discuss many things with Sir Robert Haslam, but he does not seek to interfere with what is essentially a political decision. The Government's position is clear: we intend to bring proposals before the House for the privatisation of British Coal after the next election.

Mr. Rost: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the only way to secure a long-term future for the British coal industry is for its prices to be competitive and for it to develop the technologies to burn coal cleanly? Flue gas desulphurisation does not reduce, but increase, greenhouse gases. The development of new technology such as the fluidised bed and coal gasification will alow us to burn coal in the long term and reduce CO_2.

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. In the long term, the development of new clean coal technologies will be the future of the British coal industry into the next century, but in the meantime the considerable improvement in productivity and performance in recent years must be maintained for many years to come.

Mr. Holt: When my right hon. Friend speaks to the chairman of British Coal, will he take up with him the matter of dumping waste on the beaches of the north-east of England? It may be cost effective for the coal industry, but it is extremely expensive on the environment and ultimately will have to be cleaned up. Will my right hon. Friend give notice that licensing for such disposal will cease quickly?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that there are strong feelings about this matter, for which my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is responsible. I know that he is currently considering it.

Mr. Hood: Considering the overrun in the cost of nuclear power at Sizewell B, when the Secretary of State next meets the chairman of British Coal, will he suggest that a fraction of the expenditure on nuclear power should be invested in the Scottish coalfield to reopen the Francis and Monkton Hall collieries? Scottish coal is consumer friendly; it is the green coal of the future. Will he give a lead to the chairman of British Coal by supporting the redevelopment of the Scottish coalfield?

Mr. Wakeham: As the hon. Gentleman says, several matters in relation to Scottish coal are encouraging. Scotland has a considerable amount of low-sulphur coal, which is likely to become increasingly valuable, and its quality advantage will provide good opportunities for the future. I was pleased that Monkton Hall and Francis pits were mothballed rather than closed, because it shows that, in the right circumstances, mothballing is a feasible option. I am pleased that British Coal and Scottish Power are close to agreement about coal supplies for Longannet power station. It is not all doom and gloom.

Mr. Gow: Is my right hon. Friend aware that most miners now own their homes and wish to be able to own shares in the industry in which they work? Why, therefore, did he say that the Bill to privatise the coal industry will be introduced only after the next election? Will he please introduce it in November? It could be quite a short Bill and it would be welcomed, particularly by miners.

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend has a formidable reputation for cutting through red tape and getting to the heart of matters, but the Bill to privatise British Coal will be complex, because under the licensing arrangements in the Coal Industry Nationalisation Act 1946 a privatised British Coal could not retain responsibility for licensing our national reserves.

Mr. Barron: When the Secretary of State next meets the chairman of the coal board will he discuss the most urgent matter in the coal industry—its low morale? Will he join Labour Members in supporting the chairman's efforts to win some long-term contracts for supplying electricity generators? Last year, British Coal was offering 10-year contracts to the new generators but it was stopped by the politics of Whitehall. Will he support the efforts of the chairman of the coal board to get talks going immediately to ensure future stability for the British coal industry after these short-term contracts?

Mr. Wakeham: In the friendliest possible way, may I say to the hon. Gentleman that part of the cause for the low morale, which is not as widespread as he suggested, may be some of the statements that he and his hon. Friends have made. British Coal secured a three-year contract with the generators which was benefical to both parties. Negotiations for a further long-term contract are continuing and I hope that satisfactory arrangements will be made.

Flue Gas Desulphurisation

13. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the progress of the flue gas desulphurisation programme.

Mr. Wakeham: Work on retrofitting FGD to the 4 GW Drax power station is proceeding well. In addition, I am considering applications from PowerGen for my consent to it retrofitting FGD to Ratcliffe and Ferrybridge C power stations.

Mr. Butler: Although Fiddler's Ferry power station was originally considered for flue gas desulphurisation, what progress has been made in reducing sulphur dioxide emissions by burning low-sulphur coal, and does it represent a saving to the ultimate consumer?

Mr. Wakeham: The fitting of FGD equipment in general adds to the costs of producing electricity; it does not reduce them. How the power station at Fiddler's Ferry will be run is a matter not for me but for the company. I recognise my hon. Friend's legitimate interest in these matters.

Mr. O'Brien: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware of the urgency of installing this equipment at Ferrybridge C power station, where a number of my constituents are employed? Is he aware that any greater delay in agreeing that the equipment should be fitted will mean a significant danger of more coal mines in the area being closed? Will the right hon. Gentleman urgently consider the application from Ferrybridge C power station, so that we can get on with the job and assure the people who work in the mining industry that at least their jobs will be made secure?

Mr. Wakeham: I have some sympathy with the hon. Gentleman's question. There certainly will be no delay on my part. If the initial 8 GW of retrofitting is completed, as we hope, it will be sufficient to enable British Coal to produce about 70 million tonnes of coal for the generators. That will meet the provisions of the European directive until, I think, 1998. At the moment, there is a commitment only to 8 GW of retrofitting. It will be some time before we must deal with the problem of extra retrofitting.

Mr. Viggers: Does my right hon. Friend agree that considerable caution is justified in approaching the FGD programme? Does he agree that the plant is large, the cost is great and the efficiency of the burning system is diminished by it? Could not FGD turn out to be an expensive cul-de-sac? Does he agree that it might be more productive to consider more efficient burning systems?

Mr. Wakeham: We have told the generators, "You must bring forward your plans"—they are not the Government's plans—"on what you believe to be the most efficient and effective way of dealing with the European directive." The generators must deal with that directive, and that is why we have reached the present position. My hon. Friend is right: it is an expensive and, in some ways, retrograde technology. I believe that it will play an important part in achieving the reductions that are called for, but other measures will be needed too.

National Power

14. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of National Power to discuss changes in conditions of employment.

Mr. Baldry: Conditions of employment are a matter for National Power's management.

Mr. Cox: Is the Minister aware that part of the terms and conditions of employment in the old electricity industry involved a concessionary purchase scheme whereby members of staff could purchase items sold by the boards? Is he aware that on the Saturday before privatisation, National Power sent a letter to all staff and ex-staff telling them that on the following Monday the scheme would be cancelled? Was not that a deplorable action by National Power? When the hon. Gentleman next meets the chairman of National Power, will he find out when the scheme, which existed for many years, will be reintroduced?

Mr. Baldry: Concessionary sales for National Power staff are not part of the conditions of employment; they are a matter for management. I understand that National Power is investigating alternative arrangements and has undertaken to inform staff, pensioners and trade unions in July about progress.

Offshore Installations

16. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proposals he has to improve safety in the handling of dangerous substances on offshore installations.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend is currently studying the possible extension of the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988 to offshore installations.

Dr. Moonie: I appreciate that this matter is not the Minister's direct responsibility, but I am sure that the Minister of State is well aware of the concerns that have been expressed, especially by my constituents who work on offshore installations. Will the hon. Gentleman guarantee to take careful heed of the views that have been expressed by trade unions on the importance of any changes?

Mr. Baldry: Offshore safety is of paramount importance and we have consistently stressed that we will not allow standards to be compromised for any reason. We have been reviewing the important contribution that the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations have made in improving safety onshore, and it will now be for the Health and Safety Commission to advise my right hon. Friend the Minister of State whether such regulations should be extended offshore. I have no doubt that my right hon. Friend will also have regard to comments and representations made to him by the trade unions and others concerned with safety in the North sea.

Community Insulation

17. **Mr. Burt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many homes have been insulated by community insulation projects since 1982.

Mr. Baldry: More than 750,000 homes have been treated by the projects since their work began in 1982.

Mr. Burt: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply and congratulate him and the Government on the good work that has been done through the scheme. May I bring to his attention the problems caused in certain areas by the change in benefit regulations? May I also seek his assurance that the work on the scheme will continue and that his Department will pursue that good work as far as it possibly can and encourage its growth and development? The scheme has assisted a number of homes in my constituency, and I should like its benefits to the rest of the country to continue and prosper in the years to come.

Mr. Baldry: I thank my hon. Friend for his kind comments. We are keen to ensure, wherever possible, that

work undertaken by the community insulation projects is not constrained in the run-up to the new home energy efficiency scheme. That new scheme will have about £12 million available in its first half-year of operation, and I am confident that there will be a substantial increase in the rate at which the work is done.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Official Visits

71. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next intends to pay an official visit to the Duchy; and if he will make a statement.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. Kenneth Baker): I have no plans to visit the Duchy estates in the immediate future.

Mr. Hind: My right hon. Friend will be aware that several of his tenants have expressed concern to me at the suggestion that one in 15 of them who are standard rate taxpayers may be called upon to pay more tax. They have also said that they might like to hear about the matter in an impartial manner on Independent Television News. Will my right hon. Friend do all that he can to ensure that those tenants will not be called upon to pay more tax and that they will be able to hear impartial reports about the matter on ITN?

Mr. Baker: To those of my hon. Friend's constituents who are concerned about the possibility of paying more tax, I have to say that it will not be a question of one in 15, two in 15 or even three in 15 paying more: all 15 will pay more tax under the Opposition's proposals. When the Leader of the Opposition talks on television about tax increases, it is a question of, "Watch my slips". I hope that ITN will not be browbeaten by a harassed and embarrassed Labour party.

Mr. Alan Williams: When the Chancellor visits the Duchy, will he confirm—as I am sure he will—that he meticulously differentiates between his role as a Minister and his fund-raising and publicity roles as chairman of the Conservative party? If he can give that assurance, why did not he observe the same rule when he visited Armenia recently? The Prime Minister told us that he went in his official role as a Minister but, in a response to me, he said that he travelled privately with Sir Jeffrey Sterling, who happens to be the second largest contributor to the Conservative party.

Mr. Baker: I was invited by a sponsor of the school in Armenia. The right hon. Gentleman cavils too much. Had he seen the school, he would know of the outstanding contribution that the Government and the individual sponsors have made in an area that has suffered a grave tragedy. Moreover, the school is a great tribute to the British workmen who completed the work on time, and I am surprised that the right hon. Gentleman cannot take more pride in that.

Environment

72. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what environmental responsibilities his chancellorship involves.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: As a member of Her Majesty's Government, I am closely involved in the development of future policy towards the environment.

Mr. Jack: My right hon. Friend will no doubt remember with pleasure his days in Southport and the times that he played on the beach and made sand castles. He will therefore understand the enormous strength of feeling among Duchy residents in Lancashire about coastal pollution. Can he reassure those left in the county, and some who are still left on the beaches, that the beaches will soon be clean and that the Government are four-square behind those efforts?

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend reminds me of my youth which I spent in Southport. That was some time ago. The amount being spent on environmental improvement in Lancashire and the Mersey basin constitutes one of our largest programmes. The Mersey basin programme will involve £4 billion over the next 25 years. North West Water will be investing £400 million next year and £100 million is being dedicated to cleaning beaches in Southport and Blackpool.

Dr. Cunningham: Why is it that for millions of people, including holidaymakers as well as residents in the north-west and the Duchy, it is unsafe for them and their children to bathe in coastal waters because the concentrations of coliforms, pathogenic micro-organisms and other harmful entero-viruses in the water present a serious risk to people? Is not it obvious that the Government's timetable for resolving the problems is hopelessly inadequate?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman was a member of the previous Labour Government who presided over a cut of 40 per cent. in capital investment for water authorities. The hon. Gentleman should recognise that we are spending about £3 billion to improve and clean water throughout the country and specifically in the north-west. The Labour Government ran the country so badly that they could not provide the funds for such important infrastructure developments.

Mr. Mans: Does my right hon. Friend agree that beaches in the north-west are cleaner now than they have ever been? When he next visits the Duchy, will he take the opportunity to suggest to the Labour leader of Lancashire county council that she joins other local authorities and pressure groups in the north-west in getting together with North West Water to make the beaches even cleaner?

Mr. Baker: If I believed that the Labour leader of Lancashire county council would listen to me, I would willingly pass on that advise. However, all the evidence is that she listens to no one, least of all to the Labour party. Lancashire county council is one of the biggest overspenders in the country. Last year its overspending was 17·5 per cent., which amounted to £123 million. That is why the community charge in Lancashire was so high. I re-emphasise what I said earlier. The Government's commitment to cleaning up the estuaries, rivers and beaches in the north-west is absolutely clear. More money will be spent on that over the next few years than has been spent in recent years.

Parliamentary Questions

73. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many written parliamentary questions he has answered since last replying to oral questions in the House.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have answered two written parliamentary questions since last replying to oral questions in the House.

Mr. Winnick: No doubt that gives the right hon. Gentleman even more time to write those endless letters to some of my hon. Friends. Does the Chancellor of the Duchy have any responsibility for the articles that appeared in yesterday's Conservative newspapers to the effect that the deputy Prime Minister is to be dumped, or do those stories originate from No. 10? It seems odd. Perhaps the Chancellor will wish to come to the defence of his right hon. and learned Friend, who seems to be the victim of a vendetta.

Mr. Baker: Let me say to the hon. Gentleman, who asks me questions of this nature at every opportunity—he asked similar questions of my predecessor—that the last time he asked me a question, we were about 25 points behind in the opinion polls and now we are about 11 points behind. The passage of time has seen an unprecedented decline in support for the Opposition.

Mr. Burns: My right hon. Friend rightly drew attention to the fact that, at the time of the previous oral questions to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Conservative party was 28 points behind in the opinion polls, whereas now it is only 11 points behind. Does my right hon. Friend think that, when he next answers oral questions, the Labour party will be decent enough to congratulate him and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on putting us ahead in the opinion polls?

Mr. Baker: I would not like to suggest that the improvement in Conservative party fortunes is entirely due to my appearance at the Dispatch Box. In the past few weeks, the Labour party has been rumbled. When it talks of spending, the country now realises that that means increasing taxes. The great launch of its new manifesto has gone off like a damp squib.

Official Duties

74. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list his official duties for 25 June.

Mr. Baker: Earlier today I met Duchy of Lancaster officials; later, I shall spend time attending to Duchy business.

Mr. Skinner: When I took over as chairman of the Labour party, it was six points behind in the opinion polls; when I left, it was 15 points in front. You can do anything with statistics.

As part of his official duties, does the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster watch "Spitting Image"? Is he aware that the only puppet that is not human is him and that he is portrayed as a big fat slug? Is he sending a letter of protest or congratulation to the programme makers?

Mr. Baker: I am indifferent to the various caricatures of me: I find that the more significant one becomes, the more trenchant they become.

When the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) was leader, or rather chairman—he was never leader—of the Labour party, it was doing better than it is now. I think that he should be chairman again. The Labour party is waiting for Dennis, and I hope that it will welcome him back as its chairman.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

New Parliamentary Building

78. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what representations he has made to London Regional Transport concerning finance for the proposed development of phase II of the new parliamentary buildings over Westminster underground station.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): Consultations on this subject with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment have been taken as far as they can be at this stage.

Mr. Allen: Does the Lord President agree that every hon. Member who wants one should have an office of his own, with adequate space for staff and adequate office facilities—even Conservative Members who turn up only occasionally, and have other jobs in the City and the law courts? Will he re-examine the question of further office space for hon. Members and their staff in phase 2 of the new development? Will he also tell the House what the financial arrangements will be between the Government and London Regional Transport, and explain who will pay what percentage of costs to ensure that those much-needed facilities are made available to all hon. Members?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: In answer to the second question, discussions between my ministerial colleagues and London Regional Transport will bear in mind what the Services Committee said about the share that was originally suggested. It remains the objective of the Committee that every hon. Member who so wishes should have an office by 1995.

Snuff

79. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Lord President of the Council how much snuff was administered to hon. Members by the doorkeepers in *(a)* 1969, *(b)* 1979, and *(c)* 1989; at what cost; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: In 1989 about 1·5 oz of snuff was consumed at a cost of 99p; figures for the earlier years are unknown. Only one hon. and learned Member regularly uses snuff; other hon. Members and Officers of the House do so only occasionally.

Mr. Greenway: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that snuff clears the brain and improves the health of those who take it? Will he name the hon. and learned Member who takes snuff from the principal doorkeeper, so that all hon. Members can judge the efficacy of the product that is available to us all?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It would be quite improper for me to disclose the private habits of even an hon. and learned Member in that way. Equally, it would be unwise for me

to commend the taking of snuff for any reason. I am advised that, on the whole, its effects are deleterious to health.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Will the Leader of the House confirm that the hon. and learned Member is a male Member of the House and that no hon. Ladies have participated in the taking of snuff over those years? In recognising that the taking of snuff is a male habit, will the Leader of the House say what proposals he has to improve the lives of the hon. Ladies in the House?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: That is an ingenious and attractive line of argument. I confirm that the hon. and learned Member is a male Member. I cannot absolutely exclude the possibility that female Members may occasionally partake, but I have no evidence to support it. I am always interested in considering and advancing proposals put forward by Lady Members of the House.

European Parliament

80. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Lord President of the Council whether he has any proposals to improve liaison between the House and the European Parliament.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Government agree with the Procedure Committee that there are benefits to be gained from building up informal links between the two Parliaments. The House should be able to discuss this subject later this week. Meanwhile, the Services Committee is investigating the scope for improving Members' telephone and postal contacts with Community institutions.

Mr. Marshall: Will my right hon. and learned Friend undertake to consider the systems that apply in other national Parliaments, such as the Folketing, to encourage liaison between Members of this House and British Members of the European Parliament who, after all, are fighting the same battle as we are?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am certainly willing to consider any proposals identified by my hon. Friend. He will recall that the Procedure Committee concluded that there was no strong case for the introduction of legislation to establish formal contacts. I am sure that it is in the interests of the House and of the European Parliament to encourage in as many ways as possible the development of informal contacts.

Mr. Janner: Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that liaison between individual Members of both Parliaments is often very good, not least between the three Labour Members for the city of Leicester and the Labour Member of the European Parliament for Leicestershire, and not least concerning travesties such as the closure of Bewcastle house and De Montfort house old people's homes in our joint constituencies, without informing any of us in advance and without telling the old people, who had to find out for themselves? Is not that a disgrace in either Parliament?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Even for the sake of finding something to say, I shall not commend the constituency interest that was so skilfully and characteristically advanced by the hon. and learned Gentleman.

Mr. Dykes: Will my right hon. and learned Friend say a bit more about telephone call facilities to institutions including the Parliament in Brussels? I know that it means phoning wicked foreigners, which is an inherently dangerous activity, but, as we raised the matter about 18 months ago, it really is time that we made progress, like other Parliaments.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As I said in my earlier answer, that proposal is being considered by the Services Committee. Clearly it makes sense to establish workable arrangements for hon. Members to have ready contact with European institutions. I hope that the Services Committee will report on that matter as soon as possible.

Postage

82. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will bring forward proposals to extend the Speaker's warrant to cover postage of correspondence with overseas electors.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Mr. Speaker's frank used on some correspondence originating from the House is valid within the United Kingdom only. A proposal to assist hon. Members in sending official correspondence overseas is shortly to be considered by the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee.

Mr. Butler: Will my right hon. and learned Friend bear in mind the fact that we have recently extended the franchise abroad to those who left this country up to 20 years ago? We are now receiving a good deal of correspondence from abroad, and that facility would be very much welcomed.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand that that extension of the franchise was undertaken with the support of the Labour party. It may raise the matter suggested by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Rees: Should not we be careful? Whatever the intention of this question, we are not allowed to use free postage to deal with home electors. We are allowed to deal with constituency matters, but we are not allowed to write with stamped envelopes to electors in our constituencies on the basis of the electoral register. What can be done abroad should be no different from what is done at home.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand the right hon. Gentleman's anxiety. I do not think that the matter is defined precisely along the lines that he suggests. One is entitled to use the free postage for parliamentary or constituency duties, but not for party purposes. As that is the position at home, it will be the position overseas, too.

Mr. Latham: When will something be done about communications with, for example, European Commissioners, which I understand are not covered by the pre-postage arrangement? As we have to write to them on behalf of our constituents from time to time, surely that should be treated in the same way as writing to a constituent or a Minister.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The range of the postal facilities proposed for communications with European institutions may extend that far. I shall consider my hon. Friend's point.

Dr. Cunningham: Is not it not just curious, but unacceptable, that the Government are spending more taxpayers' money on advertising to encourage people living abroad to register to vote—[HON. MEMBERS: "Labour supported it."] Welcome though it is, is not it unacceptable that more money is being spent on encouraging a small number of people living abroad to register to vote than is being spent on the programme for all the electors in Great Britain? It is the wrong way round and should be changed.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman must understand that most electors already resident in the United Kingdom are registered, and have been for many years. The point about the change is that overseas voters are a new category, so it is perfectly sensible that the information should be brought to their attention as a special innovation. I emphasise that the measure to enfranchise overseas voters was introduced with the support of the Opposition, and it should be commended to voters on that basis.

New Parliamentary Building

83. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Lord President of the Council when he expects offices to become available for hon. Members' use in the new parliamentary building.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The latest forecast is that hon. Members and their staff will be able to occupy the offices on their return from the 1991 summer Adjournment.

Mr. Banks: I think that I will still be here.

May I, through the right hon. and learned Gentleman, compliment the architect and the workers who have constructed a most agreeable building on the other side of the road? I think that it will be a good example to other architects in London. As I believe in honesty and in open government, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give me an assurance that I will have an office in that building?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot offer any long-term assurances on the hon. Gentleman's electoral position in the House.

Sir John Stokes: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that in the 20 years that I have been here there have been extensive improvements in office accommodation, but I have noticed no improvements in parliamentary performance? I wonder whether more offices will lead to the Chamber and, above all, the Smoking Room being emptier.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand that hon. Members have different views about the importance of office accommodation. I note what my hon. Friend says.

Points of Order

3.32 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I know that the subject of tomorrow's debate is aid to developing countries, but has the Minister for Overseas Development asked to make a statement on the horrific events in Iran? There are millions of people in this country who, whatever they think about the regime in Iran, are deeply concerned about and horrified by what has occurred, and they want the maximum amount of relief to be given. There was a passing statement by a Minister last Friday, but I and many other hon. Members would wish an oral statement to be made by the appropriate Minister.

Mr. Speaker: I have had no indication that the Government propose to make a statement on this matter today. However, as the hon. Gentleman has correctly stated, there will be a debate tomorrow, when these matters will be relevant.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday there was a near miss between two aircraft over mid-Wales when a British Midland aircraft and a Dan Air aircraft came within four seconds of a collision. It is a very serious matter, because there have been a number of near misses over mid-Wales in recent years. Has the Secretary of State for Transport made an application to make a statement to the House because of the serious nature of the incident? If not, what can be done to prevail upon him to do so?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has made his point. I have had no request for a statement, or any indication that the Government propose to make one, on that serious matter.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I raise this matter with some difficulty, because the supplementary question of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) was sheer magic and none of us would have missed it for the world. However, in the past, you have declined to take the supplementary questions worded in that way, referring to departmental Minister's duties for a specific day. Is that policy now to be changed because, if so, it may affect the behaviour of other hon. Members when we table our questions?

Mr. Speaker: Normally, matters of that kind would be brought to me by the Table Office. What was the question?

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): It was Question 74, about official duties.

Mr. Speaker: That was passed as in order by the Table Office.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): On a point of Order, Mr. Speaker. May I draw your attention to Question 79, which was tabled to the Lord President of the Council by the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway)? Do you agree that such questions, which cost probably 40 or 50 times more than the snuff in question, are a complete waste of money and of precious parliamentary time?

Mr. Speaker: I had better not give my views publicly about some of the questions on the Order Paper.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Legal Advice and Assistance (Scope) (Amendment) Regulations 1990 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Opposition Day

[15TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

3.36 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): I beg to move,

That this House deplores the privatisation of the electricity industry, which will cost every family in Britain over £1,000, damage the environment and undermine the balance of payments; and believes this too high a price to impose upon the British people.

First, we object to the electricity privatisation because the industry will be sold off for a third of its proper value. Secondly, we believe that measures to prevent acid rain have been reduced and put back. We also believe that the structure of the industry hinders investment in energy efficiency and energy saving. Thirdly, there is a danger of over-rapid depletion of our fuel reserves, especially natural gas. Fourthly, we believe that electricity privatisation is increasing coal imports, thus threatening the balance of payments. Fifthly, we object to the enormous sums of money that are being poured out on advice from City advisers and public relations advertising companies that are intimately involved with the Tory party. Sixthly, we believe that people are being expected to pay a scandalous price for nuclear power under the privatisation arrangements and it is about time that the Government came clean. For all those reasons, we believe that the electricity privatisation amounts to a bad deal for taxpayers and electricity customers.

The Secretary of State has been praised for sorting out the mess that he inherited from his right hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Parkinson). Although we recognise that it was a terrible mess, and to the extent that it is possible to sort out such a mess, the Secretary of State has sorted it out, I am nevertheless reminded of the dung beetle. We admire the skill and persistence with which the dung beetle moves it ball of dung, but our fascination with the process should not distract us from recognising that, at the end the substance being moved remains a ball of dung —and so it is, with the structure of electricity privatisation.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The big fat slug will have to gobble it up.

Mr. Dobson: My hon. Friend should not refer to slugs and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in the same breath.

The distribution, transmission and generating parts of the electricity industry in England and those parts of the Scottish boards that are to be sold off are worth at least £38 billion. There are a number of ways of calculating those assets, but the lowest reasonable figure is about £35 billion. I do not know whether the Secretary of State is prepared to challenge that figure. When I asked him whether he could tell me the values of the various boards that were to be sold, he told me:

"Asset values are contained in the relevant annual report and accounts."—[*Official Report*, 12 February 1990; Vol. 1511 c. 92.]

I checked carefully through those reports and accounts and the highest estimate that I came upon was £38 billion for the industry or £35 billion. That is the net asset value, using current cost accounting. It does not include the merits of taking over an industry with highly trained, highly skilled and highly educated staff who have gone about their job efficiently in the past and who a new owner can reasonably expect will go about it efficiently in future. All we are talking about is the fixed assets.

I take as an example the generating board's last annual report. Peat, Marwick, McLintock, the distinguished city accountants, said:

"We have audited the accounts in accordance with approved Auditing Standards. In our opinion the accounts which have been prepared under the current cost convention give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the board and its subsidiaries."

The auditors of the other boards signed similar certificates. Pear, Marwick, McLintock also said that the fixed assets of the generating board alone amounted to £26 billion. If we take an average estimate of the total assets of the industry, we can reckon that it is worth £35 billion. Then we must ask: what price are the companies to be sold for? James Capel, the Government broker, is advising energy correspondents that they will be sold for about £10 billion. That is £5 billion for the distribution companies, £4 billion for the generating companies and just £1 billion for all the assets of the electricity boards in Scotland.

In a parliamentary answer, the Minister denied that James Capel is saying that. Because I usually believe the Minister and we expect honesty in parliamentary answers, I checked with the journalists who produced those articles. At my request, they have gone through their shorthand notes of the briefings from James Capel, and in some cases they cross-checked with the other broker, Warburg, and both brokers said that £10 billion is the sum for which they expect the industry to be sold.

If the industry is to be sold for only £10 billion, that is a shortfall of £28 billion or £25 billion, which works out at more than £1,000 per family. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the chairman of the Tory party, last week had the brass-faced cheek to talk about Labour spending and Labour waste. There will be no Labour waste like this. This is Tory waste with a vengeance. The sum of £1,000 per family—£20 a week per family for a whole year—is too much to lose on this shabby transaction.

British people and our European partners will be asked to pay a big price by way of increased or not reduced environmental damage. Measures against acid rain will be postponed and reduced. Until the Prime Minister made her speech at the United Nations, which the *Evening Standard* modestly described as

"Maggie's plan to save the world",

we were going to have flue gas desulphurisation equipment on 12,000 MW of coal-fired plant. Now that figure has suddenly been reduced to 8,000 MW, and there is no real commitment to it—there is a firm commitment only to 4,000 MW.

The reason is that the Secretary of State has been informed by his fancy-pants City advisers that, if he goes through with flue gas desulphurisation on this scale, it will be hard to sell the electricity industry. In other words, his friends in the City are interested not in an environmentally friendly industry but only in a dirty one.

So, if right hon. and hon. Members will excuse the expression, flue gas desulphurisation has been put on the back burner and the Government have gone for cheap

options. They say that there will be a big increase instead in the burning of natural gas, but even British Gas has doubts that there are sufficient reserves on the British continental shelf to meet the demand for gas from the electricity generating sector on the scale envisaged. In any case, there are better uses for that gas. It should be used for direct heating or industrial purposes, or for chemical feedstocks, long before it is used for generating electricity.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): What would the Opposition do about flue gas desulphurisation? Would they meet the cost from higher electricity prices or by a higher subvention from the taxpayer?

Mr. Dobson: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman has attended previous debates, when we have made our view clear. We believe that Britain is under an obligation to meet its international agreements, which currently means fitting 12,000 MW of plants with flue gas desulphurisation equipment. We have also said that in so far as the generating companies persuaded the Government to postpone implementing that obligation, so that they will incur additional costs when it is eventually installed, the companies themselves—not their customers—will have to meet that cost. [HON. MEMBERS: "How?"] They will have to meet that cost out of the money that they would otherwise have paid their shareholders. It is entirely up to them.

If we do not have sufficient supplies of British natural gas to feed all the gas-fired power stations that are envisaged, the question arises of natural gas imports. We import too much of it already, which damages our balance of payments, and it would be absurd to harm it further. In any case, what would be the source of any additional supplies? The Soviet Union is entering a period of instability, as is the middle east. In the past, Algeria has been one of our major suppliers, but the recent local elections there can scarcely make anyone feel that there will be stability in that country in future and that it will be a continuing stable source of natural gas. We might find ourselves in the lunatic situation in which our gas supplies were vulnerable and we had no influence on their cost. Instead of going for flue gas desulphurisation, the Government are going for depletion of gas reserves and reliance on insecure foreign sources. We believe that that is too high a price to pay for electricity privatisation.

The Government propose switching instead to burning low-sulphur coal. It is a pity that they did not think of that over the past 10 years, when they permitted British Coal to close no fewer than 49 low-sulphur pits. That wiped out the Kent coalfield and, reduced the Scottish coalfields to one pit and the Welsh coalfields to five—and they were the coalfields that produced low-sulphur coal.

What will be the effect on our balance of payments if we have to import low-sulphur coal? I imagine that the Chancellor of the Exchequer would have a few views about that. A very cavalier attitude is taken by the Department of Energy and the big generating companies. What about the security of coal supplies and their price? We have been told that Department officials and the generating companies believe that supplies of low-sulphur coal will be secure and that the price will be all right. They are the very people who said in the past that we could rely on imported oil from the middle east, but then OPEC hit them and they were taken by surprise.

They are the self-same people—they continue in the same manner—who said that nuclear electricity would provide us all with cheap power, that it might be so cheap that it would be given away. The only giveaway now is that the truth is out at last about the cost of nuclear power, and it is costing electricity consumers a fortune. We believe that all that would be too high a price to pay for electricity privatisation.

One of our major objectives at the moment should be energy saving. Everything we do should be geared to promote that, but the new structure of the electricity industry will hinder energy saving, because it has been set up to promote sales. As my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) pointed out, the chairman of the biggest electricity board in the country was talking in grandiose terms last week in Scotland about the job of the electricity industry being to compete with British Gas and to get as big a share of the market as possible. There was no talk about restriction, energy conservation or anything else. All he wants is more sales and more profit from them.

The problem is that, due to the ramshackle Parkinsonian regime that the Secretary of State has inherited, there is an unnatural break between electricity distribution and generation. If there were all-purpose electricity boards in various parts of the country, they could face an easy question. They could ask themselves how to cope with an extra 1,000 MW of demand, and could calculate whether it was better to invest money in reducing demand by 1,000 MW by improving energy conservation, or whether it would be cheaper to build new generating capacity.

In the present circumstances, we all know that the boards would opt to invest money in energy conservation, because it would be cheaper than buying new generating plant. However, under the new separated regime that the Government are wishing on the country, the decision would not be reached in such a way, because generating and distributing companies would make more money the more electricity they sell. That is why we are saying that, when Labour comes to power, we will impose an obligation on distributing companies to invest money in energy conservation and efficiency.

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): While it is true that energy companies will make more money the more electricity they sell, is it not also true that consumers will want to buy less electricity because the less they buy the less money they will pay? Therefore, consumers will be interested in energy conservation.

Mr. Dobson: The hon. Gentleman's logic is that we should double the price of electricity and so double the consumer's interest in energy conservation. That seems to be a perverse way to go about things.

Another enormous cost that the Government are imposing on the taxpayer and the electricity user is the cost of advice on privatisation which they are obtaining from the City, allegedly to the benefit of all. Unless the score has increased—I rather think it has and he has got his 50—at the moment, according to official figures, the Secretary of State has 47 companies advising him on privatisation, including 13 estate agents—which is unlucky for some, or indeed for all of us, as they are estate agents—and 10 firms of accountants. The electricity boards are employing many

[Mr. Dobson]

more companies. More than 130 City companies are employed by the Secretary of State and the electricity boards to advise them on electricity privatisation.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): Any MPs?

Mr. Dobson: There is probably the odd MP here and there—I am not sure—but I trust that they are not Opposition Members.

The Secretary of State is spending more than £50 million on those 47 companies, but the boards say that they will not tell me how much they are spending, and I have written to all of them. Two boards told local newspapers who inquired that they did not know how much they were spending on City advisers. I got the journalists to ring back and ask how the boards were going to pass the cost on to the customer. They said, "We are working it out and it will probably be set out in our annual reports."

Mr. Skinner: They could be friends of the family.

Mr. Dobson: Yes, they could. I was struck by the thought the other day that the Tory party was once going on about a famous book called "Jenny lives with Eric and Martin." On the Tory side now, it is "Nigel lives with Barclays and Money" and "David lives with Cable and Wireless." There are quite a few of them around. It is a pity that the Secretary of State has not said that he will not take a job with any of these privatised companies. My hon. Friends are not given to cynicism, but we do not need to be cynics to ask whether the Secretary of State is fixing himself up with a cushy number in Eastern Electricity, or whether he is trying to protect the interests of the electricity consumer. We know what the answer to that question is.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): My hon. Friend has probably read in the press, as I have, that the Secretary of State for Energy may be the Prime Minister's adviser on the date of the next election. When the Tory party loses the next election, perhaps the cause of our cynicism will be confirmed when the Secretary of State for Energy takes up a job with a privatised company, just as the Secretary of State for Wales took a job with British Gas.

Mr. Dobson: The Secretary of State for Wales did not just take a job with British Gas; he took a job with two firms of City advisers that advised on the sale of British Gas, both of which are also giving advice to this Secretary of State. It is a question of "double your money". I cannot understand why the electricity boards will not tell their customers how much they are paying for their advisers. What do they have to hide?

A more basic question is whether the Secretary of State needs all this advice. He proposes to sell the electricity industry for a third of its real value—for what, in a street market, might be described as two thirds off the list price. At that price, the shares could be sold on a stall in Petticoat lane. The Secretary of State should remember the old slogan, derived from the founder of Tesco: "Pile 'em high and sell 'em cheap." That is what the Secretary of State intends to do. He does not need 50 million quid's worth of advice to tell him how to do it.

As for the question whether the advisers are giving value for money, I commend all hon. Members to look at the evidence, when the full details are published on Wednesday, that Kleinwort Benson gave to the Select Committee on Energy about its advice on the privatisation of the nuclear part of the electricity industry. During that public session, the company made it crystal clear, in answer to questions from my hon. Friends and, to be fair from Conservative Members that it did not have the faintest idea about anything to do with nuclear power. It said that all the information on which it had based its advice came from the Central Electricity Generating Board and that, if the CEGB's advice was wrong, there was nothing that Kleinwort's could do about it, because it did not know enough about the industry to challenge and question that information. What contribution did Kleinwort's make to the proceedings? It continued to advise the previous Secretary of State for Energy that it could sell off the industry, which proved to be impossible.

I have made inquiries as to whether Kleinwort's received its fee in full. By and large, the Government are in favour of payment by results. I gather that Kleinwort's got every penny of the fee that was due to it—not every penny of what it deserved, because in that event, it would have had to pay us. On the only occasion when evidence has been given about the question of this advice, those people gave bum advice that has damaged the interests of the country and even the interests of Conservative Members of Parliament.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Before my hon. Friend leaves that interesting line of inquiry and revelation, has he discovered whether any of these well-paid advisers are contributing to Tory party funds, thereby squaring the circle?

Mr. Dobson: I have not had time to go through them, but suspicions occasionally spring to mind, and I shall come to them in a moment.

The way in which the public relations firms are involved is best described by several American political phrases such as "gravy train", "pork barrel", "sleaze bucket"—you name it, they are in it. Let us consider first the public relations and marketing advisers.

The Secretary of State is not usually portrayed as an arrogant or puffed up person, but apparently he is not content with one public relations and marketing adviser to the Energy Department and the electricity supply industry, so he has appointed two—one from the Energy Department and the electricity supply industry and one for himself. Dewe Rogerson has been appointed public relations and marketing adviser to the Energy Department and Lowe Bell Communications has been appointed special public relations and marketing adviser to the Secretary of State. A director of Dewe Rogerson is a Tory Member of Parliament and Lowe Bell Communications is chaired by Tim Bell who, if rumour is correct, is scarcely ever out of 10 Downing street.

How were those people appointed? Another company called Valin Pollen International previously had the job of advising the Department and the industry. Tenders were then invited for the new separate jobs. I am told that three companies applied for each job and that Valin Pollen did not proceed with its application. Dewe Rogerson got one contract and Lowe Bell got the other. So I inquired a bit further and asked who was the unsuccessful applicant for the Dewe Rogerson job—and lo and behold, it was Lowe

Bell, and when I asked who the unsuccessful applicant was for the Lowe Bell job, lo and behold it was Dewe Rogerson.

In theory, there are rules governing such appointments, laid down and reinforced by the Prime Minister. Those appointments break four rules. There was no proper tendering procedure. Appointing a personal public relations adviser is contrary to those rules which also lay down that no public relations advisers may have direct contact with the press or the news media. We now know that Lowe Bell and Dewe Rogerson have contacts with the news media. The appointments involved intimate friends of the Tory party. The whole thing stinks, and the Secretary of State knows it.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): Perhaps the hon. Gentleman is not aware that almost every major company in the country has direct interests in the Conservative party, because they are determined to keep the Labour party out.

Mr. Dobson: I should have thought that the last way to commend the propriety of those appointments was to say that the people concerned were determined to seek a return of a Tory Government rather than a Labour Government. That is not usually a basic criterion on which public contracts are awarded. The hon. Gentleman, who is an old Etonian, has let the cat out of the bag.

Mr. Allen: May I correct the record in one particular? The biggest contributor to the Tory party, British and Commonwealth Holdings, no longer contributes to the Conservative party as it went bust a fortnight ago.

Mr. Dobson: That organisation was probably doing something useful, whereas these people just have their snouts in the trough.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Does my hon. Friend realise that he is raising very serious issues which have real implications for the quality and integrity of British public life? Does he recognise that, if those in local government —the Prime Minister and her colleagues are always calling for prudence and good behaviour in local government— conducted themselves in the way in which my hon. Friend is describing to the House, any qualified and respectable chief executive of a local authority would tell those local representatives that, if they maintained that course, or if it could be proven that they had pursued such a course, they could look forward to a considerable period of imprisonment?

Mr. Dobson: I follow my hon. Friend's point. Indeed, because of my concern about the propriety of these appointments, I wrote to the person responsible for judging the propriety of anything done by the civil service —its head, Sir Robin Butler. After immense delay, I received a reply from the Secretary of State saying that he took responsibility. At least Sir Robin Butler did not say that he agreed with it.

Another aspect of the privatisation was still to come —the award of the privatisation advertising contract. A panel was established to choose who should receive that lucrative contract. One member of it was—surprise, surprise—Mr. Tim Bell. Hon. Members will be aware that he was one of the three Tory party PR friends that the chairman of the Tory party wanted to appoint as special advisers to the Home Secretary, the Secretary of State for Education and Science and Secretary of State for Health, on the grounds that they were boring or were damaging the Conservative party's interest. That idea was so improper that even Mr. Bernard Ingham—a man not noted for his fastidiousness about the propriety of public behaviour—objected to it.

Who did the panel, including Mr. Tim Bell, choose for the advertising contract? It chose the firm Wight, Collins, Rutherford, Scott, Mathews, Marcantionio, whose chairman is Mr. Robin Wight, the man originally selected by the chairman of the Tory party to provide personal public relations advice to the Secretary of State for Education. What a racket! All those friends of the Tory party scrambled to get their snouts in the trough of electricity privatisation. The people of this country are paying a high price for those people.

I am not being unfair; I am not raising new standards of behaviour that are required of Governments. I shall judge the Government by the standards that they set, not for themselves, of course, but for local government. The new national code of conduct for councillors says:

"It is not enough to avoid actual impropriety. You should at all times avoid any occasion for suspicion"

The Government are guilty on all counts. They are guilty of double standards: others must live up to those standards, but not the Government. What is the result of all this?—National Power adverts in between the halves of world cup matches. I was going to say that, if that is a good use of public money, I am a Dutchman, but as Holland did not do too well last night, perhaps I am not.

I have had passed to me proposals for electric privatisation road shows. I have the document submitted by the people who won the contract. They will receive over £2 million for giving presentations to opinion leaders in Britain, North America, Japan and Europe. It is a good sign of Government priorities that they are prepared to spend £2 million on that, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said earlier, less than £500,000 on urging people to register to vote. Registering to buy cheap shares in electricity is a top priority, but registering to exercise democratic rights is a low priority. That has always been the Tory way.

That programme, which has been drawn up by Imagination Design and Communications, will lay on 41 road shows—26 in Britain and 13 abroad, in north America, Europe and Japan—at a cost of more than £2 million. That excludes the cost of the time of people in the electricity industry who will be taking part in it or helping to prepare it. The proposal will give presentations in major cities, and we have some wonderful sample menus of these events. People in Bristol will get lamb kebab, and in Paris they will get rack of lamb, if the French farmers will allow it in. In the United States one does not do too well; one gets spinach salad. In Japan, one gets an amazing concoction called roast duckling chipolata.

The document refers to "all-important institutional lunches". The company promises attention to detail, so much so that it will prescribe the folds that are to be made in the table napkins at these lunches. The Government proposed having a presentation in Northampton, but the company thinks that the Northampton presentation should be transferred to Leicester because there are more "high net worth individuals" in Leicester. I do not know what the people of Northampton will think of the idea that they are low net worth individuals. The company promises that there will be an "Executive Mothercare" service for

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people doing the presentations. As those people go around the country, they will all get "Executive King Size bedrooms". The company further proposes to cater for all their "personal idiosyncrasies"—the mind boggles.

I was going to talk about the chaos over nuclear power, but it is impossible to make a sensible contribution until we know the estimates of the costs of Sizewell B. The Secretary of State said that he will talk about them. There is not much that we can say about them until we hear him. The right hon. Gentleman should come clean on the figures now and for the future. He should come clean also on something that he has refused to do and disclose the price that the electricity companies will pay Nuclear Electric for the electricity that they are buying from the existing nuclear power stations.

The Secretary of State will be praised, rightly, by the Energy Select Committee for letting it all hang out on the old nuclear costs, but I am afraid that, if he let the information out on the old nuclear costs and will not do so on the new nuclear costs, people will just think that he had got it in for Cecil. I cannot believe, even from the right hon. Gentleman's smile, that that could possibly have been his main motivation. People are entitled to know as much about the costs of nuclear power as the Cabinet. We are all entitled to know those figures, so that rational discussion can take place and rational decisions can be reached.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): Is my hon. Friend aware that the Secretary of State might find himself in some difficulty in providing the costs? Every expert witness, without exception, who appeared before the Energy Select Committee conceded that it was not possible to calculate the true costs of nuclear power. The fact that the Government are shoving forward with their non-fossil fuel requirement—a percentage being for nuclear—shows that they are going ahead with that programme whatever the costs. No one knows those costs.

Mr. Dobson: My hon. Friend is right to caution anyone about making guesstimates about the long-term costs and the time taken to construct nuclear power stations. Remember Dungeness B—construction started in 1965; it is still not working properly; and it is costing between eight and 10 times as much as was originally intended. I do not want to become involved in guesswork, and no one else should. The facts should come out, and we should have a debate in due course, with all the facts before us.

Mr. Jack Thompson (Wansbeck): For a number of years, we have known that the cost of nuclear electricity generation has increased. Would it not be reasonable to suggest that Nuclear Power should sell some of its land assets to pay for some of the highly expensive electricity from nuclear power—for example, the site at Druridge bay in Northumberland?

Mr. Dobson: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. So long as either the electricity industry or the nuclear industry possesses land at Druridge bay, at Denver in Norfolk or in Pembroke in south Wales, there is always a danger that someone will want to build a nuclear power station on one of those sites. It will not be a Labour Government, but it would be better if the sites were sold or used for some other purpose.

Electricity privatisation will cost the people of Britain a fortune. It will damage the environment, it is damaging the reputation of the conduct of public business by the sleazy nature of the public relations exercise and advertising contracts connected with it, and it ought to be stopped.

4.14 pm

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. John Wakeham): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'welcomes the privatisation of the electricity industry and the internationally recognised benefits which the Government's policies are already achieving through the introduction of real competition, the introduction of new and enhanced rights for the consumer, the emergence of new, cleaner, more efficient and cost-effective generating plant, through the Government's commitment to the protection of the environment and by ensuring that the needs of the customers drive the decisions of the electricity industry.'.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) has had his fun and I hope to deal with the matters that he has raised. But there is one point with which I should deal straight away. I was somewhat surprised to hear the hon. Gentleman's comments about the book value of the electricity industry's assets. His assertion that the cost of privatisation would be more than £1,000 per family does not stand up to a minute's scrutiny.

The historic net value of the industry's fixed assets in its last audited accounts—leaving aside nuclear assets—was £10 billion. The economic value of any particular company is derived not from the asset value that may appear in its book but from a calculation of what the assets are capable of earning. The current cost balance sheets of each electricity company seek to reflect individual assets at their net replacement cost and hence involve a considerable number of subjective judgments. Net replacement cost is not the same as the net cost of the asset to the taxpayer —the actual amount paid, less the amounts written off to date. The latter cost is reflected in the historic cost balance sheets of the companies, which, as I said, amount to about £10 billion.

There appears to be another mistake in the hon. Gentleman's calculations. He appears to have included the current cost of nuclear fixed assets—some £9 billion in the current cost accounts—even though the nuclear stations are to remain in the public sector. But what is £9 billion between friends? We know that to the Labour party it is an insignificant sum.

Mr. Dobson: Would not the right hon. Gentleman agree that the historic cost method of valuation is absurd in relation to the electricity industry? And he is surely not suggesting that the grid companies' assets, which will all be necessary, could be replaced at the historic costs at which they were bought. They would have to be replaced at current costs. That is why the assets are given that value.

I included nuclear assets deliberately. The right hon. Gentleman should remember that the nuclear assets were in fact liabilities. If one takes from the industry the nuclear assets and the nuclear liabilities, its value must increase. It was because the nuclear assets were liabilities that they could not be sold.

Mr. Wakeham: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that historic values are not the only values to bear in mind, but nor are current cost balance sheets. My point was that the

asset values represent the values that those assets are capable of earning. On that basis, we shall see to it that the industry is sold at its proper value.

It is a little over four months ago that I stood here listening to the Opposition voicing their misconceptions about privatisation. From what has been said today, it is clear that they have learnt little since then. Once again, I am pleased to have the opportunity to put the record straight.

The Labour party talks about the price of privatisation; the rest of the world talks about its benefits. While the eastern bloc moves to privatise whole economies and we advise them how to do it, the Labour party talks about central planning and state intervention. For all the Labour party's glossy pamphlets, it still lives in the past.

It is now more than 50 years since Herbert Morrison set out what he saw as the major benefits that would result from nationalisation. They were as follows:

"The quality of service will tend to advance and the prices charged will tend to fall . . . The industries would be more efficiently and economically conducted and their boards and officers would regard themselves as the high custodians of the public interest."

That all sounded far too good to be true then, and so it has proved. Few of the anticipated economies of scale have materialised, and major new bureaucracies developed. Without competition, the state sector monopolies quickly became inefficient and overmanned, with low productivity, dissatisfied customers and frequent financial losses.

Privatisation is one of the great success stories. During the past 10 years, no fewer than 29 major businesses have been returned to the private sector. British Airways, British Gas, British Telecom, British Aerospace, British Steel, the water companies and many others have been exposed to new commercial and regulatory disciplines and they have thrived. Profits, investment and productivity have risen and customer service has improved.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the conditions for those working in those industries have improved materially, to their great advantage?

Mr. Wakeham: I quite agree: my hon. Friend adds to the list of successes in the privatised industries.

Because of those successes, politicians, officials, business men and others from around the world come to London to talk to us and to learn how to privatise their industries. Only at the end of March was the electricity industry reconstructed, when the new statutory and regulatory regimes came into force. However, we have already seen the effects of our policies on the electricity industry. The past few months have seen the emergence of fierce competition to sign up large industrial customers; that is competition not just between the generators and the generators and the regional electricity companies, but also between the regional electricity companies themselves.

New entrants are emerging into the generation market. The Lakeland Power project is a fine example of that, and 22 other projects have sought consents of one kind or another from the Department. In turn, National Power and PowerGen are responding by reviewing their plans and cutting their costs. As a result, the proposals coming forward for new generating plant are increasingly focusing on the development of new, cleaner and more efficient technologies. That will benefit the consumer by lowering costs. It will also minimise the impact on the environment. The special provision that we have made for power from renewable energy sources as part of the non-fossil fuel obligation has given renewable technology the greatest boost that it has ever received in this country.

There is also competition in supply. Large customers now have real choice. They can enter negotiations not just with their regional electricity company but with any regional electricity company or any generator connected to the system. They are also showing interest in generating their own electricity. The benefits can be clearly seen in the lower prices that have resulted from those fierce negotiations. For the longer term, the regional electricity companies and generators are responding to that competition by actively promoting schemes tailored to customers' needs—schemes such as co-generation and combined heat and power.

We have introduced a spot market for trade in electricity, which determines the price of about £15 million-worth of electricity every day. We are the only country with a market that sets a price for electricity every half an hour, and that has real advantages. It puts pressure on generators to be cost-effective, because they must bid prices to be called on to run and it gives suppliers and customers the right signals about the cost of electricity. They can then plan much more effectively to meet their requirements at the least cost. Our policy is working. Competition has started and it is already having an effect on prices and efficiency.

What is the Opposition's policy? Well, it is rather difficult to answer that. As usual, their policy is full of contradictions, because half the Opposition Members believe in central planning and state intervention while the others realise that privatisation, competition and free markets are popular, even if they do not believe in them.

The first contradiction that I want to highlight in the Opposition's policy is a perfect example of that. The Opposition say that they want a single organisation to be responsible for ensuring security of supply. At the same time, they say that they want more competition. That is a complete contradiction. A single organisation responsible for supply is what I call a monopoly. Generators and suppliers cannot compete if they are controlled by one organisation. Clearly the Labour party does not know what it wants. It thinks that competition is popular, and it cannot give up the desire to interfere and plan the economy.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Will the right hon. Gentleman tell the House why, if it is such a contradiction to have security of supply as an objective, that was the Government's objective for the privatisation of the electricity supply industry throughout the progress of the White Paper and the legislation, and our proceedings in the House? It was dropped only when they were advised by merchant banks that it would make the area distribution companies far more difficult to sell.

Mr. Wakeham: I believe that the Government have maintained a better security of supply through the position that they have created. By virtue of their licence, the regional electricity companies will have to contract for sufficient electricity to meet the demands of their areas. That will be a matter for the regulator to settle. How those demands are satisfied within a competitive position is for them to determine, by competition. We believe that we have improved the position by providing a licence system

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and a competitive market with substantial financial penalties for any company that does not contract for enough supply in the market.

The second contradiction is evident in the Labour party's policies for coal and the environment. It wants to be green; it also wants to be clean. However, it cannot face up to what that might mean for British Coal. Flue gas desulphurisation is not the simple answer. Although it reduces acid rain, it increases carbon dioxide emissions, whereas combined cycle gas turbine plant tackles both problems. Let me point out again that that is exactly the type of plant that is coming forward as a result of our policies.

Of course we need to make British Coal competitive in the new world, and that is why we are restructuring its finances. FGD is not the simple answer, however, and the Opposition cannot avoid the problems.

Mr. Lofthouse: Will the right hon. Gentleman concede that, if FGD is not the whole answer, it is certainly the main answer to the problem of reducing emissions of sulphur dioxide from power stations?

Mr. Wakeham: It is certainly an important part of the answer for coal-burning power stations. I welcome the fact that, under the present plans, 8 GW are likely to be fitted as a minimum; that will enable the industry to compete in the market for a substantial volume of coal up to 1988. From then onwards—and it is a good few years away yet—it must be competitive. In that case, the generators will no doubt fit further FGD by choice.

That is not the end of the list of contradictions in Labour party thinking. Labour is muddled on the question of nuclear power: it wants to close nuclear power stations, but it is outraged that privatisation should have shown the true costs and benefits. Nationalisation buried the costs of generation. Monopolies ensure that customers are paid. The Opposition may complain, but privatisation has now helped to bring into the open some of the issues surrounding nuclear costs. The need to assess nuclear power in terms acceptable to the market obliged all concerned—including the Government—to take a long hard look at the costs of the business.

In the end, it proved impossible to privatise nuclear power without giving the private sector unprecedented guarantees. The increased fuel diversity available from other sources also meant that it was right to postpone the three PWRs beyond Sizewell. Obviously, those decisions had an impact on the Sizewell project. Immediately after my decision on nuclear power last November, I asked Nuclear Electric, the public-sector company set up to operate our nuclear stations, to institute a thorough review of the costs of Sizewell B. A number of questions needed to be addressed.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): If one of the right hon. Gentleman's criticisms of the Labour party is that it does not quantify the cost of nuclear power—I accept that it was hidden under a nationalised industry—why does he not allow the cost of nuclear power to be separately quantified for the consumer? The right hon. Gentleman and his colleagues have been asked to ensure that that be done, but they have refused.

Mr. Wakeham: Under the privatisation proposals, when Nuclear Electric becomes a plc, although the shares will remain in Government hands, unprecedented amounts of information about the cost of nuclear power will be available as a result of our proposals. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will welcome that as a move in the right direction.

As I was saying, a number of questions needed to be addressed. First, what direct effect did our decision have on the capital costs of the station? I recognise that some programme costs that would have been spread over the follow-on stations would have to fall on Sizewell alone and that a single station project faced an increased risk of delay and contractual difficulties. Secondly, could Nuclear Electric still keep to the CEGB's timetable?

Thirdly, given that the capital cost was expected to rise, was the station still a worthwhile public investment? How much would it cost, in terms of pence per unit, to produce Sizewell electricity? In answering that point, it is necessary to take account of the avoidable costs of power from Sizewell. It would be ridiculous to revisit the economics of the station as though no concrete had been laid on the site over the past three years.

Those, then, are the questions. As to the answers, I can confirm that Nuclear Electric's report is a comprehensive piece of work that deals with all the searching briefs of last year. It is for Nuclear Electric to announce the results of its review, and I understand that it will do so tomorrow. However, it has told me that the selective misquotation of some figure is highly misleading. Presumably that is what was intended. I shall therefore arrange for the published material to be made available in the Library of the House.

It may be helpful if I indicate the conclusions of the report that I am likely to make. First, the project is not behind schedule. Rather, it is well in advance of the announced 72-month timetable. Secondly, all the new extra costs revealed by the report are attributed to the decision of 9 November and, in particular, the decision on the remaining three PWRs, which resulted in a saving of public expenditure of about £5 billion. They are not due to cost overruns at Sizewell B.

Thirdly, at the time of the original decision to proceed with Sizewell B, and using the rate of return then applicable, the cost of nuclear-generated electricity was comparable with that from newly constructed coal-fired stations. The new costs do not undermine the original comparison. Fourthly, the important investment decision now, however, is to compare the avoidable costs of completing Sizewell B with the costs of obtaining the same amount of electricity with the most cost-effective alternative, gas. The economics of the two are broadly comparable on the basis of the 8 per cent. public sector rate of return, and there are, of course, other benefits from completing Sizewell in terms of its contribution to the reduction of fossil fuel emissions and diversity.

Dr. Michael Clark: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the completion of Sizewell B is vital if we are to retain the option of having power in the future that will be more environmentally desirable, and also that we have power stations in future that give us insurance against declining fossil fuels?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I confirm that the Government attach the greatest importance to the timely completion of Sizewell B, as a

direct contribution to the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions and as an essential part of maintaining the nuclear option in the United Kingdom.

I say to my hon. Friend, who is Chairman of the Select Committee, that, as well as putting the Nuclear Electric report into the Library of the House tomorrow, I shall write to him with an amplification of the points that I have just made.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): If the Minister is prepared to accept strategic arguments for the retention of the nuclear industry in Britain, why were not the Government prepared to accept strategic arguments for the retention of the coal industry in 1984, when they took only a very short-term view on whether pits were economic or uneconomic at that time?

Mr. Wakeham: Of course we want a thriving coal industry in this country. The Government's strategic view is that there should be a diversity of supply of fuels. That diversity means a thriving coal industry and a quantity of electricity generated by gas, by nuclear and by oil. It is a question of creating the right environment in which those different competing fuels can find their place. I believe that all of them can.

Mr. Dobson: As Nuclear Elecric is publishing its figures tomorrow, will the Secretary of State publish the figures for alternative sources of the same supply? Will he give us the gas and coal figures, or will we still be whistling in the dark on the comparisons?

Mr. Wakeham: I shall give the hon. Gentleman all the figures I can. I recognise that I must give him sufficient figures. Initially, I shall give details of the figures in my response to the Select Committee. No doubt the hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to study the information also.

Contradictions again appear when the Opposition consider the costs of privatisation. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras is addicted to sensationalism, and uses phrases such as "rip-offs" and "scandalous rip-offs". He makes misleading or misconceived comments about estate agents and "friends in the City".

Almost in the same breath, he accuses the Government of giving away the industry. He also accuses us of raising prices to the consumers. Most people recognise that that would enhance the value of the industry. The hon. Gentleman does not realise that, in the market, the scope for manipulating prices at the whim of politicians and bureaucrats is less than in the centrally planned world of the Labour party. What does he mean? Surely he accepts that, to gain proper value for the assests, advice is needed on their value and how to market them. The Labour Government used advisers for similar reasons when the were in power. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman is bringing forward another new policy for the Labour party—that it will seek to buy and sell public assets, if it should ever have the chance, without proper professional advice.

The estate agents that the hon. Gentleman derides are property valuers, whose task is to ensure that the industry's land and buildings are properly valued when the companies are sold. Imagination—a stolen copy of whose presentation document the hon. Gentleman seems to have received—is responsible for staging the presentation of the companies to investors in Britain and overseas. The budget for that has not been finalised, but my Department and the industry will ensure that we get value for money.

Mr. Dobson: The right hon. Gentleman says that the cost has not been decided. Can he confirm that the contract has been let? If so, why is he letting a contract when he does not know how much it will cost?

Mr. Wakeham: The budget has not been finalised. We know that the firm is doing some work for us. It is not the practice of the Government—or, indeed, of a Labour Government—to give individual details of individual contracts. I shall go no further than that, except to say that we shall get value for money.

It is clearly essential that the presentations are made; otherwise, the effort of marketing the industry will be weakened, with clear consequences for the price that the Government will get for it. Opposition Members seem to have their own friends in the City. If, as the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras has suggested, we did not market the industry, we would risk selling it for less than its proper value.

The hon. Gentleman made much of the accountants who are employed by the Government and the industry. Is it too much to expect him to understand that reporting acountants are a legal and regulatory requirement for a public flotation? I fear that it is.

Perhaps that is another example of the contradictions that appear in everything that the Opposition say. I suppose that I should not be surprised at the Opposition, because their policies are full of contradictions. They make lots of commitments, while claiming that they would cost no money. They want lots of competition in electricity, but they also want central planning by a monopoly. They want lots of coal, but no carbon dioxide. Their only consistency is to say what they think people want, and to hope that no one notices the contradiction.

Mr. Dobson: Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that, of the 47 firms advising him on the sale, costing the taxpayer £52 million, I believe, not one is advising him on the interests of the consumers?

Mr. Wakeham: If he understood these things, the hon. Gentleman would recognise that, through the Electricity Act 1989, the Government have given the consumer the strongest ever protection. We have set up a regulator to look after consumers' interests. We have given him statutory powers with which to conduct his work. That is infinitely better protection than has ever existed before. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would give us credit for that, rather than criticism.

The Labour party talks about the price of privatisation. The rest of the world talks about its benefits. What about the price of nationalisation, the price of state control? the eastern bloc knows the price. It is difficult to quantify just how much Great Britain has lost in terms of skills, profits and opportunities for industries in the public sector. Being divorced from the disciplines of the free market weakens incentives. It means a loss of the necessity to control costs, to relate earnings to productivity and to remain competitive.

I shall give a simple example. Under the last Labour Government, the price of electricity to domestic consumers rose to 22 per cent., whereas, in five years of this Government, it fell by 7 per cent. The competitive

[Mr. Wakeham]

pressures that we have placed on the industry are designed to ensure that prices continue to fall. The Labour party says that it has cost £1,000 per family to privatise the industry. That is nonsense——

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): Money for the boys.

Mr. Wakeham: That is nonsense. The industry is worth what it can earn—not necessarily the book value of the assets or some number that has been dreamt up by the Labour party. On the contrary, it is clear that privatisation has brought benefits, and it will go on bringing benefits. The rest of the world knows that. Central planning is discredited everywhere, except by the Labour party. It is well known that the Opposition have no policies. Our policies are sound and successful. I urge the House to reject a return to the past, and to vote for our amendment.

4.42 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): Having listened to the Secretary of State, spent many hours in the Select Committee on Energy investigating the privatisation of the electricity supply industry, and read the subsequent reports, one thing is obvious to me. If all the members of the Select Committee could agree with me openly, I am sure that they would when I say that the Secretary of State and his Department have refused to take note of some excellent advice. I refer to the Select Committee's report of July 1988 on the privatisation of electricity. That excellent report advised—I shall not say that it warned—that the Secretary of State and his Department were moving far too rapidly if they were hoping to produce legislation that would be worth while and efficient and would ultimately benefit the British taxpayer.

The Government stand charged with refusing to take the advice of their own Select Committee on Energy, on which their own supporters formed the majority. I believe that I have advised the House before that it is worth noting that that document saw the light of day only because—unfortunately for some people—Conservative Members formed the minority at one Committee sitting, at which we were to decide whether to investigate the privatisation. It was rumoured—I put it no stronger than that—that the then Secretary of State was not very keen on the investigation taking place and that pressure had been put on certain hon. Members.

Mr. Peter Rost (Erewash): Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that all the Conservative Members who served on the Select Committee were opposed to the inquiry?

Mr. Lofthouse: I am certainly not suggesting that. I am simply saying that, if the Conservative members of the Committee had been present in force that day, it is doubtful whether the investigation would have taken place. However, it did, and the Committee produced an excellent document, which was eventually ignored.

Although the debate is about the price of electricity privatisation, I am sure that the House will not be surprised if I highlight the effect of the electricity privatisation on the mining industry. I have spoken on this subject many times, without having achieved much, but I am as convinced as I always have been of the devastating effect that it will have on the mining industry. I hope that I shall also expose the folly of coal imports, as I have repeatedly done in the House over many years.

Britain has traditionally been self-sufficient in the supply of coal to power stations. However, in the run-up to the privatisation, the electricity generators, backed by the Government, are planning to import large quantities of coal. All current evidence is that that will not only lead to massive job losses in the coal industry, but will increase the trade deficit by up to £1,500 million per year.

A recent report by the Oxford economist, Dr. Terry O'Shaughnessy, for the Coalfield Communities Campaign, shows that, because of balance of payments constraints, every 10 jobs lost in the coal industry could lead to a loss of 30 jobs in the United Kingdom economy as a whole. The question is, should the United Kingdom retain sufficient capacity in its coal industry to meet the needs of the electricity generators, or should it switch to relying on imported coal?

I noticed that, at Question Time this afternoon, the Secretary of State said that maintaining 8 GW of flue gas desulphurisation would be equivalent to 70 million tonnes of coal. If that is the case, and the coal industry is to be run down even to the extent that Sir Robert Haslam has mentioned—I believe that it will be far worse than that—by the time the FGD plants are available and working, this country's coal industry will be unable to meet demand, because we will have closed the pits and sterilised millions of tonnes of coal.

Mr. Wakeham: I know of the hon. Gentleman's deep interest in this matter, and I want to be sure that his recollection of what I said is correct. I said that my understanding is that, with 8 GW of FGD fitted, the coal industry would be enabled to sell up to a maximum of 70 million tonnes of coal per year and to meet the terms of the European directive, which would enable the industry do so for years to come. That does not deal with the CO_2 question or with that of competitive prices, but on the straightforward question of acid rain, 8 GW would, with other measures, enable a target to be achieved. That is what I said.

Mr. Lofthouse: I am grateful to the Secretary of State. Is it not a fact that, if the coal industry is run down, even to the extent suggested by Sir Robert Haslam, by the time the flue gas desulphurisation plants are available for British Coal, our mining capacity will not be sufficient to meet the demand? That will cause a major problem. If, in the short term, we import coal at the expense of the British coal industry, we shall run down our industry to the extent that we cannot meet demand. We shall sterilise millions of tonnes of coal which we shall never be able to mine.

Short-term price considerations suggest a switch to imports. At present, foreign coal at United Kingdom ports costs about £35 a tonne, compared with £42 a tonne for British coal. Only about half of British pits can compete with imports at today's prices. However, there are wider micro-economic considerations.

In his report, Dr. O'Shaughnessy draws on his exhaustive study of the current account balance rate of unemployment, or CABRU as it is referred to. That is the trade-off between the balance of payments deficit and the levels of income and employment. The report shows that, during the past 30 years, there has been a marked deterioration in the United Kindom CABRU. That means

that, to eliminate the trade deficit, unemployment must be much higher than before. The scrapping of capacity in an industry which produces a tradeable commodity, such as coal, has an adverse effect on the country's ability to pay its way internationally. In the long run, Britain can afford to import goods only to the extent that it can sell home-produced goods abroad. If we import coal, it means that we must import fewer other goods and, in turn, domestic demand must be kept in check.

Unless there is a corresponding expansion in capacity in some sectors producing tradeables, the impact of additional coal imports is that unemployment through the economy must be maintained at a higher level than previously. The United Kingdom surplus from trade in energy is already disappearing fast because of a decline in North sea oil and an increase in gas imports Additional coal imports would worsen the position significantly. So far, manufacturing exports have singularly failed to plug the gap.

Dr. O'Shaughnessy examines four scenarios, involving coal imports to power stations of 10 million, 20 million, 30 million, and 43 million tonnes a year. The last is the level to which imports might rise if United Kingdom coal was forced to compete on price alone. The scenario shows that 43 million tonnes of coal a year would lead to 47,000 redundancies in British Coal, a £1,500 million increase in the United Kingdom's annual import bill and an £85,000 increase in CABRU—the increase in unemployment necessary to hold back the trade deficit. Those calculations are based on current coal prices and exchange rates. If, after scrapping United Kingdom capacity, world coal prices rise or the exchange rate weakens, the unemployment cost to the economy as a whole could be 30 jobs for every 10 jobs lost in the coal industry.

The main technical barrier to increasing coal imports is the limited capacity of the ports suitable for use by the power generators—I am sure that we shall hear more about that later in the debate—although proposals for new facilities on the Humber, Tees and Thames and at Milford Haven are at various stages. The report argues that the Government should take advantage of the temporary limits on ports capacity. If Britain is faced with paying more for energy imports, it will be difficult to resist a fall in the exchange rate and further inflationary pressures. The sensible step is to reassess the consequences of the headlong rush into coal imports.

References have been made to the flue gas desulphurisation programme. FGD is a process by which sulphur dioxide is removed from the waste gases produced by burning fossil fuels. Unless it is removed, large quantities of SO_2 cause acid rain. The United Kingdom is the largest emitter of SO_2 in western Europe and one of the largest exporters of SO_2 emissions to other countries. In 1987, 86 per cent. of the United Kingdom's SO_2 emissions resulted from electricity generation. FGD removes about 90 per cent. of the sulphur from the waste gases.

Under the European Community large combustion plants directive, which was agreed in June 1988, the United Kingdom is committed to reducing its SO_2 emissions from existing plants by 20, 40 and 60 per cent. of its 1980 emissions by 1993, 1998 and 2003 respectively. The CEGB estimated that compliance with the directive would require a 12 GW programme of FGD retrofits, costing £1·8 billion at 1989 prices. If we are to get anywhere near meeting the directive by the agreed years, we need a programme of 12 GW. If we fail to do that and if we are to meet our electricity demands, we cannot avoid importing a large amount of low-sulphur coal. That is the decision facing the Government.

Are the Government prepared not to further encourage investment in FGD by the private electricity companies? The chief executives of both National Power and PowerGen told the Energy Select Committee that they will make a purely commercial judgment, whatever the effect on our own natural energy resources. They suggest that it will be necessary for British Coal to reduce its prices by £5 or £6 a tonne less than imported coal to finance the retrofitting. That is an impossible task for British Coal. Despite all its recent achievements, it could never achieve that.

The Government must make the decision. Are they prepared to extend their programme to run down the natural resources of coal to the extent that millions of tonnes of coal will never be mined, so that eventually we have to rely on our foreign competitors to meet our demands? That is not a wise policy.

On 7 June 1990, the Energy Select Committee, on which I have the privilege to serve, produced a report entitled, "The Flue Gas Desulphurisation Programme". I do not want to detain the House too long, but the report is up to date and the House should have it brought to its attention. Paragraph 56 of that report, headed "The Coal Industry" says:

> "The major issue arising from this Report is clearly the impact of the generators' plans on British Coal and the coalfield communities. Even if, as the Government states, it is entirely a matter for the generators how much British coal they use, a substantial decline in their purchases would have important consequences which would be matters for Government, including both the financial costs and the social costs of pit closures and the future security of energy supplies."

Paragraph 57 states:

> "A balance will need to be struck between, on the one hand, the interest of consumers in cheap electricity prices and of the Treasury in the maximum possible proceeds from privatising the ESI and, on the other hand, the long-term interests of the coal industry and the coalfield communities. In particular, private sector generators cannot be expected to take account of national interests, and pit closures are irreversible: deep-mined coal capacity cannot be turned on and off like a tap. We are not convinced that the Government has yet faced up to the dilemma which confronts it over the future of Britain's coal industry."

Emphasised in bold is the observation:

> "It is essential that these issues are not side-stepped. As a priority the percentage of electricity that will be generated using British coal in 2003 should be appraised. In the light of this, of the increased use of gas and of the freeze in the nuclear programme, the effect of limiting FGD to the 8 GW proposed should be evaluated with regard to the possibility of tightening up limits on emissions; the restrictions it will place on British coal in the absence of other clean-burn technology."

I hope that the Secretary of State will, unlike his predecessor, give serious consideration to that report.

The Government should reassess their policy on the production of electricity by nuclear power. The privatisation of electricity has highlighted the unknown costs of nuclear power. No one who has given the matter recent study would disagree. We know that research and development expenditure on the fast breeder reactor programme alone totalled £4 billion at 1988 prices. The disastrous decision was made to order four different AGR devices from different consortia when there was scarely sufficient expertise to justify one.

[Mr. Lofthouse]

For many years, the public have been told that the cheapest form of electricity generation is nuclear power, but we all know that that claim has gone out of the window. Either there has been a disastrous mistake or it is deliberate policy to market nuclear. I hope that it is the second, and that, in making the case for nuclear, the Government have kept its true cost from the public and from the House.

All the expert evidence given to the Energy Select Committee's recent inquiry confirmed that the true cost of muclear, including decommissioning, is unknown. I believe that no one can honestly come along and say—no one has yet—"Yes, including decommissioning costs, this is what electricity generation by nuclear power will cost."

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): I am well aware that the hon. Gentleman follows such matters very closely. He always presses the case for the coal industry with great conviction, but can he really sustain his argument about the non-availability of information on nuclear costs? I have a copy of a document entitled, "Projected Costs of Generating Electricity from Power Stations for Commissioning in the Period 1995-2000" published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, based on 18 countries in the OECD. The report contains a mass of information on nuclear generating costs.

Although it does not necesarily come out unequivocally in favour of nuclear power, its most significant conclusion is:

"The nuclear advantage in the reference case persists, for most countries, at common load factors for coal-fired and nuclear plants well below those assumed. However, the expectation which was shared by a number of countries in 1985, that the total cost of nuclear generation would be less than the fuel costs of coal-fired generation, no longer exists in any country covered in this study."

The report concludes that assumptions about nuclear and conventional generating costs depend entirely on predictions made about load factors, discount rates and fuel costs. As the report points out, it is difficult to arrive at any general conclusions on that issue.

Mr. Lofthouse: That was the point I was making—that no one really knows the true costs. I notice that the report does not mention decommissioning costs.

Sir Ian Lloyd: It does.

Mr. Lofthouse: If so, I apologise. Nevertheless, the hon. Gentleman's points do not differ in any way from those that I made. The experts who presented evidence to the Select Committee all agree that it was not possible to estimate the true costs.

If the Government fail to take action on flue gas desulphurisation and to support the British coal industry over the next few years while FGD plants are installed —which I believe should be to the extent of 12 GW—a further 41 collieries, employing more than 35,000 men, will be lost. If one adds others involved, such as those in workshops and administration, total job losses could reach 50,000. If one then allows for the knock-on effect on other industries and services, the final job losses in coalfield areas could number 100,000 between 1995 and 2003. If mining communities are to be destroyed in that way, the Government will have a major obligation to prepare and encourage alternative industries in those communities, before they are wiped out.

5.7 pm

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse), because he always defends the coal industry sincerely and effectively. I agree with much of what he said, but I shall take a different tack on another aspect of energy in the few words that I say.

The Government have a proud record on privatisation, starting with that of council houses. Although that was opposed when first suggested by the Government, it is now accepted by the majority of people and is now the official policy of Opposition parties.

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, the Government also privatised British Airways and the British Airports Authority, both of which subsequently expanded. The Government privatised British Steel, British Telecom and British Gas, and all three have become more profitable and found more money for investment. Those industries have grown, offer more secure jobs, and are in a better state than they were in public ownership.

Despite all the controversy surrounding the privatisation of the water industry, it too is gearing itself up for the investment that is demanded by those having an interest in the environment. Those and many more privatised industries will not be returned to social ownership under a Labour Government, if there should be one, because the Opposition know that to return them to public sector ownership would be neither desirable, popular nor economic good sense. Nor would it win votes or elections.

In all the areas that have been privatised, there has been initial opposition, yet as soon as the privatisation process is over and the arguments have settled down, in every case private companies have been accepted and it has also been accepted that they are more effective and efficient than before. The same will be true of electricity privatisation when it is completed.

We know that privatised industries work better. The staff are better motivated, they have better rewards, and they are more ambitious for the success of their industry that they were before. The privatisation of electricity is a major undertaking. It is a strategic industry—the base for so many other industries. If we do not have a proper power industry, we cannot have manufacturing and many of the other industries on which we rely.

Electricity will be the largest of all the privatisations and the most complex. It has many constituent parts, all of which have to go into the private sector. So far, progress has been remarkable. Staff have been allocated to their now companies. Assets have been divided and allocated and new plcs have been created and are working: generators, a grid company and distribution companies.

Most remarkable of all, the privatisation programme is going ahead on schedule. I pay tribute to the Secretary of State, the other Ministers and staff at the Department of Energy for keeping to a tight schedule, despite the many squalls that would attempt to blow them off course.

The morale of staff in the electricity industry is high, contrary to predictions and expectations, and I know from my personal contacts with them that they are looking forward to having greater freedom to operate the

companies and the industry in a way that they can predetermine. I have confidence that when the stock of the privatised electricity companies is sold off, there will be a successful launch. I am sure that most, if not all, Conservative Members will become shareholders, and I have a shrewd suspicion that many Opposition Members will become shareholders, too.

What about the benefits of privatisation? We should pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Parkinson) for the way in which he contrived to bring competition into the privatisation of the electricity industry in a variety of ways. Competition was the catchword, and he was determined not to privatise the electricity industry as one giant monolith, as had been done with gas. It is a credit to him that the electricity industry was broken down into so many constituent parts, and that competition was encouraged in that way.

There will be many alternative sources of supply. There will be a non-fossil fuel quota, which will admittedly be protective for the nuclear industry, but it will also encourage alternative energy sources—renewable and benign —to generate and put their share of electricity into the grid.

I believe that the greatest benefit of privatisation is cost transparency, which the Secretary of State and the hon. Members for Pontefract and Castleford and for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) mentioned. As a known supporter of nuclear industry, I still welcome cost transparency, which has shown that nuclear costs are high. I support the nuclear industry, not only because I used to think that it was a form of cheap electricity, but because I thought that we had—and I still think this—an obligation to find sources of electricity for future generations, apart from burning fossil fuels, which are declining every year and some of which will be needed in years to come as premium fuel for aviation and road transport.

Therefore, as a scientist, I saw the need to develop a new energy source, and I thought that nuclear electricity was that new source. Twenty years ago—and until 20 months ago—we were told that nuclear energy was cheap and we believed it. I do not think that I am making myself appear to be the only gullible person in the House or in the country by saying that I believed it. There was so much propaganda telling us that nuclear was cheap, from so many different sources, that many people thought that it must be true. Now we know that nuclear is not cheap, but I am delighted—I share equal delight with the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford—to find out a cost that is closer to the truth, even though we do not know the 100 per cent. truth. The cost that we are now being given is closer to the truth.

I must tell the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford and other hon. Members in the so-called coal lobby that it is not appropriate for them to rejoice at the nuclear industry's discomfort and to complain that the effects of privatisation on the coal industry are unfair or undesirable. We must have not only equality of cost transparency, but equality of consequence.

What are the effects of privatisation on costs? We know that in the nuclear industry high costs are associated with decommissioning and the back end of the fuel cycle. The inclusion of such costs in the prospectus for the sale of the nuclear industry, along with other generating stations, under the umbrella of National Power, was known to depress the price of that grouping, and was thought to make it unsaleable at a price that would benefit the taxpayer. Therefore, the Secretary of State made the right decision to withdraw nuclear electricity from National Power.

Of course, there were consequences for the nuclear industry. It meant that the family of PWRs that were to be built would no longer be built, because the nuclear industry stayed in the public sector and public funds were not available for that development. For the sake of the taxpayer it was right that the nuclear element was taken out of National Power, because that way we shall get the best price for National Power and we shall satisfy the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras by ensuring that taxpayers get a good deal.

The coal industry will suffer under privatisation to some extent, but it will suffer anyway for environmental reasons. The suffering caused to the coal industry by the present environmental regime is exacerbated by the fact that privatisation is taking place at the same time. Privatisation will put pressure on costs. As the electricity industry is privatised and competition introduced, the generators will want to buy coal at cheaper prices and obtain contracts at keen prices. The price will be forced down, as the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford said. One consequence of trying to buy coal at cheap prices may well be the importation of coal. I do not welcome that any more than the hon. Gentleman did, but there has been a massive increase in productivity within the coal industry in the past four years and there is every reason to believe that during the next three or four years productivity will continue to increase until British coal can compete quite effectively with imported coal.

As regards sulphur dioxide, of course, burning British coal, which has a higher sulphur content than some imported coals, means that sulphur dioxide will go into the atmosphere, and flue gas desulphurisation is essential to bring that under control. If the electricity industry had not been privatised, the nationalised industry mught have put in more flue gas desulphurisation and might have put in the 12 GW that the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford called for. It seems that the privatised industry will put in only 8 GW, which will have an adverse effect on burning British coal.

As the Secretary of State mentioned, while it has been decided to burn more gas and while coal/gas price ratios remain at the preset level, the use of coal will probably decline at the expense of gas. Gas, however, will not stay at its present volume or price for long. Gas prices will rise and gas reserves will be depleted. We shall need to burn more coal. At that time coal will be cheaper. I share the concern of the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford that if we are to see a dip in the demand for coal now and if we are to anticipate a rise in the demand for coal in future, it is essential not to allow our coal reserves to be sterilised so that we cannot get at them when we need them.

As for carbon dioxide—the greenhouse gas that creates the blanket in the upper atmosphere that is responsible for global warming—we cannot get rid of it, whatever we do. We could scrub it out in the flues, but the cost would be enormous. We have to accept that coal produces greenhouse gases. If we are to burn more coal, we must try to get the maximum amount of energy out of the coal that we burn, thus producing less carbon dioxide per megawatt of electricity produced. To do so, we have to continue to invest in coal-burn technology and in combined cycles. We must also, as my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash

[Dr. Michael Clark]

(Mr. Rost) constantly tells us, invest more in combined heat and power. If we want to burn more British coal yet stay within the European directives on acid rain, we must have coal-burn technology—perhaps fluidised bed, or the process that is being developed at Grimethorpe.

For the sake of both the British coal industry and the environment, I call upon the Secretary of State for Energy and his Ministers to consider carefully how much money should be expended on coal-burn technology. It would be a two-sided reward. We could protect both our indigenous coal industry and our environment by investing in coal-burn technology.

In due course I shall propose—I believe that my proposal will be well received—that the Select Committee on Energy holds an inquiry into coal-burning technology and recommends what technology should receive priority and the type and volume of funding that would be necessary. I have every reason to believe that the Select Committee will agree unanimously to hold such an inquiry.

As gas volumes decline and as gas finds in the North sea become rarer, market forces will push up the price of gas. Eventually, coal and nuclear will come back into their own. The market forces that will allow the nuclear industry to make a comeback in due course will, before then, give a boost to indigenous British coal. Both fuels have a future, but it is right that both fuels should determine their own future within a proper financial environment that takes account of price, markets and competition.

5.23 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): It is interesting to follow the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark), given his professional background and his present responsibilities. I pause to reflect on the link between a pair of his statements. The hon. Gentleman said that he was a late convert to the view that the nuclear industry was expensive, both relatively and absolutely. He knows that my colleagues and I have advanced that argument for a long time and that one of the industry's greatest defects is that practical one, as well as the other ethical defects.

I ask the hon. Gentleman to reflect whether he might similarly be wrong about his present absolutist view that privatisation will benefit industry. An issue that most appeared to affect his constituents in recent years was the sale of local authority homes in Rochford. The proposal that they should be moved out of local authority control met great opposition from his constituents when his Conservative colleagues on Rochford district council put it forward. I wonder whether in time the hon. Gentleman may come to realise that some of the Government's privatisation measures are not as popular or as justified as he may now think.

I welcome the hon. Gentleman's intention to ask the Energy Select Committee to examine the implications of coal-burn technology. Such a report will be well worth while. I also share his view that we are likely to invest far too little in flue gas desulphurisation. One consequence of the direction that the electricity industry is taking is that we may do too little about FGD, which is greatly to be regretted.

The hon. Gentleman knows that my colleagues and I have approached previous debates on this subject from the point of view that we do not oppose privatisation per se. We do not oppose the change of ownership, but question the practice of it and the motivation for it. We have consistently argued that the Government's intention to privatise the electricity industry was more for dogmatic reasons than for benefit to customer reasons—more for private good than because it was publicly bad. As we watch the advertisements on our television screens, aimed in particular at peak time viewing during the World Cup, but also at other times, we see that the Government have created a new industry in the private sector that already appears to spend money in a most unjustified way which undermines many of the Government's arguments that the industry will be more effective in the private sector.

This is an odd debate because it takes place in the knowledge that tomorrow Nuclear Electric will make an announcement about the cost of Sizewell B. I intend nonetheless to spend a few moments now on the nuclear industry in the context of the privatisation of electricity, since more important questions will have to be answered about the nuclear industry in the near future. Will the Under-Secretary of State for Energy tell the House when he winds up the debate whether the Secretary of State is to make a statement on behalf of the Government in response to Nuclear Electric's announcement tomorrow? Will he also ask his colleagues, in particular the Secretary of State, whether there is to be a formal request from his Department for a debate on the cost of Sizewell B to be held in Government time? It is a matter of significant public expenditure, on which there should be a proper debate.

We do not need to debate the matter this week; I should prefer the debate to be held after we have had an opportunity to consider the report. I welcome the announcement that the report will be made public. However, the Government should make a statement tomorrow, announcing that there will be a debate in Government time about Sizewell B and the implications for the nuclear industry.

The nuclear industry was the only matter that was allowed to interfere with the privatisation of the electricity industry. Originally, all the stations were to be privatised; then it was decided to keep the Magnox reactors in the public sector. That decision was attacked at the time by the chairman of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority as "terribly, terribly messy". When nuclear plants were withdrawn from the privatisation programme, it became possible that we might see the real cost of nuclear power. Nuclear plants were withdrawn from the privatisation proposals when it was realised that they would become a financial albatross round the neck of an industry that the Government wished to privatise.

My colleagues and I argued in Committee and at the time of the announcement that it would have been better if the Government had said, "For heaven's sake, stop now," rather than commit the mistake that Governments of both parties have made since the war, on various issues, of continuing to spend and spend instead of being brave and pulling the plug early on. Nuclear plants are essentially uneconomic, as the French are now discovering. To build one plant of one type is even worse madness, because economies of scale are lost. We know all about the delays at Dungeness. There may be costs of delay at Sizewell, too. If the figures are right, in 1987 the cost of

Sizewell B was £1,691 million. Now we could be talking about £2·5 billion. Some estimates put the cost of Sizewell B at well over £3·5 billion.

There will be additional costs. The loss of the rest of the family of four reactors which was originally proposed is calculated to add about £350 million. Although I have not read it extensively, the clear evidence of people such as the chief executive of the PWR project group of Nuclear Electric at the Hinkley inquiry was that, if the company did not proceed with building a family of PWRs, the investment in Sizewell B would become extremely doubtful.

The hon. Member for Rochford will confirm that the Select Committee has been extremely critical of the Department of Energy for allowing the cost of the nuclear industry to get out of control. There is no cross-party dispute about that. The already sharply increased costs call into question whether construction is any more justified.

Only last month the Secretary of State said two things about Sizewell B—that the future of nuclear power in Britain depended on Sizewell B being completed "successfully" and "on time". No doubt tomorrow he will respond more particularly as to whether it will be on time. He said that, so far, his understanding is that it will be. We shall see. But I wonder whether it is not already possible to say whether it will be completed successfully, and, more importantly, I wonder whether it will not be an increasing and haemorrhaging cost on the public sector which makes it economically unjustifiable by any criterion.

It almost goes without saying that if Sizewell B has failed economically, it is continuing to fail environmentally. The environmental danger and criticisms, in addition to the economic criticisms, are making Sizewell B a public sector white elephant the like of which we have not seen for a long time.

The other questions which the Government must answer concern the new structure of the area boards. They have been given the duty of keeping the lights on—a front-line responsibility—but it appears that PowerGen and National Power are now negotiating with big customers behind their backs and behind the scenes. It is quite clear that the area boards are under pressure to sell as much as possible instead of encouraging energy efficiency.

One of our underlying criticisms of Government policy is that it is all geared to selling energy. Why else are we sitting at home and seeing on our television screens adverts for electricity in between World Cup matches? Why is there so much promotion of the use of something that we should be trying to conserve? If we are aiming for across-Government environmental policy, we should consider whether it is justifiable to spend so much money on advertising, in addition to the money that is being spent on other matters outlined by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson).

The Minister may remember that in Committee my colleagues tabled an amendment calling for least cost planning, but it was rejected. It is still perfectly proper to suggest that generators should have to show that extra demand could not be met through efficiency measures before they should be allowed to expand.

Much more recent press cuttings from only last month show that National Power has failed to satisfy a Department of Energy investigation into complaints from the distribution companies that it has engaged in unfair pricing tactics to win industrial power business. I wonder whether the area electricity boards' complaints should not be dealt with much more properly by the Government, not simply by being investigated by the Department of Energy but by the Department saying what it proposes to do about those entirely justified complaints.

I am not sure whether the Government can yet be satisfied that National Power and PowerGen will be able to resist the threatened Monopolies and Mergers Commission inquiry. They are at risk because, had the Government been committed to really privatising them they would not have been allowed to achieve such a dominant position. The privatisation of electricity is not a real privatisation; it is an expensive privatisation, but it is also a falsified and distorted one and no one should try to delude the public about that.

We have a substantial concern that the Government are directing energy at the expansion of one sector of the industry rather than taking measures to which they are publicly committed but on which we have seen no action.

Last year the Secretary of State told the world energy conference:

"Energy efficiency is the single most cost-effective response to the efforts to limit carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuels.".

Although the Government's evidence to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change suggests that it is possible to reduce spending by 60 per cent. through cuts in fuel use, in written answers they still quote a reduction of only 20 per cent. Energy efficiency is still not a sufficiently high priority.

When one compares the money spent on research and development in the nuclear industry with that spent on renewables, the proportions are incredibly distorted. More than 80 per cent. of money spent on energy research and development is spent on the nuclear industry and less than 10 per cent. is spent on renewables. One consequence of that distortion is that we are developing inadequate use of the most environmentally acceptable energy opportunities.

The victims of the privatised electricity industry will be those who are most vulnerable and find it most difficult to pay. People who live in rural areas will lose all protection after five years and it looks as though the costs will then escalate so as to discriminate against and harm many of our most remote and threatened communities.

Finally, a large proportion of our elderly citizens rely most on electricity. They are threatened with ever-increasing electricity prices. The Minister will know that I regularly table questions reflecting the concern of many peope about the difficulties encountered by elderly people in paying for protection from cold and illness in the winter. We have to assess privatisation by its benefits or disbenefits to the consumer. It seems that a great deal of money is being spent on feather-bedding the nuclear industry which is no longer economic and giving big profits to the private sector in a distorted free market without any great benefit to the consumer. It is an enormously wasted opportunity.

5.38 pm

Mr. Peter Rost (Erewash): I am particularly pleased to follow the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) because I suspect that he may agree with much of what I have to say.

Although I welcome the debate, I am rather surprised that the Opposition seem too eager to shoot themselves in the foot yet again. I declare an interest as an energy

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consultant. Those of us who are aware of what is happening in the real world can report two particularly exciting developments in recent weeks. Even during the transitional period when the electricity industry has not yet been privatised, these two major events are evolving before our eyes—at least for those of us who wish to see.

First, real competition has broken out and is resulting in lower-price contracts for those who need them most—the large energy users. For too many years, our industries have been penalised with far too high electricity prices compared with our competitors abroad. Competition is working. Lower-price contracts are being signed and all the fears that were expressed by Opposition Members, industry and the CBI only a few months ago have disappeared. We are not hearing a word about the suggestion that energy prices to large users would rise; on the contrary, the silence is deafening. Some of us know that the first contracts in the competitive market have resulted in lower energy prices for heavy energy users, who will benefit most and whose lower energy costs will benefit the British economy most.

The second exciting development is that, for the first time, our electricity industry has suddenly become aware of the new technologies that are available, which produce electricity not only more cheaply but more cleanly and more efficiently, with less environmental destruction.

Those are two most significant changes. I am disappointed that the Labour party still appears to be stuck in a socialist rut with the dogma of nationalisation, whereas the contrast is already emerging. Instead of trying to pretend that it is not happening, Labour Members should have the courage to admit that the state monopoly of electricity led to the high-cost nuclear option. They tried to hide that high cost and only privatisation brought it to the surface. The state monopoly of electricity led to wasteful planning, the mismanagement of national assets and dirty, inefficient coal burn. Flue gas desulphurisation was fitted not by the nationalised CEGB but because of privatisation. It may not be enough for Labour Members, but it is happening now, whereas it did not happen before.

The national electricity monopoly rejected energy efficiency options such as combined heat and power. It rejected the combined cycle and the gas turbine, which at least would have given diversity of supply, cleaner energy production and lower-cost electricity. It rejected the fluidised bed, which would allow us to burn British coal cleanly. The private sector, preparing for privatisation, and the distribution companies such as East Midlands Electricity are proposing to build smaller coal-fired power stations, which will burn coal more cleanly and efficiently.

The nationalised industry was not interested in that. It did not start promoting renewable energy such as wind power. That is now happening thanks to the Government's renewable energy tranche, to which they are giving special encouragement, and partly thanks to the distribution companies and the producers, PowerGen and National Power, which are interested in investing in and promoting renewable energy. It certainly did not happen before.

The nationalised industry did not lead to lower and more competitive prices to British industry, but prices are lower now. It certainly did not do much to provide consumer protection. That is the contrast. We are now beginning to see the increased application of energy efficiency in the production of electricity.

I return to the important contribution that co-generation, combined heat and power, can make. The nationalised CEGB rejected that option. In a few days' time, I shall visit yet another of the new combined heat and power installations at Heathrow airport. It is saving a huge amount of energy for the BAA and is therefore helping the environment. That installation will have a good rate of return. I have visited other industrial combined heat and power installations, as has my hon. Friend the Minister, at British Sugar and Tunnel Refineries. There has been a surge in interest in co-generation in industry. Every day, one reads in the technical press announcements of new plants being constructed by industry, which will save energy, reduce fuel costs and save the environment. If he has not already done so, my hon. Friend the Minister should visit Trust House Forte, which is installing small combined heat and power plants at its motorway service stations and hotels. It is getting a three-year pay back on its investment and halving the amount of fuel consumed. That is all happening under privatisation; it certainly did not happen before.

The increased use of municipal waste in energy production will improve energy efficiency and reduce environmental pollution. The House may be aware that we are still bottom of the league for turning waste into useful energy. We still dump our waste in holes, pollute the water supply and create the risk of pollution and danger from methane explosions instead of doing what other European countries have done for many years—using municipal refuse as a valuable and cheap fuel. We convert only 3 per cent. of our huge volume of industrial and municipal waste into useful energy. France converts 25 per cent. and Denmark, the Netherlands and West Germany convert 30 per cent. at clean incineration plants, which produce electricity and hot water for district heating. In Sweden, the figure is 40 per cent. The figure in Britain is still 3 per cent., but projects are coming forward, thanks to privatisation and to the Government making refuse a renewable energy source. Those projects will produce useful energy such as electricity and hot water from refuse instead of polluting the environment with it.

I remind my hon. Friend the Minister—I am sure that he is aware of this—that converting refuse into energy is the only technology that produces a net reduction in global greenhouse gases. Although burning refuse produces carbon dioxide, it also burns the methane—a far more damaging greenhouse gas—that would otherwise be released from landfill for the next 20 or 30 years. Even if the methane from landfill is tapped for energy production, as it is on some sites, only 10 per cent. of it can be used. The remainder goes into the atmosphere, and it is a far more damaging greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide. If that refuse is burnt, other fossil fuels are displaced that would otherwise have to be burnt to create that electricity.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I entirely endorse the hon. Gentleman's view about the environmental importance of burning refuse to create energy, but does he accept that one of the problems is that we have not converted the public to the view that that process is not environmentally harmful? Work must be done to win the argument so that we can change the balance of resource use.

Mr. Rost: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for making that intervention, because it helps me to make my next point. My colleagues in the Department of Energy and the Department of the Environment have an important role to play. A helpful new clause in the Environmental Protection Bill obliges local authorities to find sensible ways of disposing of their refuse, rather than dumping it in holes, and to promote waste recycling. I hope that we shall ensure that that happens. I look forward to seeing progress in that important direction.

I have referred to the way in which more efficient energy production is taking over. Of course, we can meet our global greenhouse targets by the year 2005, and freeze the amount of emissions that will be released, but we can do much more. We can bring about a net reduction of global greenhouse gases by encouraging greater efficiency of use and of energy production. By increasing thermal efficiency in the way in which fuel is used in our power stations, we can make a much bigger contribution than in any other way to reducing global greenhouse gases. To meet, as we must, the targets that the world will demand—they are stricter than the targets so far announced by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister—we shall have to do more than just encourage energy efficiency. We shall have to encourage greater improvements in the efficiency with which we convert energy.

The fact that this is not a costly option does not seem to have got across to many people. Blood, sweat and tears are not involved. It will not be a penalising technology. On the contrary, as I said, industries are to have a pay-back period of two or three years. Energy savings of 25 to 30 per cent. a year will result from combined heat and power. It will reduce our national energy bill, thereby improving competitiveness and productivity. Rather than being a costly option, it will result in savings.

I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department of Energy will accept that, although industrial co-generation is cost-effective and taking off, the big contribution can come only when there is more city combined heat and power and when the waste heat from power stations is used to displace the fossil fuels that we now burn to provide space heating. City combined heat and power is marginally economic at present, but it needs a stronger market signal. I hope that progress will be made —we have started in Sheffield—to get more core city schemes going. They will be a major contribution to energy savings and to reducing global greenhouse gases. If that can happen in many towns and cities in Europe, it is time that we got on with it. In due course, it must happen.

I should like my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department of Energy to give an annual tranche of expenditure to city combined heat and power, just as they do for renewable energy, and to get one or two cities a year to apply that system. By accepting that combined heat and power will displace the fossil fuels that would otherwise have to be burnt, thereby creating pollution, and giving that tranche, we shall give a slightly stronger marketing signal to the consortiums of local authorities, private enterprise and distribution companies—such as those in Leicester—which are keen to proceed.

The Government have taken a major initiative in giving renewable energy an opportunity to get into the marketplace, even though it is not competitive when compared with gas and other fossil fuels. The Government believe that it is important to have diversity of supply and that that initiative will result in less pollution because carbon dioxide will not be released. The 300-odd projects about which information has flooded into the Department of Energy, overwhelming my right hon. and hon. Friends —I do not think that they expected such an enormous response—show the potential for the production of 2,000 to 3,000 MW in the next few years. They should be allowed to go ahead, provided that they can produce cheaper electricity than nuclear power.

It would be difficult for the Government to justify rejecting projects involving renewable energy sources if they offered cheaper electricity than nuclear electricity. Nuclear energy has been given a special, continuing role on environmental and diversification grounds. The same should apply to renewables.

I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department of Energy will plead with the other European Energy Ministers and the European Commission to ensure that an eight-year cut-off point does not apply to subsidising non-fossil fuels. That cut-off point is intended to stop us subsidising the nuclear industry for more than eight years, but the baby has been thrown out with the bath-water, because renewable energy projects have been undermined.

I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will take a tough line in Europe and persuade our colleagues that it is not in the long-term interests of a global energy strategy to discourage renewable energy production. There should be a European policy that allows each member state to develop a tranche of renewables, which could be subsidised if we wished, in the interests of environmental protection and diversity of supply. That would be exempt from the 1992 competitive rules, which are the reasons why the Commission allowed us to subsidise renewable energy only over an eight-year cycle.

Mr. George T. Buckley (Hemsworth): The hon. Gentleman praised market forces in the privatisation of electricity, but he now suggests that renewable energy should be given a subsidy. I wish that the Government would make up their mind whether they believe that the operation of market forces will result in cheaper electricity. The hon. Gentleman said that the contracts that are being negotiated for major consumers prove the benefits of privatisation. Will he assure the House that the domestic consumer will also look forward to a substantial price reduction?

Mr. Rost: The hon. Gentleman raised two points. I shall concentrate on the first because that is what I have been talking about. I have not suggested for renewables anything new that has not already been agreed, promoted or proposed by the Government. The Government have provided for a tranche for renewable electricity, which obviously will need to be subsidised, just as with nuclear power and the coal industry. I have not suggested anything that will extend that subsidy. I have merely suggested that, if we give a subsidy to encourage renewables, we should ensure that it goes ahead. If the European Commission imposes an eight-year limit on such subsidies, there will be many projects that will not be bankable for private sector investors.

The European Community should make it a part of its energy policy to do what the British Government have done. It should allow a small proportion of every member state's electricity generation to come from renewables. If member states wish to promote renewables through a form

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of subsidy, they should be allowed to do so. I am not suggesting anything new; I merely propose an extension of what the Government are already doing.

Of course I accept that we want a competitive market in electricity, but we also want to save the environment, and that aim must be an equally important part of our energy strategy. If global warming becomes a serious threat, as scientists are now beginning to argue it will, we may have to do many things, some of which will be far more costly than providing limited support for a marginal amount of electricity generated by wave, wind and tidal sources. I believe that the cost of renewable energy will fall as the technology develops and that it will become competitive. I wholeheartedly support the strategy which, as a result of electricity privatisation, is now going ahead. For that reason alone—leaving aside the other reasons that I have mentioned, such as the promotion of greater energy efficiency—the Government's privatisation of the elec-tricity industry will be seen as one of the most important policy measures that they have introduced in their 12 years in office.

6 pm

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): The speech of the hon. Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) improved as it went along, and given the hon. Gentleman's opening remarks, there was no alternative to such an improvement. If the hon. Gentleman's remarks about the superiority of a privatised industry over a planned approach to energy policy proved anything, it was that it is the hon. Gentleman who does not know what is going on in the real world. He made accusations about the mismanagement of national assets, and laid that at the door of socialism and the nationalised industry; in fact, it is a key characteristic of the Government's madcap privatisation schemes, as we have seen from the electricity privatisation proposals.

I shall concentrate on the consequences of privatisation for Scotland, and particularly for the Scottish coal industry. Given the Government's original intention to privatise nuclear capacity, and as 60 per cent. of Scotland's electricity is nuclear-generated, the future for the Scottish coal industry under private ownership originally appeared bleak. There were so many cheaper alternatives to which the private sector could turn.

There was the nuclear industry itself, which had been subsidised by the Government and the taxpayer for the previous four decades and which the private sector clearly expected to continue to be subsidised on into a privatised future. There was gas-fired generation. There were plentiful supplies of gas from the North sea and elsewhere and the new combined cycle gas turbine plants offered an alternative to coall generation that was not only cheaper but environmentally sound. Then there were the imports of cheap low-sulphur coal from South Africa, Venezuela and Colombia.

In addition, in the private sector's view there were so many problems associated with coal. There were the carbon dioxide and sulphur emissions created by coal generation, and a European directive had set national targets for reductions in such emissions. Expensive technologies were required to clean up coal generation. We are not talking just about flue gas desulphurisation, which, in any case, applies mainly to pits and plants outside Scotland. We are talking about fluidised bed combustion technology, which, if it was applied to the refurbishment of the Kincardine power station, would help to secure the future of the Monktonhall and Frances collieries, at present mothballed by British Coal.

It is against the background of the investment needs of the coal industry and of the cheaper alternatives available to the private sector that the key attitudes to the coal industry have been struck in recent years. It is against that background, too, that the Scottish industry has all but been betrayed by the Government in their privatisation policies.

A report issued by George Kerovan and Richard Saville at the time of the last general election warned that, if the privatisation of the electricity industry went ahead, all the mines in Scotland, with the exception of Longannet, would be closed down and that the number of miners in Scotland would be reduced to 2,000 or less. At the time of its publication, Ministers dismissed the report as scaremongering and criticised its authors as left-wingers who could not be trusted and who were in any case likely to criticise the Government's privatisation policies. Three years on, the authors have been proved exactly right: Longannet is now the only deep-mined pit surviving in Scotland and there are now fewer than 2,000 miners in my country. The authors have been proved right partly because of the drive toward privatisation by the Government and the electricity industry.

Like many others, I welcome the recent news that Scottish Power has at last made a five-year deal with British Coal that helps to secure the future of the Longannet complex. But I ask the House to examine the timing of that agreement. It came not before but after the decision to pull nuclear plants out of the privatisation. The question has to be asked: would a privatised Scottish Power that still owned Torness and Hunterston B have struck such a deal with British Coal? If Scottish Power had continued to own a massive generating capacity provided by those nuclear stations, would it still have felt it necessary to enter into new agreements with British Coal? I fear that the answer to those questions is no. So long as Scottish Power enjoyed a nuclear alternative, it did not need Scottish coal and, as a private operator, what it did not need it was not prepared to pay for.

Only when Scottish Power was brought face to face with the reality that nuclear generation was uneconomic and could not be privatised, and only when it had to face a future in the free market without Torness and Hunterston B, did it rediscover the value of coal in generating electricity. That explains the five years deal on Longannet struck between British Coal and Scottish Power. It also explains Scottish Power's new willingness to negotiate on the Cockenzie power station, with the possibility of reopening Monktonhall. It is as simple as that. Scottish Power's private need to secure new sources of generation after the nuclear alternative was taken away from it explains the different attitude that it has now brought to its negotiations with British Coal.

What was in the interests of Scotland and the Scottish people or of the United Kingdom as a whole never entered into the equation, which was dominated by the private interests of Scottish Power. That explains Scottish Power's different attitude before and after the nuclear capacity was removed from the privatisation process. That has been the greatest price to be paid for the privatisation of the electricity industry—the loss of any consideration of what

is in the strategic interests of the country as a whole. It used to be called planning, which the Secretary of State told us today belongs to the past.

Private interests have come to predominate. That is why the tremendous potential of the Scottish coalfield has been sadly neglected by a Government bent on privatising and by an industry intent upon lining its own pockets and those of its shareholders. Make no mistake about it: a priceless national asset has been neglected in the privatisation process. The Scottish coalfield has massive resources. In the Musselburgh basin alone, we have workings capable of sustaining 100 years worth of production. Monktonhall could work for 20 years from its current workings. With the appropriate development, both Monktonhall and Frances at Dysart have another 50 years worth of workable coal. Those pits, along with large unexploited coal stocks at Harpendon in Lanarkshire and at Canonbie in Dumfriesshire represent a tremendous national resource which ought to be exploited economically in the national interest—all the more so because Scottish coal is green, environmentally friendly coal with a very low sulphur content. So why is it not being exploited? Why is it being wantonly neglected by the Government and the industry?

The pathetic excuses for the failure to use Scottish coal simply cannot be sustained. We were told that it would cost too much to transport coal from Frances colliery in Fife to elsewhere on the United Kingdom mainland. Yet, in the same breath, the Government tell us that it is not too expensive to transport similar coal from other continents on the other side of the world. We are expected to believe that moving coal more than 3,000 miles is economically more efficient than moving it 300 miles. No one in their right senses would believe such a preposterous proposition. However, that is the present position because of the Government's plan to privatise the electricity industry. The hon. Member for Erewash referred to the waste of national assets, but Scotland's national assets are being wasted as a direct result of the Government's free-market privatisation policy.

One of the great ironies of the whole business of privatisation had been the stark contrast between the Government's attitude in 1984 and their attitude today. In 1984, the iron law of the market was rigidly applied to the coal industry. Uneconomic pits which could not show short-term profitability had to go. The Government came close to waging a civil war with the National Union of Mineworkers to drive that lesson home—and drive it home with a vengeance they did. More than 100 pits were closed, and more than 100,000 miners have gone to the wall. Yet just five years later, the Government have run away from applying the same iron market laws to their beloved nuclear industry.

Nuclear power stations are uneconomic, and they are not profitable. The private sector would not touch them with a bargepole, as everyone is aware. Are those nuclear power stations to close? Is that industry to be decimated? No. Those stations are to be withdrawn from the privatisation process and they are to be propped up, like the economic lame ducks they are, within the public sector.

We can only marvel at a Government who happily write off £1,400 million of debt which nuclear power had cast around the neck of the electricity industry in Scotland, but who baulk at a fraction of that investment in new clean coal technologies that would secure the future of economic exploitation of the massive strategic reserves of Scottish coal. That behaviour is beyond rational explanation, but increasingly the same accusation can be levelled against a range of Government policy. Because of that, the people of Scotland, England and Wales are turning away from the Government and their wasteful polices. The people are turning towards the Labour party—the party which will put the national interests before private interests and the party which will win the next general election.

6.11 pm

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): I hope that the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) will forgive me if I do not refer to Scotland as he did. I want to begin by referring to the Social and Liberal Democrats. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) has disappeared from the Chamber, together with his colleagues. There is not one SLD Member present in the Chamber now. However, I am afraid that that will not stop me saying a few words about the SLD and its policies.

It is one of the SLD's more endearing characteristics that that party shows a degree of muddle and confusion. If ever one day the SLD showed itself to be sharp and incisive, we would all wonder what on earth had gone wrong.

Opposition to the Government's proposals on privatisation was expressed by the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) when he was SLD energy spokesman. In a press statement on 25 February 1988, he claimed, among other things, that privatisation of electricity would be

"a repeat performance of British Telecom and British Gas in that there will be no protection for the consumer . . . and the only result of privatisation so far has been an increase in electricity prices . . . The Government has yet to convince that privatisation on these terms will benefit anyone but the get-rich-quick privateers."

Those views are in sharp contrast to those of his successor as energy spokesman, the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce). In an article entitled "Why I'm buying electricity shares", which appeard in *Liberal News*, the hon. Member for Gordon wrote:

"It is impossible to defend the status quo in the electricity industry. The Central Electricity Generating Board has become a centralised monopoly which is closed, secretive and accountable to no one. The economics of generation and conservation are neither being properly examined or subjuted to market forces."

The hon. Member for Gordon said that on 7 October 1987.

However—this is yet another element of muddle—the SLD green paper "Privatising Electricity", which appeared in August 1988, states openly:

"Social and Liberal Democrats oppose the Government's privatisation plans for the electricity supply industry because they are irrelevant to the problems facing the industry . . . because they will not lead to any significant degree of competition."

As I have said, it is one of the SLD's more endearing characteristics that its members are muddled, and I am only sorry that there is not one SLD Member present to add to that muddle and confusion now.

I want now to consider the Central Electricity Generating Board. If you, Madam Deputy Speaker, were to ask the ordinary man or woman in the street what the CEGB was, most of them would not have a clue. They would probably think that it was a foreign football team. However, the CEGB, which was of course one of the most important bodies in this country, displayed poor accountability and a lack of market discipline and was also

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susceptible to Government interference. It led to enormous over-capacity, as a result of which British consumers have been paying for years for mothballed power stations.

Under privatisation, there will be greater democracy and greater accountability, particularly through the Secretary of State and the director general's office. It might also be worth-while to consider the attitude of some of the trade unions. I beleve that in today's *Times* Mr. John Lyons states that he wanted 10 per cent. of the shares in the industry to be allocated for his members on favourable terms. That shows that Mr. Lyons is very wise. Similarly, Mr. Eric Hammond said:

> "There is scepticism, to say the least, among our members about the moral and practical effects of nationalisation that is ignored by our composites . . . Our members reveal an enthusiasm for the market system and its values that infuriate the sherry party revolutionaries with their model resolutions and conference hall rhetoric."

Those are wise words once again.

When the electricity industry was a nationalised industry, there were difficulties in planning before and after 1974. Reference has already been made to the nuclear industry. In the mid-1960s, a Labour Government commissioned different types of advanced gas-cooled reactor power stations. As a result, those power stations have had many difficulties. As has already been said, 20 years on, one of those stations is running at about 1·1 per cent capacity. That is a poor record.

I want now to consider the concept of business and profit alongside service. The other day I had the misfortune to catch my foot in my telephone cord, which caused the telephone to fall to the floor and burst open. I rang British Telecom and a man came round the next day. I must say that that was very efficient. He put my telephone right in no time. He told me that British Telecom operates as a business today, not as a service.

I thought that that was significant because, apart from anything else, I had to pay for that service. I did not mind doing so, because I had been careless enough to break the telephone and it was right and proper that I should pay to have it mended. However, I can remember that, before the industry was nationalised, if I had done the same thing, it would have taken three weeks for an engineer to appear. It would have been little consolation for me to discover that I would not have been charged directly, but that the charge would have been added to everyone's bill.

I am afraid that time is fast running out, but I want to refer briefly to pollution and the environment. We have heard about alternative sources of energy and about wind farms, tidal barrages and the generation of hydro-electricity. However, all those have their own costs in terms of the environment.

A wind farm is incredibly noisy. No one can live within miles of one. Once the wind speed rises above 30 or 35 mph, the windmills must be stopped to prevent the vanes from blowing off. A barrage across the Severn estuary would have an appalling effect on the wildlife in the estuary and the life forms that depend on the tide going up and down. The Scottish people know the environmental cost of installing hydro-electricity. The River Garry in Perthshire is now almost permanently dry because its water was taken years ago for hydro-electric schemes.

The latest technology—combined cycle gas turbines—is far more efficient than coal-fired power stations. Instead of requiring the hundreds of acres that are needed for the latter, they require only about 15 acres, and have a far shorter lead time. There is no doubt that that is the way forward. If the technology had been adopted some years ago, we would not now be wrestling with all the problems of FGD, which is immensely costly: £700 million is to be spent on the Drax power station.

Nearly 50 per cent. of Sweden's electricity is generated through nuclear schemes. Sweden is now in serious trouble, because the people have recently said that they do not want nuclear power any more, and that it must be phased out by 2005. The Swedish authorities are at their wits' end to know how to produce that amount of electricity without using nuclear power.

There is no doubt that the privatisation of the electricity industry will bring great benefits to consumers and the British public. Therefore, I hope that the House will reject the Labour party's motion.

6.21 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Unlike the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson)—I am sure that he will forgive me—I wish to refer to the texts before the House, and especially to the Government amendment. The amendment refers to

> "internationally recognised benefits . . . rights for the consumer . . . the Government's commitment to the protection of the environment".

Although "internationally recognised benefits" will accrue, they will not benefit the people of Britain, who will see an asset being sold off for far less than it is worth to help an appalling balance-of-payments problem. Government policy—and certainly electricity privatisation—make no contribution to resolving that problem. As for the reference to "rights for the consumer", the Minister cannot deny that consumers are already paying 20 per cent. more for electricity as a result of the Government's privatisation policy than they would otherwise have paid: Opposition Members made that clear in our last debate on this subject.

The Government say that they are committed to the environment. I have long been committed to the environment, and I could spend a long time listing the Government's abject and appalling environmental failures. Sites of special scientific interest have been damaged, international conventions have been ignored and, a mile from my home, an enormous quantity of toxic waste—which should never have come into this country—has been dumped. It has been there for over a year. If the Government allow such poisons to enter the country, they are not fit to be in charge of the environment, and it is a disgrace for them to refer to it.

I detect the stench of corruption to which some of my hon. Friends have referred. I do not need to spell out the details, but let me describe a debate in Budapest in which I took part three weeks ago. It took place in the Hungarian Parliament, and was attended by Prime Ministers and Finance Ministers from eastern Europe. They were educated by the assorted bodies of the European right.

There was a substantial delegation of Conservative Members, who presented a paper advocating privatisation in eastern Europe. To support their argument, they produced a list of all the privatisations that had taken

place in Britain since the Prime Minister took office, in chronological order. At the side, in the same order, was a list of the net proceeds that the Government had received.

I examined the list with great interest. It is not a list that Conservative Members would like to see published in the *Official Report*; it showed, for example, that the net receipts from the sale of the royal ordnance factories was about one tenth of the amount involved in the land fiddles that followed that privatisation, and that the net proceeds from the sale of British Gas amounted to £1·74 billion. That—as my hon. Friends who served on the Committee examining the Gas Bill will recall—is about 10 per cent. of the worth of the industry before it was privatised. When public assets are sold for one tenth of their actual worth, the stench of corruption is strong.

Mr. Rost: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hardy: I will not give way. The hon. Gentleman made an appallingly long speech: he spoke for half an hour, although many other hon. Members wanted to make important contributions. To the best of my knowledge, he has already made that speech three times.

Mr. Rost: For the record, my speech may have been appalling and long, but it did not go on for half an hour: it was 21 minutes.

Mr. Hardy: It seemed like half an hour.

Ministers are carrying out their normal task and saying that we do not need to bother about asset value or what anything is worth, but should merely sell for what we can get in a market where Britain is increasingly less valued. The countries that may provide the purchases know that we have a balance of payments deficit of appalling proportions, and that beggars cannot be choosers. The Government have brought Britain to beggary, and the privatisation of the electricity industry is one example of that.

At the debate in Budapest, I made sure that the assembled gathering was made aware—although I do not like to criticise Britain abroad, and do not do it often—that assets had been disposed of at knockdown value. I also provided a response to the choruses of demands and advice that had been forthcoming from Conservative Members who told eastern Europe: "Dismantle your controls, get rid of regulations, leave your economies to the market force and let our entrepreneurs come and help you."

I suggest that eastern Europeans would be well advised to resist the greedy, salivating entrepreneurs who want their snouts in everyone's gravy trough. I advised them to bear in mind that in any civilised country there must be regulation to protect the community, the consumer, the worker and the environment. The Conservative Members who advised people in Budapest to sell of their assets cheaply and to scrap all their rules would not say that on the hustings in Britain. However, what they said in Budapest they believed, and that belief smells of corruption.

Conservative Members have echoed the cheers in support of the dismantling of a large part of the British coal industry. In my area, there is a blight: hundreds of acres of land have been rendered derelict as a result of the pursuit of greed. Yet, despite the economic blows that the Government have inflicted on that area—despite the ravaging of public sector assets—we are now told by this corrupt Government that my area is one of the least deprived, most fortunate and well-furnished, in a civic sense, and least necessitous areas of Britain.

Coalfield areas that have been robbed blind by the Government are now seeing their prospects being further reduced by this sort of dogmatic privatisation. At the same time, Departments of State are saying that our areas need less help than others. Let us think about those other areas. They include Purpeck, the Isle of Wight, Kent, Sussex, Surrey, Hampshire, Dorset, Wiltshire and parts of the most salubrious areas of outer London, such as Royal Tunbridge Wells and Richmond on Thames. All those areas are now regarded as deprived.

When the shares are sold at knockdown prices, they will not be bought by people in areas such as mine, because they cannot afford them; they will be bought by people in areas that the Government are assisting. That is why we are entitled to say that there is a stench of corruption. That is also why I hope that my hon. Friends will ensure that we maintain our opposition to the Government's disgraceful policy.

6.30 pm

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): The Prime Minister, in her third term of office, has at last started to take some interest in environmental matters. Unfortunately, the Department of Energy, which perhaps has the most to contribute to environmental protection, is preoccupied with this privatisation rather than devoting its time to what it could contribute to protect the environment.

We know that acid rain is a major problem for industrialised countries throughout Europe. Despite being in office for more than a decade, the Government have so far achieved nothing in tackling the problem. Britain is by far the largest producer of sulphur dioxide in Europe. We were about the last to reach an agreement with our European partners on progressive cuts of 20 per cent., 40 per cent. and 60 per cent. by the year 2003. We are way behind other countries in terms of doing something. West Germany has already fitted flue gas desulphurisation units to 40,000 MW of generating capacity—that is, 116 separate units—yet, when the Government leave office, not one of our power stations will have been desulphurised. That speaks volumes for the Government's and the Prime Minister's commitment to the environment.

On global warming, the Prime Minister made a major speech to the Meteorological Office on 25 May and impressively recognised that a major problem confronts the planet. Higher carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere pose the threat that sea levels will rise and, much more important, climatic change across the globe. Having accepted that there is a major problem, the Government's policy is simply stabilisation of carbon dioxide levels by 2003. That implies that, if the Government were returned to office, they would allow carbon dioxide levels to continue to rise—business as usual—and would then leave it to a successor Government towards the end of the century or early next century to try to effect those difficult cuts.

West Germany has a target of 25 per cent. cuts by 2005. The Labour party is committed to stabilisation by the year 2000, which is the policy for most of the European Community. With the privatisation measure, there was an opportunity to do something constructive and substantial

[Mr. Alan W. Williams]

to tackle problems such as global warming. The answers lie in energy efficiency and in the development of renewable sources of energy. However, we know the record of the Energy Efficiency Office and the cuts in its budget. When the privatisation measure was considered in Committee and on the Floor of the House, many amendments were tabled by the Liberal Democrats and by Labour Members, but the Government voted them all down. A major amendment on energy efficiency and the idea of least cost planning was tabled in the other House, but it was voted down.

It is clear that, rather than invest £2 billion, or whatever is the figure now, for Sizewell nuclear power station, a much better use of the nation's resources would be to put that £2 billion towards improving home insulation, district heating schemes and so on. Investment in energy efficiency creates jobs and makes the economy more efficient. Last week, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) made some powerful remarks to that effect. If we invested to save energy use, the whole economy would be more productive and competitive. Energy would be saved and goods would be cheaper. That is the Japanese record, and it is self-evident common sense.

The other way of tackling global warming, which is one of the most intractable environmental problems—by stabilisation of carbon dioxide levels—is not enough. We need drastic cuts during the next century. If drastic cuts are ever to be possible, we must develop renewable sources of energy. According to what I hear from organisations and from what I read in the newspapers, far from encouraging renewable sources of energy, this privatisation measure is faulty.

As the hon. Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) mentioned, when the Department of Energy asked for projects to take the renewable tranche within the privatisation, it was embarrassed by the hundreds of replies that it received. Having got 600 or so projects lined up, it moved the goal posts and changed the 15-year payback to an eight-year payback. If we want renewable sources to make the major contribution that they could to our energy supplies in the next century, we must invest in the same way as we are willing to invest in nuclear power.

The only good thing that has come out of the privatisation measure is the fact that it has introduced transparency to nuclear costs. When people in the City started to examine the costs of decommissioning and the costs of treating nuclear waste and possibly disposing of it, they were horrified. I am relieved and pleased that that aspect has been taken out of the privatisation measure. A 20 per cent. cost escalation at the Sizewell nuclear power station during the past two years has been mentioned. There is no question but that that power station, along with the other three, should be scrapped now.

Hon. Members have heard several contributions about economics and cost of the privatisation—selling £20 billion or £30 billion of assets at knockdown prices. The consumer will have to pay for that. It is my strong belief that the consumer cannot afford this privatisation. Because of imports implications, the country cannot afford it either, and nor can the environment.

6.38 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): In the light of the limited time available, I must dispense with some of the customary niceties in sweeping up at the end of the debate and get straight into the remarks that are necessary for Opposition Members to explain what we find so unsatisfactory about the Government's privatisation of the electricity supply industry.

This privatisation is different from other privatisations in that the industry is being dismantled and reassembled at the same time as it is being privatised. That poses entirely new problems for those guiding the industry not just into the private sector, as on 1 April, but on to the stock exchange and being sold off somehow or other over the next 12 months or two years.

Usually, when selling a company on the stock exchange, five years of audited accounts must be produced as a guide for anyone buying shares. What animal are they buying? Is it fish, fowl, chalk, cheese or whatever? Buyers will not have the benefit of that procedure with this flotation. Anyone wishing to buy shares in an area distribution company will find that it is not the same as the distribution board that existed until 31 March. It is without some of its previous operations, but it has many others. It has the power to generate, but it does not have a monopoly over distribution. When a new housing estate is built in the area, a generating company—or any Tom, Dick or Harry—could bid to put in the wires. There is no automatic monopoly; the company has lost that guaranteed income.

Similarly, when buying a share in a generating company, that will not be the same as simply buying the 70 per cent. coal-fired and oil-fired generating sets that belong to the Central Electricity Generating Board, because the electricity distribution companies can operate in generating and the generating companies can operate in distribution. It is a complete mish-mash of an industry.

Conservative Members may say, "That's fine; that is what we want. We want a mish-mash. We want distributors to be able to generate and generators to be able to distribute. We want distributors to be able to pinch business from each other in the borders or, for example, the North of Scotland Hydro Board to take contracts in south Wales, and so on." That is exactly what they want. What does that mean for the small shareholder who might be inveigled into buying shares? Stockbrokers can no longer say, "Here are the audited accounts for the previous five years. It appears that there will be a gently rising path into the future, which means that we can expect so much capital growth and so much dividend income." Now a new company, of a new kind, is being floated. What sort of protection will be offered to the small shareholder?

The Government could say, "Well, that does not really matter, because we are converting the company not merely into shares but into a sort of granny-bond operation. Whatever the results this year, we can project forward through the inclusion of the retail price index plus x minus y formula." Apart from the fact that that builds inflation into the formula, it is no real protection for the small shareholder because he cannot find any independent advice about new shares that he wants to buy.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): As the hon. Gentleman knows, a large number of people in my constituency work in this most important industry. I

apologise for not having been present for the whole of the debate; I have been in my constituency. Is he aware that the main question asked by people in the industry in my constituency is when will they get their shares? They have complete confidence in the industry and in the privatisation.

Mr. Morgan: The trouble is that that assumes that the shares will be given away at a very low price by writing off two thirds of their book value—and if that can happen once, it can happen again. Where will they get advice on what is the proper and fair arbitration of the current value of the shares as they belong to the taxpayer, and the appropriate value for selling them to the private shareholder? Who will provide that?

A recent heavyweight article in *The Times Business News* stated:

"A few weeks back, a highly-placed executive at one of the country's 12 electricity distribution companies was threatened with court action by the Department of Energy.

His alleged crime was giving an honest review of the prospects for his business, a breach, in the department's eyes, of the Financial Services Act . . . Nothing better reflects the paranoia and uncertainty surrounding electricity privatisation . . .

It was a feature of the water floatation that the FSA was used as an extension of the Official Secrets Act, to plug unwanted—as opposed to Whitehall-sanctioned—leaks."

The problem with this privatisation—it is worse than with any previous privatisation—is that we cannot put a proper value on the industry unless we allow independent comment. The Government are putting a blanket ban on any independent comments that could help small shareholders to decide what is the right price and whether they want to go into the industry as investors.

As far as I am aware, the Government have not yet decided whether to sell any shares in the generating companies to the Sids. Perhaps the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), who has joined the debate at the last minute, has views on that which she may want to make to the Secretary of State. I understand that it might be done by replacement or by tender. The Secretary of State may have views on that which he could express to the House tonight—it is a suitable opportunity—because it is very important to the way that public expenditure on this industry is being thrown around.

We have heard several times tonight about the way in which the generating companies are presenting themselves as the wonderful folks who bring us the world cup and the weather forecast. The world cup sponsorship slots are not just advertisements, they are included in the commentator's references. He might say, "This game is brought to you by National Power," as though the world cup would not be on television were it not for electricity privatisation. Bob Phillips, a sports commentator on my local newspaper in Cardiff, said that it was the most unwanted electricity plug of all time, and I agree.

The blurring of the distinction between what is sponsorship and what is advertising is absolutely appalling. It is part of the drift into sleaze to which we have referred several times. It is impossible to obtain a contract in anything to do with privatisation unless Tim Bell is one's public relations adviser——

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): Ireland beat Romania 5:4 on penalties.

Mr. Morgan: I am glad to hear that.

I am anxious that we should know just how much money is being spent on advertising. It appears that, this year alone, the corporate advertising of National Power, PowerGen, the 12 area distribution companies and the Government in presenting the companies for sale will be well above £50 million. That is creating a whole new class of privatisation junkies—advertising agencies that cannot do without the full-page advertising and newspapers which, in the downturn in commercial advertising, cannot really afford to keep on their journalists unless they take privatisation advertising.

The stockbrokers and merchant bankers—the Kleinwort Bensons, the Warburgs, the Capels and the Cazenoves—are now completely dependent on privatisation proceeds to keep them going during a period of slack business in the stock market and in merchant banking.

What we now need to know is the real purpose and the real priority of privatisation of the electricity supply industry. Will it meet the priorities of the industry? Will it convert the industry into the shape that it should be so that it can answer the real problems that it will face over the next 10 or 12 years—as perceived by Conservative Members, let alone by Labour Members? Will the electricity industry's top priority be competition?

Some Conservative Members probably think that everything should be subject to competition—even, as we heard last week, the very currencies in which we deal. They believe that hard and soft currencies should be the subject of competition when one buys groceries or uses a travel agent. We believe that there are more important priorities in the energy industry—and when it comes to attending international conferences, even the Prime Minister thinks that there are more important priorities than merely competition.

I know that the Prime Minister suffers from her own version of BSE—Boadicea syndrome encephalopathy. She likes to grab hold of the nearest chariot wheels in the conference game. If there is a conference, especially in this country where she can organise it and make sure that she has a starring role, she is in there, fighting for a leading role. She is one of those recognisable types of person who boss their way into being secretary of the best-kept-planet-in-the-galaxy committee. When it comes to global warming, yes, the Prime Minister wants to be there, as long as everybody does what she says. If everybody did what she says, not what she does, we might have a healthier environment for our planet, but we certainly will not have that if we follow what she does.

The Prime Minister has refused to put conservation at the top of the energy industry's agenda, while talking up her role as the person who can solve global warming and acid rain. Having seen that wonderful headline in the *Evening Standard*,

"Maggie's plan to save the world",

the Prime Minister cut the acid rain reduction programme from 12,000 MW to 8,000 MW. However, the *Evening Standard* did not run a headline stating, "Maggie's plan to save two thirds of the world", although it should have.

With all the advertising and the creation of an entirely new class of privatisation junkie, now is the time for the Government to giving serious thought to the real needs of the next 10 years. Is it rational to plan our use of energy and the way in which we sell energy, with a view to the global environment, or is it simply a question of selling off our energy industry to create a new class of small shareholder?

[Mr. Morgan]

If global warming turns out to be a big problem, and if in 10 years' time the Secretary of State's successor is sitting on the Terrace with the successor to Sir Humphrey as the Thames water from the rising sea level comes over the parapet on to the Terrace, we do not want the Secretary of State to say to Sir Humphrey, "Well, global warming is here to stay; what is our policy response?", and Sir Humphrey to reply, "I suppose that we could always try breast stroke."

6.51 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Tony Baldry): This has been an interesting and wide-ranging debate. It has enabled the Government, once again, to set out the success of our privatisation proposals. We have heard interesting speeches from hon. Members of all parties, all of whom take a close interest in energy policy. In the eight minutes left to me, I shall try to respond to some of their points.

The first point that the Opposition sought to make was about the price of the privatisation. I wish to make it clear that, via the supplementary estimates, the Government have obtained parliamentary approval for the preliminary spending. The other spending will be netted against the proceeds of the sale, and has been provided for with a token vote, as is the established practice. The final cost will be presented to the House as soon as possible after the privatisation sale—again, following the established practice. That is all perfectly proper.

It is clearly too early to make any estimate of the final costs because numerous factors may affect them. However, we are seeking to keep the cost to the minimum commensurate with maximising the proceeds of sale because that will obviously be to the benefit of the taxpayer. In all this, we are seeking to ensure value for money. That is why we have awarded contracts by competitive tender, and are therefore getting competitive rates.

Electricity privatisation is an extremely complex exercise, but advisers are appointed only where a clear need for expert advice can be demonstrated and where that advice is not available within the Department. Therefore, the appointment of advisers is the most cost-effective way of obtaining expertise. The bulk of that advice is on accounting and legal matters.

We are seeking to ensure not only that the privatisation of the electricity industry is a success, but that the taxpayer and the community as a whole benefit from that success. We have always sought to make what we are doing clear to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) and he, of course, has been given ample information, including a list of the advisers appointed by the Department, a list of the advisers appointed by National Power and PowerGen and the area boards, and our estimated costs up to the end of 1989-90, together with our estimates for this year. I understand that the hon. Gentleman has sought further information from the regional electricity companies.

Mr. Dobson *rose*——

Mr. Baldry: No, I shall not give way—[HON. MEMBERS: "Give way."] With respect, I have very little time.

In every privatisation, the total cost of the privatisation as a percentage of the sale proceeds has been small. In Britoil, it was 5·5 per cent; for British Gas, it was 3·4 per cent; and for the water privatisation it was 2·5 per cent. Those costs, as a percentage of the sales proceeds, were spent in ensuring the maximised return from the proceeds to the benefit of the taxpayer. As I said, we are seeking to ensure the minimum cost commensurate with the maximum proceeds.

Opposition Members seem to scowl at both marketing and advertising. The marketing of the industry is necessary to ensure that we have maximum wider share ownership, including among employees. Marketing is designed to ensure that we achieve value for money and that there is proper information that can lead to the formation of a proper share price, which again leads to the maximum proceeds. Similarly with advertising: it is too early to estimate the costs of an advertising campaign, but it is intended to ensure maximum proceeds for the taxpayer. It is surprising that Opposition Members, who are quick to criticise when they feel that the Government have not secured the maximum proceeds for an industry, should be so derisory when we take all proper efforts to ensure that we achieve the maximum proceeds.

All the advisers who have been retained by the Department of Energy punctiliously meet the conventions governing the appointment of such advisers. All those appointments have been made in accordance with the proper proprieties and to ensure value for money. There has been no breach of any rules. Every appointment has been made in accordance with the clear criteria set out by the Cabinet Office.

Mr. Dobson: If all the proprieties have been followed, why were not many of those advisers appointed by competitive tender? That point was confirmed by the Secretary of State in an answer to me.

Mr. Baldry: With respect, all the advisers have been appointed by a proper competitive process, to ensure proper competitive forces——

Mr. Dobson: The Minister should ask the Secretary of State about that.

Mr. Baldry: The hon. Gentleman's mathematics leaves a lot to be desired.

Not only is his mathematics wrong—he was incapable of deducting the £9 billion of Nuclear Electric from the value of the electricity assets—but so is his methodology. The current cost accounting method is not an appropriate basis for valuing the industry because it seeks to measure replacement value, which is not the same as what the taxpayer has paid for the assets. One must therefore look at the written down costs, which are estimated at £10 billion.

Estimates of the sale proceeds are at present somewhat speculative. However, the benefits of the privatisation are not only the money that it realises, but the benefits of competition; of downward pressure on prices; of wider share ownership; and of removing the burden of interest costs from the public to the private sector. Competition and market forces are already producing real benefits in the price reductions that have been achieved for large industrial users. Our prices are good news for customers, industry and the environment.

The opposition has been based on a complete misunderstanding of the position and on ignorance of the progress being made. The benefits already secured in privatising the industry are considerable. The Opposition say that they want to get proper value for the industry, yet they criticise the valuation and marketing exercise which the Government are undertaking and which will ensure that we realise a proper return for the public.

This debate——

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 186, Noes 298.

Division No. 259] **[7.2 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Galloway, George
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKelvey, William
Maclennan, Robert
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wallace, James
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ken Eastham and
Mr. Robert N. Wareing.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet

Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alastair Goodlad and
Mr. Tony Durant.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments):—*

The House divided: Ayes 298, Noes 187.

Division No. 260] **[7.15 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*

Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'coster)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Galloway, George
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*

Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKelvey, William
Maclennan, Robert
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wolfson, Mark
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ken Eastham and
Mr. Robert N. Wareing.

Question accordingly agreed to.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House welcomes the privatisation of the electricity industry and the internationally recognised benefits which the Government's policies are already achieving through the introduction of real competition, the introduction of new and enhanced rights for the consumer, the emergence of new, cleaner, more efficient and cost-effective generating plant, through the Government's commitment to the protection of the environment and by ensuring that the needs of customers drive the decisions of the electricity industry.

Orders of the Day

Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill *(By Order)*

Order read for consideration of Lords amendments.

7.28 pm

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will know that since the last time this subject was brought before the House, when the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill was debated on Third Reading, there have been some important developments on private Bill procedure. The first was the publication of the report of the Joint Committee on Private Bill Procedure, 1987-1988, House of Lords paper 97, and House of Commons paper 625. That report contained several important recommendations covering the matters before the House tonight. In particular, recommendation 9 dealt with ports and harbours.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I find it difficult to relate what the hon. Gentleman says to the Lords amendments to the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill. I cannot see that a consultation paper is relevant.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): See? My hon. Friend is a lawyer.

Mr. Bell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his help. My point of order to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is specific; I have not lost track of it. I referred to recommendation 9 dealing with harbours and ports. Procedural amendments were also made that touch upon proceedings: the deposit and advertising of private Bills that are now before the House. I draw to your attention a further development: the publication by the Lord President of the Council of the document that I hold in my hand. Last Thursday, I asked the Lord President of the Council whether he would make clear the Government's position on the private Bill procedure. At 3.30 pm, he said that a written answer and a document would be placed in the Library. This document is a consultation paper. It may be a Green Paper, or it may be a White Paper——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is referring to procedural changes that may or may not take place some time in the future. Under the existing procedure, we are about to deal with Lords amendments to a particular Bill. Any point of order must be directly related to the existing procedure.

Mr. Bell: I now approach the point of order that I have for you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. According to the latest edition of "Erskine May", page 861 states:

> "If any stage of a Bill is proceeded with when the notice has not been duly given, or the proper interval allowed, or if notice is taken of any other formality, the proceeding will be null and void, and the stage must be repeated."

My point of order for you is that important and serious changes have been made to the private Bill procedure since the House last met on the issue. The Government have said that they intend to change the law of the land in relation to the private Bill procedure. That is clearly stated in the document issued by the Lord President of the Council.

Have the Government, either through their business managers or through the usual channels, intimated to you that as a consequence of the proposed changes to the law they wish to defer the private Bill that is before the House? I draw your attention to the quotation from "Erskine May". I ask you to be kind enough to suspend the sitting until you have taken the advice of the Clerks and ascertained whether the situation has changed. If it has, I ask you to rule that we cannot proceed with consideration of the Lords amendments.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: What we are about to do is perfectly in order. I emphasise yet again to the hon. Gentleman and to the whole House that we are now working under our existing procedures and that what has been set down for debate today is perfectly in order. The sooner we get on with it the better. Mr. Michael Brown.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): I beg to move, That the Lords amendments be now considered.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I shall hear the point of order of the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond).

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) ought to keep quiet and pay attention. It is an important matter. You will recollect that when the Bill began its passage through the House we said that it was a hybrid, not a private Bill. At that time the Chair ruled, and has ruled on several occasions since, that it is not a hybrid Bill, so the procedure is correct. Would you consider suspending the sitting until you have had time to reflect on the fact that the Government have been involved in the various stages of the Bill? In view of the Government's involvement and connivance, I ask you to suspend the sitting and then to rule that this is a hybrid Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There is nothing further for the Chair to reflect on. The Chair has reflected over a good many months on the Bill and on the procedures that we are following. They are wholly correct.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I shall take points of order, but it would be very much tidier if the hon. Member who is sponsoring the Bill, the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown), were able to move the motion. Then I should be prepared to take points of order.

Mr. Michael Brown: I beg to move, That the Lords amendments be now considered.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I shall hear the point of order of the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron).

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I should like to clarify the point that was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond). When the Bill received its Third Reading in the House, there was a good attendance by Opposition Members. The amendments that were made in the other place could have been made in Committee in the House of Commons. Was the Bill in its correct form when it received its Third Reading in this House? It could have been amended in this place but it was not. The Bill was introduced in 1988 and received its Third Reading in 1989. We believe that amendments were made in the other place to prevent the Opposition from tabling further amendments to the Bill here and scrutinising it properly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman can make points of that kind when we debate whether the amendments should be considered. It is not a point of order for me. It is a genuine point that could be made in the debate. That is why I suggest that it would be much more sensible if the Question were proposed so that these points could be raised legitimately on the Question whether the Lords amendments should be considered.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I shall take the point of order of the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse).

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I hope that I shall be able to persuade you that consideration of the Bill should not continue and that the sitting should be suspended. Paragraph 26 of the special Committee report recommended that

> "In our view it is the Government's duty to take whatever steps are necessary, in the overall national interest, to protect the indigenous coal-mining industry."

The Select Committee of the House of Lords supported that view in paragraph 23. I ask you to bear it in mind that the Government have responded to neither of those reports, which recommend that special protection should be granted to the coal industry. I ask you to suspend the debate until we receive such an assurance from the Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am not prepared to do that. I have dealt with that point. These are not matters for me. There may be changes to the procedure in due course, but until it is changed I am bound to observe the rules of the House and the existing procedure. What has been set down for debate today is perfectly in order. I suggest that it would be wise to get on with it.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I shall take the point of order of the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy).

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have two points of order for you. I shall deal first with the slighter one. On Thursday afternoon, during questions to the Leader of the House, I made the point that I had tried to obtain copies of the amendments the day before and also at 3 o'clock on Thursday afternoon before I came into the Chamber. I was accompanied by my hon. Friends the Members for Doncaster, North (Mr. Welsh) and for Barnsley, East (Mr. Patchett). I was assured that the Lords amendments were not available. One hour later, the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) vigorously waved in the House a document that I think he hoped that we would

[Mr. Peter Hardy]

accept. It was a copy of the amendments. He implied that what I had said to the House was untrue. That is unacceptable.

I am entitled to ask the hon. Gentleman to make it clear that in no way does he deny that inquiries at the Vote Office in pursuit of copies of the amendments resulted in information being given to me that they were not available. I accept that they became available some time before 4 o'clock, but they were not available at 3 o'clock. It is unreasonable that the amendments were not available until such a short time before the debate. I ask the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes to make it absolutely clear that he was not suggesting that my hon. Friends and I had misled the House.

My second point of order is much more serious. I have never been an expert in the bureaucratic aspects of parliamentary life, nor do I have a detailed knowledge of parliamentary procedures, but it appears to me that the way in which the Bill has been managed, throughout the long period in which it has been under consideration, means that we are now treated as if the House of Commons is an inferior part of the legislature to the other place. We have an obligation to maintain the importance of our democratically elected Government and to make it clear that the House of Lords cannot override or disregard the rights and powers of the House of Commons. Those rights and powers are being challenged by the way in which the Bill is being presented tonight.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: First, I understand that the amendments are available and have been available for some time, and I made specific inquiries about that. As I have told other hon. Members, the other points that the hon. Member has made are legitimate points to raise in the debate that we are about to have. As a specific point was directed at the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes, if that hon. Member has anything to say on that point, of course I shall call him.

Mr. Michael Brown: Are you calling me to make my speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I am very happy to respond—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. At the moment, I am calling the hon. Gentleman further to the point of order, if he wishes to comment on the points that were specifically made about him.

Mr. Brown: If it will assist the House, I am willing to respond to the point of order made by the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy). In no way would I ever accuse him of misleading the House, and if he took what I said as an implication that I was making such an accusation, I withdraw any such suggestion.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I draw your attention to Standing Order No. 186, dealing with private business. It states that the Chairman of Ways and Means, who governs the procedures of private business in the House, may give directions for the printing of any amendments,

"including a requirement that the clause as amended shall be printed *in extenso* with every addition or substitution in distinctive type, and the omissions included in brackets and underlined."

That has not been done. We have a single sheet of typescript with no clear relationship to the clause. The first two amendments alter clause 3 and the remaining four amendments alter clause 18, which is a short clause that alters the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1977 by substituting a further provision. I should have thought that the four alterations to a clause that is about 10 lines long, the extent of the alterations and the fairly radical changes involved are sufficient to suggest that the Chairman of Ways and Means should have carried out Standing Order No. 186.

This is a controversial measure, which has been going through the House for some time. I should have thought that, out of consideration for all hon. Members who are interested in the Bill, at least Standing Order No. 186 should have been carried out. It may be Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you wish to consult the Chairman of Ways and Means, and some of us would be very happy for you to suspend the proceedings while that consultation takes place.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has very largely answered his own point. He said that the reference that he read out is permissive. I am satisfied that the amendments as printed and the Bill as available make it quite clear to what the amendments refer and that nothing further is needed.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have no doubt that, when your office looked at the amendments from another place a week or a fortnight ago, they were in order, but as a result of an incident that occurred only a week ago —the Spanish trawler case, which called into question certain legislation passed by the House as it is affected by EC directives—it has been brought to my attention that complaints have been made to the European Commission concerning the failure to carry out an environmental assessment of the Immingham project.

If that is so—I have no reason to believe that it is not —whether or not we debate it tonight, we are discussing the Bill in the certain knowledge that it will be challenged in the courts immediately. That challenge will come from either the European Commission or an individual. As the matter has arisen only in the past week, I should have thought that it cannot have been taken into account by Mr. Speaker in considering the Lords amendments. Perhaps there is a legitimate reason for saying that we should not debate the Bill tonight.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman's suggestion sounds to me pretty remote from what we are likely to have before the House, but when we debate whether the Lords amendments should be considered, if he catches the eye of the occupant of the Chair, he can have a go at finding out whether he is in order.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I seek your guidance on an issue that has generated some confusion because of the history of the Bill as it has progressed through the House. Everyone knows that there have been many hours of discussion on the Bill. Amendments have been tabled in the House of Lords so that they can come to this House unopposed. The Lord President of the Council, in a written reply on 21 June, stated:

"The procedure for those matters which would remain to be dealt with by private Bills will be reformed along the lines

suggested by the Joint Committee and as broadly accepted by the Government in the debate on the report. The Government believe that those proposals, taken as a whole, will provide a more appropriate way to deal with infrastructure projects in the modern age by protecting the interests of all those involved.—[*Official Report*, 21 June 1990; Vol. 174, c. 628.]

Many people in my constituency could be affected by the legislation, so if the Lord President of the Council's reply on 21 June is as I interpret it, I assume that there is no further cause to discuss the Bill tonight. As it is confusing, I ask you to suspend the proceedings and get the Lord President of the Council to come here and give an interpretation of his reply on 21 June.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That may be ingenious, but it has nothing to do with the debate that we are about to have. I suggest to the House that it would be sensible to move the motion now so that we can debate in a proper manner whether the Lords amendments should be considered.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Michael Welsh (Doncaster, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like your guidance on an important issue. My constituents may suffer tremendously as a result of the legislation. I draw to your attention the fact that, according to European legislation, an environmental assessment should have been made. As no such assessment was made, the number of lorries that will come through my constituency——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That cannot possibly be a point of order, but if the hon. Gentleman succeeds in catching the Chair's eye when we reach the debate, he can have a go then.

Mr. Terry Patchett (Barnsley, East): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. On local television which covers the constituency of Brigg and Cleethorpes, the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) said quite clearly that he was dissatisfied with the procedures of the House for dealing with the Bill. He said that he intended to challenge or to question the procedures of the House. Is not it unfair to proceed with the Bill until the sponsor has explained his position? He has challenged the procedures of the House, and I hope that we shall give him a fair hearing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is a most helpful point of order. The hon. Gentleman reinforces the point that I made: it would be much more sensible if we allowed the sponsor of the Bill to speak to the amendments. I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman, and I hope that the House will soon feel that it would be sensible to follow him.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. During his point of order, I heard a disgraceful smear on the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) by the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown). He shouted across the Benches that his hon. Friend was grovelling only to save his small majority in Nottingham. I have been criticised in the past for making that comment, but it is a bit much that his hon. Friend is smearing him so disgracefully. Will you come to the rescue of the hon. Member for Nottingham, South and ask the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes to withdraw his disgraceful attack?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am trying to come to the rescue of the House so that we can get on with the business.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You have sat in the Chair many a time on private Bills and watched them being steered through. No doubt you are aware that on such occasions there are no Whips. I must draw to your attention the fact that a breach of that convention has taken place. I have the Labour Whip here, which says, "Opposed Private Business"; there are no lines, nothing. That means that no direction whatever is being given to my hon. Friends. I received a Whip from the other side, which I picked up.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): Where did that come from?

Mr. Skinner: Some research assistant let it slip through. It says, "Dear Norman"—presumably that is Tebbit—

"Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill, Lords amendments, Monday 25 June 1990 7 pm to 10 pm. I am delighted to report that this Bill has now received its Third Reading in the House of Lords"——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This may be a very interesting, but whipping has nothing to do with me. What is the point of order for the Chair?

Mr. Skinner: It is quite simple: private business is not whipped. The Chairman of Ways and Means finds a suitable time for the Bill. There is no collusion between the Whips to decide what the agenda will be for the parliamentary week. The Chairman of Ways and Means decides because it is a private Bill, which means that there are no Whips on it. The Tory Whip says:

"Unfortunately the Lords have made several minor technical amendments which will be heavily contested in the Commons on Monday 25 June."

I have only——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. As I have told the hon. Gentleman more than once, this may be very interesting and revealing but whipping has nothing to do with the Chair. We have had a good run on points of order. We really should get on with the debate before the House.

Mr. Skinner: I should like to believe that that is true, but the Whip goes on to advise Conservative Members

"to be in their places between 7 and 10".

and talks about the Bill

"having gone for two and a half years. We must assist to reach the finishing post. The Brown legislative programme invites your continued support once again,

Yours ever"——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is clearly not a point of order——

Mr. Skinner: "Michael Brown, the Member for"——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is an experienced parliamentarian. I have told him three times that what he is raising is not a point of order and I am sure that he knows that that is correct.

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): I hope that this is a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I take you back to the written answer given by the Lord President of the Council? It seems to many hon. Members that it is germane to consideration of this business. Have you read that written answer? If not, will you suspend the House for five minutes so that you can do so and properly apprise yourself of its import?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I cannot possibly see that that written answer has anything to do with the business before the House.

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): Further to that point of order of the hon. Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood), a former constituent of mine whose vote I was sorry to lose. I should like to take up his point about the scurrilous remarks made by my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) about my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) trying to save his seat. We are trying to save the seat of my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes because his rural constituents will turn him out at the next election if this goes through.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I thank you for at last seeing me behind my hon. Friend the Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood)? I was panicking that points of order were exclusively for hon. Members taller than 5 ft 1 in.

I wish to draw your attention to the *Official Journal* of the European Community, published in 1985, on articles of the convention relating to environmental assessment studies. Paragraph 8, which has been adopted by the Government refers to

"Trading ports and also inland waterways and ports for inland-waterway traffic which permit the passage of vessels of over 1,350 tonnes."

Parts of the Bill are covered by that European Community document, so it should have been taken into consideration before the Bill was brought before the House, but it is clear that it was not.

Therefore, the Bill should return to the other place so that that procedure can be carried out. Without it, the European Court can challenge the procedures of the House. It is important that the procedures on the article are not put aside. The article was introduced to protect petitioners against the misuse of the private Bill procedure in places such as the United Kingdom, particularly on Bills that relate to huge industrial developments such as this port. I implore you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as someone who has looked after the interests of hon. Members, to take into account the article, stop this procedure and return the Bill to the other place.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I assure the House once more that the motion and the amendments are in order. We should now get on with the business before the House.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Lords amendments are not numbered and do not give us full details, but there appear to be six of them. Will the House take them in order? Will the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) speak initially to the first Lords amendment? I have a second point of order to raise as well, Sir.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is a fair point. It would be better to proceed first with the debate, if we are to have one, on whether the Lords amendments should be considered. When that is out of the way, it will be perfectly legitimate for the hon. Members to raise that point again. We shall deal with it at the more appropriate time.

Mr. Harry Barnes *rose*——

Mr. Cryer *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have called the hon. Member for Bradford, South once already and I have dealt with his point.

Mr. Cryer: It is a different point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member has had one go. I have called every hon. Member who wished to put a point of order and have dealt with those points of order. I hope that the hon. Member will feel, either now or once he has raised his point of order, that it is appropriate to proceed with the debate.

Mr. Cryer: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When we deal with the Adelphi Estate Bill, reference was made to several 19th century Acts of Parliament. Madam Deputy Speaker pointed out that it was difficult to get elderly Acts of Parliament from the Library, because they were unique and precious. The first group of Lords amendments refers to changes from section 85 to section 85E of the Railway Clauses Consolidation Act 1845. I imagine that this Bill falls into the same category as the Adelphi Estate Bill.

Have the Bill's promoters troubled to produce extracts from the Railway Clauses Consolidation Act, just as the promoters of the Adelphi Estate Bill took the trouble to do after this point was brought to their attention? That legislation was circulated to Members, rather than have Members in the Chamber handle heavy and fragile bits of legislation, dug out of the Library shelves. As we are talking about the application of a different section of the Railway Clauses Consolidation Act, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wonder whether you have any information about the provision of copies of the legislation to hon. Members.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: My impression is that all the relevant information is available. It would be better if the hon. Member were to raise those points when we consider the Lords amendments.

8.2 pm

Mr. Michael Brown: I beg to move, That the Lords amendments be now considered.

Mr. Harry Barnes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Brown: I should like first to make it clear that I certainly did not wish to impugn the motives of my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo). If I did so, I withdraw any such suggestion unreservedly.

Clauses, 3 and 18 were amended in Committee in the other place. The amendments to clause 3 are necessary to clarify and specify the application of the clause. The amendments to clause 18 are necessary because of a change in the general law since the Bill was deposited before Parliament.

Mr. Barron: The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) chose his words carefully and said that the Lords amendments had been tabled because of changes made since the Bill was laid before the House. We all know that the Bill was introduced in the House years ago. As I said on a point of order, these amendments could not have been tabled during the Bill's passage through the House of Commons. Consequently, they

should have been tabled in Committee. The legislation to which the amendments refer was implemented more than 12 months before the Bill completed the Committee stage.

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): I happen to have a copy of the Railway Clauses Consolidation Act 1845. I glanced through it, looking for a reference to the date on which the amendments could have been put forward. The date has been revised to 31 October 1979. Therefore, surely the Lords amendments could have been made properly to the Bill during the past 10 years.

Mr. Barron: My hon. Friend's assessment is correct. I can do no more than agree with him.

A motion has been tabled to the effect that the Lords amendments be considered upon this day in six months' time. I support that motion. The Bill has had a long history, and we have had many debates on it. It has been scrutinised by a Committee and was passed on the Chairman's casting vote. The amendments laid were not accepted because of the Chairman's casting vote. We have had many debates about the Bill's implications for the coal industry. The amendments which were not accepted in the House of Commons or in the other place in Committee related specifically to that point.

My opposition to the Bill, because of its possible effect on the coal industry, has not wavered since the Bill was introduced.

Mr. Michael Welsh: It is obvious to everyone that great damage will be caused to the industry. Is not the Bill also important in terms of the great damage that it could do to the environment?

Mr. Barron: I am sure that that is true. I was about to say that that was a principal reason why I support the motion that consideration should be adjourned for six months. We are not saying that the Bill should be defeated, as we have done in the past—although, given the opportunity, I certainly would. We are asking the House to delay considering the Lords amendments for six months.

Our arguments on the Floor of the House and in Committee were as one in terms of the effect on the coal industry. Over the past five years, the industry has done remarkably well because of a massive improvement in productivity. Sadly, about 30,000 jobs a year had been lost over the past five years—150,000 jobs overall. This is hardly an industry that should be penalised for what it has done over the past five years, but we know what the Bill will do.

Some of those in the other place who had presented petitions against the Bill changed their minds. They argued strongly in Committee and on the Floor of the House that there should be environmental assessments of what will happen if the terminal goes ahead. My hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Welsh) made that point.

Mr. Lofthouse: Is my hon. Friend aware of the great concern expressed in the other place about the increased transport that would result from the extension of the ports —5 million or 6 million tonnes of bulk cargo a year? An attempt was made to table an amendment, but Sir Frank Layfield advised the Committee on behalf of the petitioners that there were sufficient powers in local government legislation to control that traffic. Expert witnesses speaking on behalf of Doncaster council, including the research officer—who was an agent for the Coalfield Communities Campaign in the other place—the director of planning and the director of the public works directorate, have suggested that there is no such power in that legislation. That being so, should not we delay our debate so that Sir Frank Layfield's evidence can be examined in the other place?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I realise that the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) is painting the background to the debate and to the amendments that may eventually be considered. But before he answers that point, may I remind the House that this is a comparatively narrow debate? We are discussing whether the Lords amendments should be considered, and we should remember that those Lords amendments are limited and technical. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will bear that in mind in his comments.

Mr. Barron *rose*——

Mr. Illsley: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Clause 18(2) says that certain things may apply,

"subject to the provisions of subsection (3) below, in its application to development authorised by this Act".

I seek your interpretation, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Do the words "this Act" refer to the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill or to the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1977?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is a matter for debate, and if the hon. Gentleman catches my eye he may be able to make his points. The matter that he has raised is not a point of order.

Mr. Barron: I take your guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse). But, of course, my hon. Friend was quite right that the evidence given in Committee in the other place suggested that the lack of an environmental assessment study would not prejudice events away from the ports. We have discovered since that more relevance was attached to lorries having access to the main motorway network than to their coming out of the ports or arriving at their destination. The local authorities have discovered that, in those circumstances, they do not have the powers that the Committee in another place suggested.

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): I accept the arguments advanced by my hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Welsh). However, we are talking about not only the environment but jobs. In the past few days, there has been another pit closure in my constituency. British Coal has argued to the unions that closures have resulted from the fall in value of coal because of the availability of cheap foreign coal which is already coming into Britain. Much more cheap foreign coal will come in through our ports if the Bill is passed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am sure that the hon. Member for Rother Valley will stay in order in responding to that intervention. I remind the House once more that we are debating a comparatively narrow motion—whether the Lords amendments should be considered.

Mr. Barron: I accept your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The points made by my hon. Friend the Member for

[Mr. Barron]

Mansfield, (Mr. Meale) have been debated when we have considered the Bill in the past, and I do not intend to cover old ground tonight.

Mr. Hardy: Does my hon. Friend accept that the House should act consistently? You will recall, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that less than an hour ago the House voted in favour of the Government amendment to the previous motion, which was highly relevant because it referred to the Government's commitment to the protection of the environment. No doubt my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley is in order if he argues that we should not proceed to consider the Bill because the Government's commitment to the environment is imperilled by the Bills' progress.

My hon. Friend should continue to press for a delay in further consideration of the Bill so that the environmental impact assessment that has already been mentioned can be carried out. If that is not done, the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) will have to speak in terms that we can hear and understand, as we were unable to hear or understand him when he opened the debate. He must be able to convince us and to persuade those who voted less than an hour ago for the Government's commitment to the environment that the environmental impact assessment should not proceed.

The European authorities and everyone else take the view that no such proposal should be enacted until there is a guarantee that a thorough environmental impact assessment will be made.

Mr. McCartney: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I apologise for rising on a point of order once again but since my original point of order I have listened carefully to hon. Members' interventions and to your views, Sir, concerning the narrow nature of the debate.

It has come to my notice that the Commission in Brussels has corresponded with a number of bodies on the subject of the Bill. I should like to quote from a letter from the Commission to the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds earlier this year:

"It is the opinion of the Commission that for a project to be exempted from the scope of the Directive it is necessary that an environmental impact assessment similar to that requested by the Directive is made in the process of adopting the new legislation."

That was the view of the Commission——

8.15 pm

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That cannot possibly have anything to do with the motion before the House.

Mr. Barron *rose*——

Mr. McCartney: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have dealt with the hon. Gentleman's point of order. Mr. Barron.

Mr. Barron: I agree that my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) went somewhat wide and I accept your judgment on these matters, Mr. Deputy Speaker, although what my hon. Friend said about the EEC directive was relevant.

I was questioning the arguments about the environment advanced in the other place, both in Committee and on Third Reading.

Mr. Andy Stewart: The hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) is developing his argument well and cogently. Will he remind the House of the effect that a further 10 million tonnes of imported coal and the lorry movements that it will entail will have on the local environment? The 10 million tonnes of coal will mean 500,000 juggernauts travelling through the Humberside and Nottinghamshire villages, not on motorways but on unclassified roads.

Mr. Barron: I do not wish to go too wide of the motion, but I agree with the hon. Gentleman that there is a likelihood of that. I can only refer briefly to a letter from PowerGen to the chairman of Associated British Ports. One person whose constituency will certainly be threatened by the movements of lorries is the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes, who is the sponsor of the Bill.

Mr. Meale: Is my hon. Friend aware of the damage that may be caused to roads by the movement of coal? Nottinghamshire county council recently had to take the CEGB to court because of such problems and Nottinghamshire ratepayers ended up having to pay millions of pounds to repair the damage. That is an important factor.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that the hon. Member for Rother Valley will ignore irrelevant comments, from whichever side of the House they may come.

Mr. Barron: I thank you, once again, for your guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I should like to move on——

Mr. Cryer: I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) will not omit to consider the argument that we should delay our consideration of the Lords amendments—that is the subject of the procedural motion before us—because of the sweeping changes that are taking place in South Africa. The Bill is designed to facilitate the importation of South African coal and the motion suggests that we should delay our consideration of the Lords' amendments for six months. Is it not possible that, in six months' time, the South Africans, under the leadership of Nelson Mandela, will refuse to export coal to Britain in the interests of preserving and securing jobs and in the name of international brotherhood? My hon. Friend should consider that.

Mr. Barron: I do not want to follow that line of argument too far, because I am sure that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would call me to order if I did. However, it is interesting to think about what would happen if the changes, which we all want, occurred in South Africa. We would then have to consider our attitudes to imports of coal from South Africa. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) said, the price of that coal might rise if the South Africans began to pay decent wages in their coal mines. But as you said earlier, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should not digress on that point.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend is arguing for delay. We are all aware that the Bill has been progressing through the House for two and a half years. It has been subject to a

modicum of delay already. What has delay provided us with? We have had an opportunity to say that, when the Bill began its progress two and a half years ago, this country had a balance of payments surplus. Two and a half years later, it has a massive balance of payments deficit of £20 billion and rising.

I do not want anyone from any quarter of the House to tell me that my hon. Friend cannot refer to delay in terms of what impact the Bill might have on the economy or the environment. There has been a two-and-a-half-year delay, during which time Britain's economic position has been turned on its head. I hope that my hon. Friend will expand on the argument for delay so that the impact on the environment and on the economy can be examined. The Opposition are trying to delay the Bill because we have already learnt, during its passage, that it will make our balance of payments position even worse.

The delay in consideration of this Bill is important. It is also important that my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley and others can extend the debate so that we can prove to the country that we are doing a good job by delaying the Bill. It can already be argued that 10 million tonnes of coal——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is good enough for an intervention.

Mr. Barron: I thought that that was a very good intervention as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am sorely tempted to continue along those lines, but I am sure that you would call me to order if I were to do so.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is aware that energy imports have gone into deficit in this country over the past 12 months. As people look round the country and see that we are rich in energy, they must be shaking their heads and saying what fools we are for importing more than we are exporting.

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) is aware that it is more than 12 months since a cargo of extremely dangerous poison reached my constituency and was close to his. That stuff came into this country through a port. It could have come in through the port that we are discussing in the Bill. This country still lacks adequate legislation to control properly the import of such toxic materials. Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that no new port facility or private Bill which facilitates such a development should be allowed to pass through the House until we have adequate regulations to prevent other people from suffering the anxiety, risk and severe disadvantage that beset my constituency. The Government have been powerless to do anything about that for the past 12 months.

Mr. Barron: I really do not want to pursue that line, although I have much sympathy with my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy). I have received many letters about recycling which I can pass on to my hon. Friend. The port to which my hon. Friend refers is not many miles from my home, which is almost on the doorstep of my hon. Friend's constituency.

Mr. McCartney: Far be it from me to take my hon. Friend down a road along which he does not wish to travel, but it is important to be clear that no attempt is being made through the Standing Orders to legitimise the gagging of hon. Members on either side of the House to prevent them from debating the issue.

On 6 June this year, the markers that we had attempted to raise about environmental impact assessments and others matters, were properly debated in another place. For the life of me I cannot understand why, if unelected Members in another place could on 6 June consider those matters to be relevant to the Bill and reach a decision upon them, we should be prevented from doing the same this evening. Who is in charge of legislative procedures? Is it those in another place or the elected Members of this place? It is vital to make it absolutely clear that hon. Members will not be gagged and prevented from discussing the consequences of the Bill and the inability of the sponsor to bring forward environmental impact assessments as required by the European Commission.

Mr. Barron: I am grateful for that intervention. I shall refer later to comments made in another place about those points.

Mr. Redmond: As for the problems with imports, I do not recollect that we were given any guarantee by the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) about nuclear fuel being imported or exported via the new facility. The hon. Gentleman might want to give that guarantee now, but I do not recollect such a guarantee being made before.

The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes appeared on television several times saying that there would be no nuclear dump in his constituency. Given that the new port could import nuclear fuel, has the hon. Gentleman had a change of heart? Is he satisfied that nuclear waste could pass to and fro through the new port?

Mr. Barron: If I was to comment on that point in any detail you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would rightly call me to order. However, it makes me smile wryly to wonder, if the Bill had been promoted by British Nuclear Fuels plc or Nirex, whether the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes would be its in-house sponsor. Perhaps he would not. He might cause a by-election if he did so.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): As a sober-minded citizen, as everyone knows, I believe that the motion that we are considering is, to say the least, absolutely reasonable. Six months is not a long time in the light of what is happening in the world. When the Bill first appeared, the political shape of the world was different from what it is today. Eastern Europe has changed massively. None of us thought that the miners in the Soviet Union could possibly strike, and suddenly we were alarmed when the miners went on strike in the Soviet Union.

Let us consider South Africa, where the situation is even more fluid than it was in the Soviet Union. The right wing was out in South Africa the other day and its supporters had their badges on their arms. I believe that they are fascists. The situation in South Africa——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman cannot make a speech within a speech. I am sure that the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) has got the drift, and that he will resist the temptation to get out of order.

8.30 pm

Mr. Barron: I shall indeed resist that temptation, although I was quite enjoying the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery)——

Mr. Flannery: I had not finished my sentence. I was saying that, in the past six months, the position in South Africa has been fluid. Certain people have attempted to overthrow the state and threatened to kill President de Klerk and Mr. Mandela. I think that, as patient people, we should wait another six months before we discuss this matter.

Mr. Barron: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his ingenuity in asking for the six-month delay in this motion, which involves eastern Europe and South Africa. I shall be even more grateful if it makes hon. Members vote with the Opposition tonight.

My hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield touched on an important point when he referred to the constitutional aspects of the Bill and the amendments, which all relate to planning matters. If the EC directive were implemented by another country, or by an individual or group of individuals in this country, we could be passing legislation knowing full well that we are supporters of that directive.

I shall tell the House briefly what is in the EC directive——

Mr. Skinner: Some of us are not too keen about that.

Mr. Barron: I understand my hon. Friend's keenness on the question of European Community directives. I shall refer to directive 185/337/EEC. Article 4(1) of directive 185/337/EEC says:

"Subject to Article 2(3), projects of the classes listed in Annex I shall be made subject to an assessment in accordance with Articles 5 to 10."

I shall resist the temptation to waste the time of the House by reading out all of it——

Mr. McCartney: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My hon. Friend has rightly quoted from a number of important articles. However, unless he gives us clear indications of the precise nature of the subsections, Opposition Members will not be able to follow his argument as well as we would like. I implore you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to insist that my hon. Friend reads out the appropriate article.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It would be better to let the hon. Member for Rother Valley make his own speech in his own way.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. An interesting issue arises here. During debate on Government Bills, if a Minister quotes from any document, he is required by Standing Orders to place a copy of that document on the Table. I would be grateful, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you would tell the House what the position is with regard to these documents, copies of which have not been placed on the Table. As my hon. Friend is quoting, will he have to place a copy of the directive on the Table?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I must protect the hon. Member for Rother Valley, who is being put off by all these bogus points of order.

Mr. Galloway: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It seems to be bordering on a contempt of the House for such an important document to be quoted without any hon. Members having access to it, without its being placed on the Table and without my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) giving the House the benefit of reading it. I implore him to do that, as it is absolutely germane to the debate.

Mr. Barron: I do not wish to upset my hon. Friends; I may need their support in the Lobby later. If hon. Members would like to see a copy of the directive, I could put it through a photocopier later, and perhaps they could read it before they go to sleep.

Mr. McCartney: My hon. Friend could move the Adjournment of the House until appropriate copies of the regulations have been made available, so that hon. Members can consider them in detail. It would be more appropriate for hon. Members to see them now, rather than after the Division.

Mr. Barron: May I take my lead from the Chair, and say that the Adjournment of the House is not a matter for me? I was quoting from the EC directive, and explaining what article 4(1) meant. Annexe 1, which is mentioned in article 4, relates to planning matters that should have an environmental assessment, according to the directive. I am sure that all hon. Members know that Britain is a signatory to that directive. It refers to

"Trading ports and also inland waterways and ports for inland-waterway traffic which permit the passage of vessels of over 1,350 tonnes."

In those circumstances, it is relevant that the Bill fits the EC directive. I question whether it is right for the House to pass the Bill now, and not to wait the six months proposed in the motion so that an environmental assessment can be made.

All hon. Members know that the proposed terminal would make this facility the largest bulk terminal in the United Kingdom, other than ports used exclusively for the use of British Steel. It cannot be considered a mere extension of the existing facility, as it would scrap the existing facility.

The terminal is aimed primarily at a new market—those needing steam coal for power stations—rather than intended as an extension for existing customers. In those circumstances, it fits the directive.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I support the point that the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) is making.

It is almost unnecessary even to debate whether this is a modification or not. Associated British Ports has already argued that it wants the new facility to compete with Antwerp, Rotterdam and Amsterdam. If the port authority is seeking to compete with ports of that size, there cannot be a shadow of a doubt that the directive is relevant. Therefore, the environmental considerations have to be taken into account. We are wasting our time debating the matter until that question is resolved.

Mr. Barron: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. More to the point, because direct competition with European ports is involved, it is more likely that there will be a challenge on the ground that the Bill is against the EC directive. If the Bill is passed, Britain could end up in the European

Court. Consequently, as legislators, we would all be made to look fools because we did not take the right course when the Bill passed through both Houses of Parliament.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend mentioned the European Court. The decision on Spanish trawling rights is even more serious, as it has meant that legislation passed by both Houses of Parliament can now be suspended, for the first time. The precedent has been established that legislation approved by the House can be suspended pending the outcome of the final hearing. It is even more serious than my hon. Friend has suggested. Because there is an EC directive, any other organisation, port authority, port, shipper or transport organisation can go to a British court and ask for an injunction suspending the legislation. In view of that, it behoves us to defer any consideration of Lords amendments until the position is clarified.

Mr. Barron: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I feel that it would be hasty at this stage for us not to take heed and have a six-month break. Article 1.5 of the EC directive appears to provide an exemption from having to conduct an environmental assessment. It is an exemption relating to

"projects the details of which are adopted by a specific act of national legislation, since the objectives of this directive, including that of supply and information are achieved through the legislative process."

No information was supplied by the developers. Therefore, the exemption should not apply.

I have a note on environmental assessment. I am sure that hon. Members will be more than pleased to hear this as well. I have a list of projects that are going through parliamentary procedures and which have conducted environmental procedures. They include the King's Cross redevelopment by British Rail and London Underground, the light rapid transit project in the west midlands and the Jubilee line extension by London Underground, which will shove its head out somewhere near the House. Other Bills include measures in respect of the port of Hull and Associated British Ports. An environmental assessment of more than 200 pages has been published since that Bill was published. We have not had one sentence on this Bill.

Mr. Hardy: Hon. Members will recall—I hope that the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) will attend to this point—that we have had several debates, and all that the hon. Gentleman has wanted to do is formally move the Bill and get it through. The hon. Gentleman is again trying to pull a fast one by gabbling his introductory words when no one could hear them. I do not know whether he was trying to give information. I hope that the authorities of the House will take the view that was advanced by my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron)—that the exemption cannot apply in respect of this legislation because at no stage has the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes provided necessary details of the environmental assessment.

Mr. Barron: I agree with my hon. Friend. I have a small list of projects in accordance with annexe 1 of the directive. They include the Isle of Grain gas importation and the other was the Isle of Grain container port with Highland Participants plc. Another was the Pittenween development by Fife regional council and another was the Hayle harbour development by the Hayle harbour company. All those projects involved inland ports and waterways that needed environmental assessments.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth is quite right. The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes and Associated British Ports have not given one detail about environmental assessment.

Mr. Redmond: Will my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) willingly give way to the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) if he wishes to clarify that matter and perhaps explain why he has not done so previously? May I have an assurance that my hon. Friend would give way to the hon. Gentleman?

Mr. Barron: I am quite prepared to do that.

Mr. Michael Brown: I take a strong view on matters of this kind. I was one of those hon. Members—probably in the minority, but we were joined by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner)—who voted against our entry into the EC. I did so because I believe that this House, and this House alone, is the determining factor in the government of this country. I am not impressed by any impost that is forced upon this House or any legislation that it chooses to pass. I have a low opinion of anything that the European Commission might be inclined to do to contravene legislation passed by this honourable House and the other honourable House. I have a low opinion of any European legislation that would override decisions taken in this House.

Mr. Barron: I hear what the hon. Gentleman says, but I do not recall that he has opposed every European issue that has come before the House. I do not want to be distracted from the points that I am trying to make. This matter is about the environment and the hon. Gentleman's constituents. The hon. Gentleman should have made sure that the environmental impact of the development was taken into account before it was forced on to his constituents.

8.45 pm

Mr. McCartney: The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) cannot get away with that anti-Europeanism. In 1988, the House passed two set of country planning and environmental assessment regulations. Local authorities are now required to act on assessment studies under the regulations, which are not precisely based on European regulations. The House has passed legislation that the company and the hon. Gentleman should take into account.

Mr. Barron: I agree with my hon. Friend.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): My hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) will realise that people in Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire travel to that area for their summer holidays. I refer to the Camping and Caravan Club. Many hon. Members, particularly those from Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire, have caravans and they go to Brigg and Cleethorpes. I have heard rumblings about what they would think if the development went ahead. I should have thought that it was in the hon. Gentleman's interests and those of his constituents to withdraw the Bill right now.

Mr. Barron: I shall certainly pass on that offer to the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes. The correspondence that I have had from people in the hon. Gentleman's

[Mr. Barron]

constituency is more concerned about proposed changes in a caravan site. For example, I have had correspondence with the clerk to the hon. Gentleman's council.

Mr. Redmond: I also have had many letters from people in that area. It has not been made clear that the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes is supporting alterations to the caravan site. I wish that the hon. Gentleman would make it clear to people who go to that area that he does not support them and that, as far as he is concerned, they can go elsewhere.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We must get back to the motion.

Mr. Barron: Getting back to the point, we discussed the situation——

Mr. McCartney: Before my hon. Friend leaves that subject, I invite him to deal with environmental assessment procedures published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office. I hope that the Minister is listening, just in case he might like to respond to my hon. Friend. Page 23 of a document on projects approved by a private Act of Parliament states:

"an environmental statement which can be considered by the select committee and standing committees of each House on the Bill"

should be paraded by the promoter. That has not been done. If that is not a flagrant attack on parliamentary procedures, I do not know what is.

Mr. Flannery: A breach.

Mr. McCartney: My hon. Friend is right. The Minister owes it to my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) to make the Government's position clear on the failure to follow the procedures that were set down by the Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The debate is again moving away from the matter before the House. I remind hon. Members that the subject is relatively narrow—it is whether or not the Lords amendments should be considered.

Mr. Barron: I want to explain why I believe that we should support the amendments when we consider them in six months' time. There have been several interventions——

Mr. Jack Thompson (Wansbeck): Is my hon. Friend as puzzled as I am about the question of environmental assessment, as it links in with the amendments? There is to be a change in clause 18, which shows the difference between using the Town and Country Planning General Development Orders 1977 and 1988. I do not think that there is a conflict of interest between the environmental assessment argument and the use of the General Development Order. I have some experience of planning matters, and they all involve environmental issues. There is no conflict.

Mr. Barron: Whether or not there is a conflict is not a matter for me, but I take my hon. Friend's point. He had many years' experience of planning matters before he came to this House.

There is a lack of information, because there has been no consultation either in this House or in the other place——

Mr. McCartney: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have just received an urgent message that two prisoners have died at Hindley remand centre in Greater Manchester. Could arrangements be made for the appropriate Home Office Minister to come to the House at 11 pm to make an urgent statement about the conditions in that remand centre and the background to the appalling deaths that occurred this evening?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman will realise that I cannot deal with that sad matter at the moment, but I am sure that his comments have been heard by those on the Government Front Bench.

Mr. Barron: I am sorry to hear the news that my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) has just given the House.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) has just informed me that a bomb has exploded at St. James's, so there should be a statement on that important matter. Indeed, I wonder whether we should continue with the debate. There should be discussions between the appropriate people about an urgent statement by the responsible Minister.

Although we are discussing the important subject of the environment, I am not sure that we should continue, because we need statements on other important matters. Prisoners have been killed and bombs have exploded, yet we are discussing a matter that we all know can be discussed later. The Minister—he is the only Minister present—has good reason to speak to the Government Whip about urgent statements. You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, could quite easily facilitate that by suspending our discussions—even if only for a relatively short time—while arrangements are made for those urgent statements.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Those are serious matters, if they are correct. Again, what has been said has been noted by those on the Government Front Bench. One of the great glories of the House of Commons is that our proceedings are not interrupted by any incident outside.

Mr. Barron: I was talking about the lack of consultation on environmental assessment. Simply because no information has been supplied does not mean that there has been an exemption in the operation of the EEC directive. Indeed, in a letter dated 14 February 1990, Mrs. Elizabeth Dissing of the European Commission wrote to Mr. Standaring of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds about the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill, and said:

"For a project to be exempted from the scope of the directive, it is necessary that an environmental impact assessment, similar to that requested by the directive, is made in the process of adopting new legislation. If an environmental impact assessment is not made through the legislation process, the project is not exempted from the scope of the directive."

If that is the case, it is probable that it can be challenged under the European laws—

Mr. Meale: I am pleased that my hon. Friend has mentioned that point. The Bill must not be passed without an environmental impact survey, and not just because the

damage that will be done to roads in Nottinghamshire, Yorkshire and elsewhere. The Government are discussing with the European Community the planting of a national forest—a new Sherwood forest. My understanding is that the main area that it will cover will be part of Nottinghamshire, through Leicestershire and up to Yorkshire. It will envelop the area through which all the lorries will be trundling. The survey is essential before the Bill is passed.

Mr. Barron *rose*——

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am sorry to interrupt my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron), who is doing a good job. I am having difficulty in following the debate because the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) is continually engaged in conversation with Conservative Members who are coming into the Chamber to ask him what time there will be a vote, what time he is fixing for a vote, and so on. That is interrupting our concentration. It is yet a further sign that there is a plot and that the hon. Gentleman is attempting to gag many Opposition Members who want to take part in the debate.

Mr. Barron: I have briefly read what was said by the European Commission about the operation of the directive in relation to the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill.

Mr. Hardy: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way and assure him that this intervention is relevant, given his reference to the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. Indeed, my point illustrates the argument that my hon. Friend is advancing. Last week, an extremely rare bird, the night heron, arrived and can currently be found in the Denaby nature reserve in Don Valley. Its arrival has been well reported and many people have descended on the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond).

At the moment, that bird is protected because it is in one of the reserves of the Yorkshire Wildfowl Trust, of which I am proud to be patron, and several people are supervising its welfare. But, if in a little while the bird decides to fly away, to tell other night herons of the splendid security, welcome and hospitality that can be found in Don Valley, it might fly east, and if it does, it will fly down the Humber——

Mr. Skinner: Is it a little plover?

Mr. Hardy: No, it is a night heron.

It might fly east, down the Humber, However, all the disturbances could prevent that bird either from reaching its home or from returning to my hon. Friend's constituency. That fact fully strengthens the argument of my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley.

9 pm

Mr. Barron: Once again, I am grateful to my hon. Friend for an intervention. Indeed, my hon. Friend is a scholar on the birdlife of Britain. I am more than interested to know that the night heron is currently residing within a few miles of my constituency. I may be tempted to go to see it at some stage, provided that I do not have to go out at night.

Mr. Redmond: Does my hon. Friend agree that the people of my constituency are concerned about environmental matters and make generous provision to enable visits from not only wildlife but the constituents of other hon. Members, who come to enjoy our quality of life? Yet it is that quality of life which the Bill and the Lords amendments are seeking to destroy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We should leave the night heron to itself and get back to our business.

Mr. Barron: I agree entirely, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I shall not be dragged further into a debate about the night heron at Denaby or anywhere else.

I referred to the Commission's letter to the RSPB merely to point out that we should not ignore the fact that we, as legislators, should ensure that an environmental impact assessment has been carried out. We should instigate an environmental assessment as part and parcel of our legislation. However, most hon. Members—of all parties—agree that that has not taken place in relation to this Bill.

Mr. Meale: I should like to refer my hon. Frind back to our discussions a short time ago about a new national forest for Britain which, as I said, would cover Nottinghamshire, parts of Yorkshire, Lincolnshire and Leicestershire. It will involve about £1 billion of European and British taxpayers' money. It is outrageous that any measure that could inflict such damage on the environment could proceed without an environmental survey of its effects being considered, if not carried out. Will my hon. Friend comment on that ?

Mr. Barron: Although I do not want to go too wide of the motion, Madam Deputy Speaker, I believe that the new forest that might be planted would cover part of my constituency. Like many other coal miners, I greatly appreciate long-term planning for the coal industry and planting a new Nottingham forest will help us in a few million years.

Just as you took the Chair, Madam Deputy Speaker, I was referring to our position as legislators and to the fact that we shall ignore at our peril the EC directive on the environmental assessment that should be carried out by legislators in the different EC countries, or in some other form, and to the lack of it——

Mr. Michael Welsh: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Barron: I shall give way in a moment, but I should like to carry on for a little while, to get over the page.

Complaints have already been made to the Commission about the failure to cary out any environmental assessment of the Immingham project. However, I shall give way now to my hon. Friend before outlining the principle complaints.

Mr. Michael Welsh: I shall be brief. The promoters of the Bill say that this is a private Bill, so they do not need an environmental statement or assessment, although it has been pointed out that the Government believe that the promoters of the Bill should provide an environmental statement. Does my hon. Friend agree that, even if they are right, 61 Tory Members, 18 Cabinet Ministers and 10 Whips voted for the Bill on Third Reading? Therefore, is this not also a Government Bill?

Mr. Barron: My opinion about whether this is a Government Bill is on the record. I do not for a minute disagree with my hon. Friend's figures, but if I commented

[Mr. Barron]

I know that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, would rightly call me to order because I would be going wide of the debate.

I have mentioned the possibility of likely complainants if the Bill proceeds in its present form. I hope that in the distant future the Lords amendments will be accepted by the House.

I have with me a letter sent by one of the original petitioners to the legal services department of the European Community about directive 85/337/EEC and the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill. It comes from Greg Kayser of the European relations sector of the Coalfield Communities Campaign secretariat. I shall not read the whole letter—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"] I know that some of my hon. Friends will be disappointed; perhaps somebody else can do so. I shall read the relevant parts. It states:

"I write as a matter of urgency following a complaint by the Coalfield Communities Campaign that directive 85/337/EEC has been breached in the United Kingdom."

The breach relates specifically to the passage of the Bill through this House and the other place. The last paragraph of the letter states:

"The Coalfield Communities Campaign urges you to give this matter your immediate attention and to apply pressure on the Chairman of Committees in the House of Lords to recommit the Bill. The Coalfield Communities Campaign will be available to discuss the case either by telephone or in Brussels at any time."

The Coalfield Communities Campaign, which is one of the original petitioners against the Bill, is not taking lightly the absence of the EEC directive with regard to this legislation. The legislation is likely to be challenged in the European Court, and certainly in the British courts, if the House does not recognise what has been said and change its mind to provide a breathing space of six months.

To discuss the Bill further now would pre-empt the outcome of the complaints. We can hazard a guess now that the CCC will be one such complainant, but we must remember that when the Bill started its passage, more than nine petitioners were against it. I understand one or two of them have direct interests in the particular area of Immingham. They continue to oppose the Bill in the other place and are likely to oppose it in any way that they can. One of the nine is likely to secure a judgment against the Bill because it is outwith the EEC directive. In those circumstances we should slow the Bill's passage and stop proceedings now, so that we do not make a fool of the House which is our principal legislature.

Mr. Meale: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. He will recall that the difficulties of Nottinghamshire county council arose because of damage caused and that the Trent area, where the power stations are situated, is about 70 miles from Immingham. But that council, which is part of the Coalfield Communities Campaign, said that it would have to go to appeal because of the likely environmental damage and because an environmental impact survey will not be undertaken before the Bill is passed.

In a letter from that council to the CCC stressing its reluctance to support the Bill, it gives as one reason the fact that being a highway authority, which it is, it cannot restrict the movement of heavy goods vehicles on primary road networks. Another is that the power of the council as a highway authority is limited to the immediate access road to a power station, so it is unlikely that access could be prevented for more than eight hours in any one day.

Those are both important factors. Millions of pounds of damage will be done to the environment and to the road network throughout Nottinghamshire with no environmental survey in sight before a Bill that will affect the county so badly is passed.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Before you took the chair, I raised on a point of order with the previous occupant of the Chair the need for a statement on the explosion just down the road at St. James's. It seems more than a little, not odd, but out of place and insensitive, for the Government not to make a statement before 10 o'clock on that incident purely because they want this debate concluded. I raised that point of order at least a quarter of an hour ago, and I thought that the Minister for Public Transport would convey that request to one of his ministerial colleagues and would manage to get one of them to give the House a report on that explosion. It seems to me that the Government are in a conspiracy with the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) and that they are refusing to make a statement because it might interrupt the debate, with the result that we would not conclude the business before the House. If that is the case, the Government are playing a very dangerous game.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I heard the hon. Gentleman's point of order when he raised it some time ago. The then occupant of the Chair gave the hon. Gentleman the correct response, that there has been no request at this stage for a statement by any Minister. But of course members of the Treasury Bench are fully aware of the hon. Gentleman's comments.

Mr. Barron: Before returning to my arguments, I will reply briefly to my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield, who raised the important issue of an environmental assessment. I have a letter from the chief executive of PowerGen, Mr. Ed Wallace, to Mr. Stuart Bradley, managing director of Associated British Ports, the promoters of the Bill, on 21 March. It is a short letter, but its contents are important in terms of the environmental impact of the proposal on the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield, and of neighbouring constituencies, including that of the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes. Mr. Wallace wrote:

"Following our recent conversation, PowerGen has given consideration to the various methods of transport which are available to take coal from the port of Immingham to PowerGen's various generating stations. We have looked at both the commercial and environmental issues involved"—hardly an environmental assessment. He continued:

"I am pleased to be able to confirm that we view the use of rail transport by British Rail to be an acceptable means of transport having a minimal environmental impact."

I am sure all the right hon. and hon. Members agree with that. He goes on:

"Clearly, the use of such a mode of transport by PowerGen would not preclude the use of any other method if PowerGen so determine it to be desirable for commercial reasons."

That letter was relevant to my hon. Friend's question, and I read it out because any hon. Members with coal mines in their constituencies—there are a considerable number in mine—will know that when British Coal or anyone else, such as the CEGB, moves coal and the load

is not sizeable enough to fill a train, it goes by road. That creates havoc in my constituency and in many others, and we do not want that to spread.

We have changed the nature of buying coal for electricity generation. The industry is now considering buying coal in small amounts on the spot market at set times to make a quick buck. It is not importing coal as it used to do, under a 12-month contract, at a set price. With the changed circumstances, the coal may be imported in small ships, and it will not go by train because the shipload is meant for diverse locations and the amounts will be smaller than a train load. Therefore, we will have lorries running round the countryside.

9.15 pm

Mr. Meale: My hon. Friend is right to raise the issue of the environmental impact assessment. In Committee, it was suggested that coal could be transferred to rail, as my hon. Friend pointed out, and to barges. That was rejected. It is important for me to mention that point because other Opposition Members and one Conservative Member are also concerned about the issue and because there are no canals in and around the north Nottinghamshire area which could be used to take coal to power stations—it has to come by road.

Because of the Beeching cuts, only limited use of the rail network is possible from Retford works to Nottingham city and on to the Trent Valley power stations. If any coal is transferred from the Humberside-Immingham area to my part of the country it has to go by road, and the local authority—Nottinghamshire county council—has to bear the financial burden, because there is no alternative.

Mr. Barron: My hon. Friend makes his point very well and understands the dangers involved.

Mr. O'Brien: Will my hon Friend consider examples of areas where coal is transported by road to power stations? If he goes to Ferrybridge C power station he will find that the grass verges and the road are black with coal dust from the wagons which transport the fuel into the power station. There are canals and rail services, but because the Government in many instances oppose British Rail and British waterways they encourage transport by road, which creates tremendous problems.

The environmental issues are significant, and my hon. Friend is right to mention that the Bill will cause more transportation of coal by road. The examples are there and if anyone wants to see them I invite them to my hon. Friend's constituency, where I live. There is evidence of environmental blight caused by extensive use of road transport to carry coal. I hope that Conservative Members will listen attentively to what my hon. Friend is saying.

Mr. Barron: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right. The problem affects his constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. As you know, my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) mentioned the bomb explosion not far away from here. I understand that there are a number of trapped and injured people at St. James's. Could you tell the House whether the Home Secretary will be dealing with the police regulations which follows this business, in which case it would clearly be convenient for him to make a statement at 10 o'clock about the explosion? If you have received no information, can you tell the Home Secretary that the House expects a statement at that time because of his presence here?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I have received no information, but I am sure—as I said earlier and as Mr. Deputy Speaker said earlier—that it has been noted by the Treasury Bench.

Mr. McCartney: On a separate point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. About 30 minutes ago I rose on a point of order concerning Henley remand centre. Since then I have been informed that two 19-year-olds, who had not been found guilty of any offence, have hanged themselves in their cells. To my certain knowledge, there have been four deaths at the remand centre in the past 24 months. The position is becoming intolerable, due to the closing of Risley remand centre because of the conditions there and the need to transfer its inmates to other centres in the north-west. This amounts to a crisis for the families. They know that deaths have occurred at the centre. Moreover, on three occasions during the past 12 months industrial action has been taken by the staff because of conditions that affect both the staff and those on remand.

There is to be a debate later on the police regulations. I hope that the usual channels will refer this matter back as a matter of urgency. All hon. Members want information as soon as possible from the Home Office about both incidents. One is very much more serious than the other, but the deaths at the remand centre amount to a tragedy for all the families concerned.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Both incidents are seriously to be regretted. I have received no information about the matter, but I am sure that those on the Treasury Bench will have noted it. It is not, however, a matter for this debate.

Mr. Harry Barnes: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Compared with the previous two points of order, this is a minor, technical and procedural matter that relates to the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill. Before you came to the Chair, my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) suggested that the Bill should not be proceeded with until the promoters had provided us with the relevant sections of the Lands Clauses Consolidation Act 1845. This may be an even more serious matter than that which was raised by my hon. Friend. The only copy of that Act in the Chamber is held by my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley).

The first Lords amendments seems to be minor and technical: that the reference to section 85 should be changed to a reference to section 85E. The sections of the 1985 legislation that are relevant to this measure are sections 77 to 85. Section 85 is now to be referred to as section 85E. The 1845 Act consisted of only nine sections that occupied two and a half pages——

Mr. Michael Brown *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I heard the original point of order. *[Interruption.]* Order. The Chair must occasionally be allowed to say a word. The matter that the hon. Gentleman has raised will be an important matter to debate as soon as we reach the amendments. Mr. Michael Brown.

Mr. Michael Brown *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 173, Noes 145.

Division No. 261] **[9.24 pm**

AYES

Allason, Rupert
Arbuthnot, James
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cash, William
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Harris, David
Hayward, Robert
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hill, James
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thurnham, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wallace, James
Ward, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Derek Conway and
Mr. Edward Leigh.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Boateng, Paul
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Carr, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foulkes, George
Galloway, George
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Illsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilfedder, James
Knowles, Michael
Lamond, James
Latham, Michael
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McLeish, Henry
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Ruddock, Joan

Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Spearing, Nigel
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stott, Roger
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Harry Barnes and
Mr. Michael Welsh.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put accordingly, That the Lords amendments be now considered:—

The House divided: Ayes 174, Noes 156.

Division No. 262] **[9.37 pm**

AYES

Allason, Rupert
Arbuthnot, James
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Atkinson, David
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Harris, David
Hayward, Robert
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hill, James
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wallace, James
Ward, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Derek Conway and
Mr. Edward Leigh.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alexander, Richard
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Carr, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Galloway, George
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilfedder, James
Knowles, Michael
Lamond, James
Latham, Michael
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*

Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McLeish, Henry
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Ruddock, Joan
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stott, Roger
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. George Buckley and
Mr. Eric Illsley.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The Question is, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendments.

Several Hon. Members: *rose——*

Madam Deputy Speaker: On a point of order—Mr. Hardy.

Mr. Hardy: I thought that I was merely intervening.

Madam Deputy Speaker: No, on a point of order, Mr. Hardy.

Mr. Hardy: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. If an hon. Member rises to respond to your suggestion that we debate the proposition that we agree with the Lords in the said amendments, is it appropriate for you to decide that I am making a point of order?

Madam Deputy Speaker: If an hon. Member rises and seeks to catch my eye, I decide whether to bestow my favour on him.

Mr. Hardy: I am exceedingly grateful, Madam Deputy Speaker. I take it that we are dealing with all the Lords amendments in the one debate, but that, at the end of that debate—if it ends—we shall proceed to divide the House on each amendment in turn. I should be grateful if you would clarify that point, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Yes, the procedure is that we debate the amendments en bloc, but any hon. Member may call a Division on any one amendment.

Mr. Hardy: I am most grateful. That means that we are in difficulty, and that the debate may not be as concise and simple to follow at it would have been if we were taking each amendment separately. Inevitably, we shall be jumping from one amendment to another. If that is the rule of the House, hon. Members will have to be more patient and accept that the debate will inevitably be more convoluted and complex than if we were debating each amendment separately.

A number of Conservative Members—not least the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown)—may take the view that the amendments are completely trivial, and perhaps rather technical. However, Opposition Members do not accept that they are trivial, and—obviously—we are critical of the proposition that because they are relatively technical the House should not consider them at all. We could not possibly subscribe to such an illogical and unreasonable approach. Each amendment deserves careful scrutiny and detailed consideration.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Before you were in the Chair I referred to Standing Order No. 186 on private Bills. The Chairman of Ways and Means may require the promoters to set out amendments and to print clauses fully with the amendments in brackets and in bold print to help the House. As the debate is to finish shortly, it would be helpful if you could ask the Chairman of Ways and Means to arrange for that printing to be done. As you have made the point that we are dealing with the first two amendments together—I hope that we shall take the last four amendments separately—it would help the House if there were a requirement under Standing Order No. 186 to produce the information for the House. I hope that you will agree to request the Chairman of Ways and Means to do that.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The Chairman of Ways and Means has made his decision on that matter. He may or may not print the amendments as he wishes. The amendments are by no means substantive.

Clause 3

INTERPRETATION OF GENERAL ENACTMENTS

Lords amendment: in page 3, line 10, leave out '85' and insert '85E'.

Mr. Michael Brown: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

There are two amendments to page 3——

Mr. Hardy: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will come to his point of order this time.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have answered the hon. Gentleman's point of order. I have a point of order from the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy).

Mr. Hardy: My point of order follows on from the point of my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer). You have decided, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the six amendments should be taken together, even though we shall divide separately on them. That would make for a complex and convoluted debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South has properly pointed out that, although the Chairman of Ways and Means regards the amendments as slight and technical, nevertheless they are sufficiently important to merit the

attention and attendance of a substantial number of right hon. and hon. Members. In view of that, it is reasonable for my hon. Friend to require a full presentation of the amendments. I see no reason why the amendments should not be specifically spelt out. If one looks at the first amendment——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I think that I understand the hon. Gentleman's point of order. *[Interruption.]* Order. I am sure that I am entitled to give the hon. Gentleman an answer. I have answered the points of order. I refer the hon. Gentleman and the House to recent precedents on the Isle of Wight and the International Westminster Bank Bills. All the Lords amendments were taken together. We are following a precedent of the House.

Mr. O'Brien: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am not challenging your ruling, but may I ask your guidance on how we are to proceed with the amendments? Do I take it that we shall debate them in the pendulum manner that was outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy), so that we shall move from one amendment to the other, with the whole lot being voted on at the end of the debate? Is it possible to deal with the amendments individually and not consider them in their proper order?

Madam Deputy Speaker: The amendments will be taken en bloc. Hon. Members will debate the amendments collectively. At the end of the debate, any hon. Member who wishes to divide the House on any of the amendments —and I will go through them individually—will have the opportunity to do so.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I did not quite hear everything that you said, for the very good reason that Liberal Democrat Members were discussing why they vote with Conservative Members. The drift of what I heard you say was that precedence suggests that all the amendments should be taken together and then votes taken separately, if required. You used arguments about the Isle of Wight Bill and so on——

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.
Debate to be resumed on Thursday next.

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Leader of the House knows very well that there is a great deal of disquiet in all parts of the House about reports of an explosion in central London. I think he shares my view that it might help the House to progress and help to allay some of the disquiet if he made a brief statement on the subject.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I was close to the scene of the explosion a little over an hour ago. The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis and I went as close as was judged prudent. We could not get a view of the scene, nor is it possible—I have consulted subsequently my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary—to give any definite information about the scale of the damage, its cause or the number of casualties. I am afraid that I cannot give any more information to the House tonight. Obviously, my right hon. and learned Friend will, in the light of further information as it becomes available, consider whether he should make a statement to the House tomorrow in the usual way.

Police

10.1 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): I beg to move,

That the Police (Amendment) Regulations 1990 (S.I., 1990, No. 401), dated 1st March 1990, a copy of which was laid before this House on 9th March, be revoked.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): With this it will be convenient to discuss the next two motions on the Order Paper:

That the Police (Scotland) (Amendment) Regulations 1990 (S.I., 1990, No. 469), dated 4th March 1990, a copy of which was laid before this House on 9th March, be revoked.

That the Royal Ulster Constabulary (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 1990 (S.R.(N.I.), 1990, No. 82), dated 26th February 1990, a copy of which was laid before this House on 7th March, be revoked.

Mr. Hattersley: With the agreement of the House, I intend to concentrate almost all of my remarks specifically on our prayer concerning the Police (Amendment) Regulations 1990, as the new regulations affect England and Wales. Others of my right hon. and hon. Friends will, if they catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, refer to the two other sets of regulations covering police arrangements for Scotland and Northern Ireland. In any event, the principle that we are discussing tonight is the same in each of the sets of regulations, and hon. Members who share my view on the way that the principle of this affair has been dealt with will share my view about the unacceptability of each of the three sets of regulations and will wish to vote against them.

I shall deal principally with the position affecting England and Wales, and I shall begin by briefly setting out the background to the sorry story on which the House must pass judgment this afternoon. The story begins with a claim by the Police Federation—I should more properly say, the employee side of the joint negotiating machinery—for an increase in housing allowance. An increase was, in its view, made necessary by the replacement of rates by poll tax, which for most policemen, as is the case with most other members of society, resulted in a substantially higher payment. It is no secret that the Government then advised the employers' side of the joint negotiating machinery—that is, the police committees of England and Wales, meeting together from time to time in London—on how they should respond to the federation's claim.

The Government said that the poll tax was a personal and individual tax and, unlike the rates that it replaced, was not appropriate for reimbursement by employers to employees. The employers—I repeat, basically local authorities, themselves basically short of income—accepted the argument and made a counter-proposal. That was to replace rent allowance with a new housing allowance which would be simply based on a rent calculation containing no element which would compensate what had previously been reimbursement of rates charges. The reimbursement of rates charges was previously part of the rent arrangement and, until then, had been an integral part of the rent allowance.

The employers' proposal would have left most—perhaps all—police officers substantially worse off. Not surprisingly, it was rejected by the Police Federation, which put the claim to arbitration. As is the case with most arbitrations, it was a compromise between two positions. However, it is important to understand that the arbitrators accepted what for the sake of this evening's argument, I shall call "the underlying principle of the poll tax"—that it was regarded as a personal tax, not appropriate for reimbursement. I hope that we shall hear nothing more this evening about the police wishing, and demanding that they particularly, individually, and uniquely should have their poll tax reimbursed when nurses and others do not enjoy that privilege.

The arbitration award said specifically that it was the police officer's individual responsibility to pay what the Government insisted was an individual tax. In consequence, the arbitration award fell far short of the Police Federation's initial claim. However, it was based on the equitable principle that the arbitrators set out in paragraph 49 of the award, which stated:

"Except for our treatment of the Community Charge"—as some people call the poll tax—

"we emphasise that nothing that we have proposed is intended to leave the police officers, as viewed generally, either better or worse off than before".

Many police officers would regard the phrase

"except for the incidence of the poll tax"

as a large exception, but

"except for the incidence of the poll tax",

the arbitrators wished to leave police officers no worse off and no better off than before. To most reasonable people, I am sure that that would sound a reasonable answer.

On that basis, the employers—the local authorities—accepted the arbitration award. The employees—the Police Federation—also accepted the award, despite their strong reservations; they believed that, having asked for arbitration, it was their duty to accept what the arbitrators put to them. I have yet to meet a policeman who regards the award as reasonable, let alone generous, but the employees took the view that, having put the matter to arbitration, they had an obligation in honour to accept what the arbitrators proposed.

However, that was not the Government's view. The Government vetoed the arbitration, despite their professed support for the Edmund-Davies pay formula. As we all know, because this has been repeated in the House almost every year since the Edmund-Davies committee reported 12 years ago, Edmund-Davies explicitly stated that arbitration awards should be overturned only when such arbitrary action was justified on the grounds of the "utmost" or "grave" national emergency. Perhaps the Home Secretary will describe the "utmost" national emergency and the "grave" national emergency that justifies him overturning the arbitration award for the first time, or perhaps he will simply admit that he no longer honours and respects the Edmund-Davies proposal.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): Is the right hon. Gentleman saying that, in the unlikely event of a Labour Government being returned, he, as a potential future Home Secretary, will promise now to honour the Edmund-Davies formula?

Mr. Hattersley: I fully accept that, without qualification. Indeed, I have seen the rather silly letter that the Home Secretary sent to Conservative Back Benchers which deals with exactly that point. I propose to come to that in a moment, but so that the hon. Gentleman should not be over-anxious in quoting the Home Secretary's misquotation of me, let me assure him that we would honour the Edmund-Davies formula. Indeed, we set up the Edmund-Davies committee. The Edmund-Davies pay formula is the result of a Labour initiative. I say a third

time and I shall say again towards the end of my brief speech that we would certainly honour the Edmund-Davies proposals.

Will the Home Secretary tell us whether he regards the national emergency as so grave that it justifies vetoing the proposal, or is he simply saying that he no longer respects at least that part of the proposal? The veto of the award puts in their proper place all the Conservative platitudes about supporting the police. This is not a policy for cutting crime. Everything that was said about supporting the police was cheap party propaganda, to be abandoned and forgotten when it was convenient. I hope that, as a result of this, at least in future we shall be spared the pretence that the police forces are the property of the Conservative party. That myth was shattered when the Home Secretary visited Scarborough last month.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): What will the right hon. Gentleman do?

Mr. Hattersley: I shall deal with that. One of the flattering things about the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence)—I use the word "learned" in inverted commas, as one properly should—is that he always intervenes on the assumption that I am soon to be Home Secretary. It is a wholly proper assumption for him to make, and I propose to respond in exactly those terms.

The scheme which the present Home Secretary proposed in place of arbitration has been twice amended since it was originally announced, and it now has four basic elements. Officers presently receiving rent allowance will receive it, but will have it frozen at present levels. New recruits will receive a new housing allowance based on the old rent allowance, but excluding the rate element; thus, it will be considerably smaller than it would have been. The smaller allowance for new recruits will be updated annually on the basis of the retail prices index. When the new recruits' allowance catches up with the level paid to officers already receiving allowance this year, those officers will begin to receive an additional increase calculated on the RPI.

What that means in hard terms can easily be described: it is a substantial immediate loss of earnings for this year's recruits. They will earn substantially less than they would have earned had the Home Secretary not vetoed their award. In Norfolk, they will lose £1,674 a year, in Greater Manchester £1,245, in Surrey £1,109 and in Warwickshire £811 a year.

Officers serving this year whose housing and rent allowance is to be frozen will certainly receive no less money next year than now, but their rent allowance may well be frozen for 10 years or more, until the reduced allowance now being paid to new recruits catches up with what they are presently receiving. Serving officers are to face a decline in the real level of their rent allowance, because the money level is to be frozen for 10 years or more.

That is our first reason for praying against the regulations tonight. The principle that arbitration should be upheld is dear to this side of the House, but related to the principle is the practice. All reasonable people will take exception to the proposition that an employer can arbitrarily tell his employees that over the next 10 years they are, in effect, to receive a reduction in the pay which they legitimately expected and which was granted to them according to their terms and conditions of service.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Will the right hon. Gentleman explain to me how I can justify to my Derbyshire constituents that police officers receive £4,800 in rent allowance tax-free, which is over £90 a week, when many of my constituents do not even get that in total salary before tax?

Mr. Hattersley: The hon. Lady may not find the argument particularly attractive, but the way to justify it is to say that she believes in keeping her promises. This is an arrangement between the Government and the police, and until the Government want to negotiate another arrangement, it is dishonourable for them arbitrarily to abandon the existing one. The hon. Lady will find that her constituents are greatly more attracted to the idea of the Government keeping their promises than she believes, and she will find my case proven at the next general election.

Our second objection is that, as a result of the Home Secretary's action, many thousands of police officers will receive less than it was reasonable for them to expect and which was specified for them under the Edmund-Davies formula. When the Home Secretary speaks, he will doubtless say again that no serving officer will be worse off next year, and that is true. But the year after next, and for year after year subsequently, while the new recruits' rent allowance catches up with the level enjoyed by serving officers, those officers' real level of rent allowance will be cut.

Our third objection is the effect that it must have and will have on police morale, to a disastrous extent. There was never a time when a boost to the morale of the police force was more necessary than now. Policemen say openly and frankly that their morale has been damaged by the Government's privatisation of police services—by the use of private security services in areas that the police believe are proper only for them to deal with.

Police morale has been damaged also by a shortage of manpower, the facts of which are constantly obscured. Figures announced in one White Paper are repeated the following year as if they were new. No allowance is ever made for the reduction in police hours that comes from a reduction in overtime—although that reduction is often made to finance extra recruits. Most important of all, the number of new recruits is never compared with the extra duties now imposed on policemen.

Police officers are now required to perform tasks on the beat and in the station which would have been unthinkable before the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. In the judgment of chief officers and members of the Police Federation, the police are more overstretched today than in 1980. Add to that the fact that, according to all informed predictions, we are about to see an unprecedented rise in crime rates to record levels, and this is clearly a lunatic time to assault police morale, yet that is exactly what the Government are doing. The intriguing question is why they are doing it.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Given the history of many Labour local authorities, from which the right hon. Gentleman might quite properly wish to dissociate himself, of doing all they can to undermine their local police services, is he saying that he is setting forth among his other commitments one to increase the size of the police force? If so, by how much does he wish to increase its size, and what will it cost?

Mr. Hattersley: Of course I am setting forth that commitment. There are vast amounts of money to be saved in the Home Secretary's budget in the area in which it is most profligately spent, in sending to prison men and women who should not be sent there and who could be punished outside prison in ways better for the community and much cheaper for the Exchequer.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Waddington) *rose——*

Mr. Hattersley: The Home Secretary is about to intervene—I shall gladly give way—to say that he published a White Paper on punishment by sentencing in the community. When he does that, I shall welcome a sinner come late to repentance, because he is adopting a policy which the Opposition have been advocating for 10 years.

Mr. Waddington: The right hon. Gentleman does not lack cheek. He waits until we publish a White Paper which advises more punishment in the community, and he then gets to his feet and pretends that it is Labour policy, when, throughout the whole time that it was in office, Labour carried out entirely contrary policies. I have never heard such nonsense in all my life.

Mr. Hattersley: With respect, the Home Secretary is a little confused about the facts. As the police know, if he does not, we published a document on that issue three months before he did and—what is more important—we have been advocating that policy for 10 years longer than he has.

Before I deal with my next point, I wish to answer the matter raised by the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) about Labour local authorities. There was a time when we were accused of failing to support neighbourhood watch schemes. At present, Labour local authorities are virtually unanimous in their support of neighbourhood watch. I notice the chairman of Crime Concern nodding in his place on the Tory Back Benches. No doubt he will nod again, as he is nodding now, when I say that the problem with neighbourhood watch now—as he has identified—is that the Government are not providing enough money to enable it to be extended and improved.

I want to return to the subject of police morale, because all informed predictions suggest that we are about to see an unprecedented rise in the crime rate. It is impossible to imagine a worse moment to strike such a severe blow at poice morale. Once again, I ask why the Government choose to do so at this time.

A reason of sorts was given by the Home Secretary in a letter which he sent to Tory Back Benchers—I am not sure whether he sent it to all Back Benchers or to hand-picked Back Benchers—on 19 June.

Mr. Marlow: He did not send one to me.

Mr. Hattersley: Well, no one would choose the hon. Member.

The letter included the following sentence, saying that the Home Secretary

"could not accept a recommendation which would have meant rent allowances continuing to rise at a rate which bore no relationship whatsoever to the actual cost of running a home."

What the Home Secretary did not tell his colleagues, and what the letter did not say, was that the independent arbitrators, picked in part by the Home Secretary for their independence and wisdom, had made an exact and specific judgment on whether housing and rents allowance was rising at an unacceptable speed. They said:

"We were given no compelling evidence that the level of rent allowance is out of control. The level is fixed by established criteria and, whilst it is not suggested that these should not, from time to time, be reviewed, those currently in use appear to confirm the logic of previous accepted criteria."

No evidence that the rise was running out of control was given, which is the excuse provided by the Home Secretary, in the hope that a few more supine Back Benchers would go into his Lobby this evening. The Home Secretary knew, as he has always known, how weak his case for vetoing the award is. Indeed, I give him credit, as a blunt, practical man, that, had he been in charge when the award was veteod, it would have gone ahead. The poisoned chalice has been passed to him and, if I may scandalously mix my metaphors, he must defend it as best he can. That is why he made two extraordinary sets of wholly cosmetic adjustments to the original awards.

I shall take one example from each group. The first adjustments were made on 15 March—the day of the police national rally in Preston. It belatedly agreed to the re-evaluation of those rent allowances—about half the total—which were due for bi-annual review this year, but for which no review was to be allowed. As the meeting was taking place in Preston, the Home Secretary belatedly agreed to a re-evaluation being carried out, but only on the basis of the retail prices index, and not, as is usually the case, on housing costs. Thus, he left many thousands of police officers disadvantaged as compared with other officers.

Last week he made a series of adjustments, which were even more bizarre and wholly cosmetic. One was the announcement that, if one officer was married to another officer and one of them took unpaid maternity leave, the officer who remained at work would no longer receive only half rent allowance but would receive the whole rent allowance. Of course, the officer who remained at work would have qualified for the whole allowance anyway, since the other officer was no longer being paid by the police service, and did not qualify for any rent allowance. The Home Secretary should be driven into—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Waddington: Opposition Members may think that these are funny matters, but all three of them arrived on my desk as a result of representations made by the Police Federation. Surely I am entitled to some credit for listening to their concerns and for trying to do something about them.

Mr. Hattersley: I make no secret of the fact that my party consults the Police Federation. The proposal was described to me at 3 o'clock this afternoon by the Police Federation as absurd. If, however, the Home Secretary wants to apply his fine and clear mind to the logic of promising to pay somebody something to which they are already entitled, we shall be delighted to hear his explanation.

No one who considers these matters can doubt that these cosmetic changes reflect the absurdity of the position in which the Home Secretary finds himself. Therefore, I want to suggest to him how he could get himself out of the mess—a mess so obvious, even to him, that the Government have run away from debating the subject for

the last four months. The prayer should have been debated soon after the regulations were laid. It is a scandal—a legitimate scandal, in terms of the House of Commons' rules, but a scandal nevertheless—that we are debating the regulations months after they came into operation.

I have no doubt that the Home Secretary thinks that, by playing for time, he has sapped the resolve of some of his Back Benchers who at one time intended to vote against him this evening. As the night wears on, we shall see the sort of metal they are made of. The fact that the Home Secretary has—I repeat—run away from the debate for four months suggests that he at least is beginning to understand the problems that he faces. I hope that he has the grace to welcome some advice about how to get out of them.

First, the right hon. and learned Gentleman should honour the arbitration. That is the basic principle of good industrial relations—certainly for a Government who prefer compromise to consultation and for a Government who understand the special position of the police force, which is unable, quite rightly, to take sterner action in its own interests. Secondly, when the Home Secretary has honoured the arbitration, he should think about the long term. If he agrees, as I do, specifically and explicitly with the arbitrators who say that police pay contains too many anomalies and inconsistencies, he should set out to negotiate—I emphasise, negotiate—a new deal with the Police Federation.

In his letter to Tory Back Benchers, the Home Secretary was kind enough to quote part of my speech to the Police Federation conference. Working from the written text, he correctly quoted the following words:

"The time has come for a general re-examination of the structure of wages within your service."

Then there was a line of dots in the Home Secretary's text. He then quoted me as saying:

"If the structure of police pay is to be changed, it must be changed by negotiation."

That is my view and opinion. However, the Home Secretary then thought it right to put his own gloss on my view and opinion. He said:

"Labour have not bound themselves to honour the Edmund-Davies formula."

Some of the Home Secretary's Back Benchers fell for that sentence. Even on the evidence that the Home Secretary quoted, that is a strange proposition. Since the Labour party is committed to a negotiated settlement, the proposition assumes that the Police Federation would be prepared to negotiate away Edmund-Davies, which is unlikely. Moreover, there was an addition to my speech that the Home Secretary will be pleased to hear when I send him the tape recording of what I said. It was added because I was advised on the morning that I made the speech that

"Some malicious idiot might try to interpret your offer as something different from Edmund-Davies."

I do not know to whom that referred, but I thought it right to insert the words

"Of course, until the negotiations are completed, Edmund-Davies will be honoured."

The truth of the matter is that Edmund-Davies is not being honoured now by the Government. Edmund-Davies is inherently a proposition on wages and conditions, and conditions relate to housing and rent allowance. The arbitrators said in their award that, if the Government interfered with the proposition on housing and rent allowance, they would be disturbing the pattern of the Edmund-Davies formula. The Government have certainly done that.

I repeat to the Home Secretary that it is bad not only for the individual police officers who will lose over the years but for the country because of the effect that it will have on police morale. Police morale will suffer not only because the officers will lose money but because the arbitrary, unthinking way in which it was done will convince them that the Government are prepared to sacrifice their interests for a comparatively small amount of money.

Many hon. Members will stand up for their interests tonight. Some of them will be Conservative Members and the police will be comforted by that, but I believe that they will be more comforted to know that, sooner or later, they will get the pay award that they deserve.

10.30 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Waddington): The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparbrook (Mr. Hattersley) has constructed his case on an entirely false basis, as will become clear to him after the first few minutes of my speech.

First, I remind the House that we are debating three separate sets of amending regulations relating to England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland respectively. The arrangements for payment of rent or housing allowance have long been due for an overhaul. Rent allowance was intended to place officers who live in their own homes on a broadly equal footing with those who live in a police house or quarters, but there has long ceased to be a credible relationship between the two.

Much has been made by the right hon. Gentleman of the decision to set aside certain conclusions of the police arbitration tribunal. There were, however, very strong grounds for doing that, as I shall explain—*[Interruption.]* If the right hon. Gentleman and other Opposition Members will listen, they will learn something which they obviously do not yet know.

In any case I must make it clear that the tribunal is there to enable the two sides of the police negotiating board to arrive at recommendations when negotiations break down. These recommendations are then put to me and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. But tribunal recommendations are not binding on the Secretaries of State, as is absolutely clear from the Police Negotiating Act 1980. If the right hon. Gentleman would do me the courtesy in future of reading the legislation before he makes his speech, he would know that is the case.

Mr. Hattersley: I am not suggesting for a moment that the Home Secretary behaved illegally. Had he behaved illegally, we should have pursued him in a different fashion. I am suggesting that he behaved wrongly. That is the case that he has to answer rather than some spurious suggestion as to whether he behaved within the law. We took that for granted.

Mr. Waddington: That is the usual waffle we hear from the right hon. Gentleman. The Police Negotiating Act 1980 went through the House long after Edmund-Davies. If he looks carefully at the Police Negotiating Act, he will see that the function of the police arbitration tribunal is to

[Mr. Waddington]

try to reconcile the two sides on the police negotiating board, but when eventually a recommendation is made to me, it is for the Secretaries of State to decide whether to accept those recommendations. That has been so since Edmund-Davies reported, as the right hon. Gentleman must know full well. It is therefore complete balderdash to speak of a breach of an agreement with the police, because no agreement is involved. The award that was made by Edmund-Davies was finally implemented by the Government, and the 1980 Act reaffirmed that eventually it is for the Secretaries of State to decide whether to accept an arbitration decision.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): If the Home Secretary is right that it is complete balderdash, will he explain why level-headed members of the police force in Scotland are so angry about what has happened? Why should they be so angry if it is complete balderdash?

Mr. Waddington: I am addressing my remarks to the suggestion by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook that an arbitration decision by the police arbitration tribunal is binding on the Government.

Mr. Hattersley: In honour, if not in law.

Mr. Waddington: In honour, if not in law; that is what the right hon. Gentleman says. I do not suggest for a moment that if a person who is receiving a large allowance is told that it will not be increased year after year he will not be unhappy; of course he will.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Does the Home Secretary accept that we are talking not merely about new recruits but about existing members of the force being severely affected by the regulations? Does he also agree that because police forces do not resort to industrial action they have always relied on the arbitration service to reach an appropriate deal? Does he feel no moral responsibility to members of the police forces?

Mr. Waddington: If the hon. Lady will let me get on with my speech, she will find that we have made special provisions for existing officers. The original provisions made for them were made more generous as a result of representations by my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) and the Police Federation. We must make our own decisions on these matters, on the merits of the recommendations, regardless of whether they are made after recourse to arbitration.

Every four or five years, police pay and allowances are reviewed by the police negotiating board, and they were so reviewed in 1988. After a reference to the tribunal by the official side and an award subject to further negotiations in the board on a variety of detailed matters, things moved slowly and further recourse to the tribunal seemed likely.

Meanwhile, the then Secretaries of State were worried that any outcome based on the tribunal's award was likely to give rise to problems, and it seemed wrong that the two sides of the police negotiating board should continue to talk without being made aware of those difficulties. Therefore, my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd), who was then Home Secretary, wrote to the independent chairman of the police negotiating board on 23 October last year, pointing out, among other things, the difficulty of a formula that involved reimbursement of rates, when they no longer existed, and giving notice to the board that the Secretaries of State could not commit themselves to meeting the recommendations of the board solely because they were supported by an award of the police arbitration tribunal.

Last autumn, my predecessor made it abundantly plain that it would be very difficult to achieve a formula which resulted in rent allowance being paid on the basis that rates, which were no longer payable, should be included in the total which was then divided into rent allowance.

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): That has nothing to do with it.

Mr. Waddington: The hon. Gentleman should know —I am sure that he does—that that was the reasoning of the police negotiating board.

Despite the letter, the negotiations proceeded on their original basis. Disagreements about the remaining issues were resolved by a further application to the tribunal in November, and as a result of this second major award by the tribunal a police negotiating board agreement was finally delivered to the Secretaries of State on 20 December. On 4 January, the board was informed that the agreement was unacceptable to me and was asked to comment on draft regulations incorporating what we believed to be the right approach.

On 17 January, I met the chairman and secretary of the staff side together with my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge and, as a result of representations made, I agreed to make major changes. But there were certain key recommendations of the board which I could not possibly accept. For example, the old allowance was based on the supposed open market rent of a typical police house plus rates, and I could not possibly agree that into the pool out of which the new allowance was to be paid should go an amount to cover rates when they no longer existed; nor could I accept the recommendation that police officers in police houses should receive the new allowance and pay rent.

The payment of rent would have meant giving the occupants the right to buy, and police houses are badly needed—*[Laughter.]* I do not see what is particularly funny about that. It would not have been wise of a Secretary of State to accept a recommendation by the police negotiating board which would have resulted in people in police houses paying rent having the right to buy and therefore the stock of police houses gradually diminishing. *[Laughter.]*

I assume from the hilarity that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook agrees that that would have been absurd. If so, where does his argument that one must accept all the decisions of the arbitration tribunal stand? It is as plain as a pikestaff that the right hon. Gentleman recognises that that is one recommendation of the arbitration tribunal that could not possibly have been accepted by any responsible Secretary of State.

Moreover, serious difficulties could have been caused to individual officers in the not unlikely event in some areas that the rent they were charged would exceed the new allowance. Some officers would almost certainly have lost heavily.

The new allowance, still based on what is assessed to be the open market rent of a typical police house now in a particular force area, will have to be revalued from time to time, and the board proposed that it should be increased

every two years by a combination of two indices. The first was the index of regional house price movements compiled by the Building Societies Association. The second was the housing element of the retail prices index. The logic of basing an index on house prices, which represent a potential capital gain to the house owner, is, to say the least, highly questionable. Such an index would almost certainly lead to steep increases over time and a return to the craziness of the old system from which most people would say we had to escape. It led to completely bizarre increases, which the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook has not faced up to, such as the 57·5 per cent. increase for the Metropolitan police in 1989 and 67·2 per cent. for Warwickshire in 1989—in other words, the increases did not bear the slightest relationship to the true increase in the housing costs of the officers concerned and their absurdity could not possibly be justified on the basis that they were necessary to maintain recruitment.

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): Who authorised the increase for the Metropolitan police of 57·5 per cent?

Mr. Waddington: The amount awarded to the Metropolitan police was the amount calculated on the regulations approved by the House. The new allowance will therefore be increased every two years in line with movements in the general index of retail prices, an index which, of course, includes mortgage repayment costs.

There is then an odd thing called the compensatory grant—the repayment by the police authority of tax paid on rent allowance—which is a considerable benefit in itself. Here the tribunal came up with a very strange suggestion. It wanted everyone to lose compensatory grant from now, those in service before 1 April and new recruits alike, but recommended that the money saved as a result should be used to make part of the new rent allowance pensionable. It seemed to us that it would be difficult to devise any fair or logical scheme on those lines, and in any event police pension arrangements are already generous and it is difficult to see any justification for further improvement in them.

Therefore we decided that serving officers should keep the compensatory grant as part of crucial transitional provisions to protect them. In short, those officers receiving rent allowance on 31 March will continue to receive the same level of allowance, including the rates element, despite no rates being payable by them. They will continue to be paid compensatory grant until the new housing allowance, which as I have said is based on the rent of a typical police house in the force area uprated by the RPI, reaches the same level.

Mr. Marlow: It has been explained to me, although I do not know whether the explanation was accurate, that some police forces had their rent allowances uprated last year according to housing costs and other forces are having the rent allowances uprated this year according to the RPI. It is suggested that similar police forces in similar parts of the country with similar housing costs are getting different allowances. Is that correct? If it is, how does my right hon. and learned Friend justify it?

Mr. Waddington: I shall come to that in a moment. I can tell my hon. Friend now that rent allowance always differed from force to force because it was based on different housing costs in the sense that it was based on the typical value of a police house in one area compared with another. Some police forces have always had their rent allowances updated in an even year while some have had them updated in an odd year. Simply as a result of that, representations were made to me by my right hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow), my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge and Police Federation officers. As a result of their representations I made an important concession. Perhaps my hon. Friend will bear with me and I shall deal with that.

Mr. Hattersley: May we have the point raised by the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) cleared up? As he said, the uprating is done on a different basis from the previous uprating, thus leaving, let us say, Thames Valley and the Metropolitan police unequal in that one force does not benefit to the same degree as the other. That is a simple fact and I do not understand why the Home Secretary does not agree with his hon. Friend.

Mr. Waddington: That was always the case and if the right hon. Gentleman had been listening he would have heard me say that. Housing allowances and costs differ from area to area. If one takes a 10-year period for one force and compares it with a 10-year period for another, one will find that sometimes the even-year force does better and sometimes the odd-year force does better.

Mr. Marlow: May I put my point again? Is it possible that in two areas where housing costs are the same or similar the rent allowances now available to police forces are different?

Mr. Waddington: Under the existing system, the allowance differs according to housing costs. Under the new system it will differ in the same way. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] I am answering the question. The only difficulty arises because 33 forces are updated in an even year and 20 are reviewed in an odd year.

When I announced my proposals in January I received representations from colleagues about the alleged unfairness to the 1988 officers of continuing to pay them an allowance assessed in that year and not uprated to take account of changes since. As I said, I had representations from a number of people, including my right hon. Friend the Member for Woking, my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge and the chairman and secretary of the Police Federation.

Because I was impressed by the strength of the pleas made to me, on 15 March I announced a significant change in the original proposals. In effect, officers in the forces last reviewed in 1988 will have their red circled amounts, as they are called, uprated by the retail price index for the period between the date of their last review and 1 April 1990. I do not think that my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge will mind if I say that that was twice as good as the proposal that he put to me. He suggested that the grievance could be met by an uprating for the 1988 forces which would increase those allowances by one year according to the RPI. We actually decided to uprate them by two years.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Does the Home Secretary accept that one grievance felt by many police officers is that, while the review is taking place, it would have been better to resolve some of the other anomalies? Bearing in mind the point made by the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), there will be a £2,000 discrepancy between the Merseyside force

[Mr. David Alton]

and the Cheshire force as a result of the Home Secretary's announcement about rent allowances. Does he accept that that will cause considerable anguish among serving police officers in difficult areas like Merseyside?

Mr. Waddington: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman's figures are correct. In any event, the anomaly, as the hon. Gentleman was generous enough to admit, has always existed. We have tried to correct what was perceived to be an injustice by not freezing the 1988 forces at the valuation then placed on their rent allowances, but by having an uprating according to the RPI.

Mr. Shersby: If my right hon. and learned Friend will reflect on what he has just said, he will recall that I pressed him originally to bring those forces on the 1988 revaluation up to the same level as those that were revalued in 1989. I went on to say that if that proved impossible, at the very least I expected and hoped that he would bring those officers on the 1988 revaluation up to the 1989-90 level through the movement in the RPI over those two years, not one year.

Mr. Waddington: My hon. Friend is in error in his last point. However, the basic fact remains that my hon. Friend made a proposition to me and I readily accepted his suggestion.

Mr. John Ward (Poole): While my right hon. and learned Friend is dealing with that point, will he reflect on the fact that despite the concession that he made or negotiated with my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby), a Dorset policeman will be £856 a year worse off than a Hampshire policeman under the new arrangement? Would it not be sensible, as was suggested, to share the misery and ensure that at least in each region everyone gets roughly the same allowance? Otherwise, recruitment will be badly affected.

Mr. Waddington: It will not affect recruiting. The anomalies always existed and it would have been even more anomalous if we had paid the same rent allowance to all officers irrespective of the area in which they live when we all know perfectly well that the cost of renting a house differs greatly in different parts of the country. The allowance was always based on the difference in the market rent of a typical police house in a particular part of the country. Because that differed so much, rent allowances always differed greatly between one part of the country and another.

Following discussions with the Police Federation and my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge, I made a further change to help officers living in free accommodation provided by the police authority. It was represented to me that such officers were at a disadvantage compared with officers in receipt of rent allowance, the latter having their former levels of rent allowance including the rates element, protected as I have described on a mark-time basis. It was suggested that something needed to be done to help those officers who lived in police houses or quarters and who, up to 31 March, were living there free of rates.

Here again, I am glad to have been able to do something to meet the representations that were made to me. Hon. Members will see that the amended regulations provide for the payment of a transitional allowance of £300 a year for three years to officers in a police house or police quarters who were living in provided accommodation on 31 March 1990. The Scottish regulations make similar provision from 31 March 1989. The allowance does not apply in Northern Ireland, because there is no community charge, and police officers therefore continue to occupy police houses or quarters free of rates.

Even that is not the last of the concessions that I have been prepared to make. As the police authorities came to implement the new arrangements, various other matters were drawn to my attention—much mocked, I might say, by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, but obviously considered important by those who mentioned them to me—I thought that they should be put right, and I have proposed three further changes that will benefit serving officers.

First, it appears that some officers serving on 31 March would have been due to receive compensatory grant on not only their previous year's rent allowance, but the tax paid on compensatory grant itself in years before 1989-90. Although struck by the infinite complexity of the arrangements, I am content that those amounts should also be included in their red circling. Not only do those officers continue to get tax back on the rent allowance; they continue to get tax back on the tax back! It is as complicated as that.

Secondly, I have decided that, where police officers were married to each other and receiving flat rate rent allowance on 31 March, the husband should move up to full rate if his wife goes on unpaid maternity leave. Finally, if a similar married couple were living in a police house or quarters on 31 March and the wife goes on unpaid maternity leave, it seems to me right that when she returns she should resume her entitlement to provided accommodation allowance.

Draft regulations on all those matters have been sent to the police negotiating board for comment and, subject to that, will be laid before the House as soon as possible. They cover forces in England and Wales; similar drafts for Scotland and Northern Ireland will follow as soon as possible. I am sure that the arrangements are fair and reasonable.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): There is a widespread belief among policemen that the real reason for the anomalies to which the Home Secretary has referred—and to which other hon. Members have drawn attention—is that the cost of implementing the tribunal's findings would have been extremely heavy. What calculation have the Home Secretary and the Government made of that cost?

Mr. Waddington: I can tell the hon. Gentleman that rent allowances now take up 13 per cent. of total police remuneration. I can also tell him that, if more and more is spent on rent allowances, less and less will be available for other parts of the police service.

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend: he has been very patient with interventions.

The problem is, I think, one of recruitment rather than anguish. Those of us whose local authorities are next to comparable authorities—in cost terms—are very worried about police moving from one authority to another. I am informed that, in Hertfordshire, 40 police officers have asked for transfers to other authorities in the past two

months. If there are recruitment problems as a result of the regulations, will my right hon. and learned Friend have another look at this and other aspects of them?

Mr. Waddington: Obviously, it is my duty to ensure that recruitment is maintained at a proper level for the sake of efficiency, and I can therefore give my hon. Friend the undertaking for which he asks. I must add, however, that I see no evidence of a fall in police recruitment; in fact, I think that we are about 0·2 per cent. below establishment at present. That is contrary to the position back in 1977, when people rushed out of the police force because of the paltry wages that they were getting under the Labour Government. No Government could have allowed a system under which rent allowances continued to roar out of control in the way that I have described. All of us would have wished to protect serving officers by ensuring that they did not lose anything in cash terms. That is what we have done.

I must stress that the new allowance still represents a most substantial addition to police pay—police pay which, under the Edmund-Davies formula, has increased well ahead of inflation since 1979. Let there be no doubt about it—we reaffirm our commitment to Edmund-Davies.

I am surprised at the right hon. Gentleman's comments. I am bound to say that no reasonable person could have read what he said at the Police Federation conference and think that it was a reaffirmation of Edmund-Davies, so the right hon. Gentleman has had to do some pretty swift thinking since then. As he has now said that a Labour Government would be committed to Edmund-Davies, perhaps, some time before the end of the debate, he will tell hon. Members what additional amount an incoming Labour Government would be prepared to dedicate to rent allowance over and above what we are prepared to spend. In other words, let him tell us precisely what is the financial commitment of a future Labour Government. Of course, he has not said one word about that.

In view of some of the right hon. Gentleman's comments, there is only one motto for the police service to remember—"Never trust Labour". I say to the police, "Labour let you down in the 1970s when officers were leaving the service in their tens of thousands because of such poor pay, by the standards of your fellow workers, and they will let you down again." When, during the miners' strike and at Wapping, the police were protecting the right of every man and woman to work and to get to his or her place of work free of molestation, they got no support at all from the right hon. Gentleman.

I remember the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), with his usual weasel words, condemning violence from wherever it came—by which he meant action taken by the police to contain violence, as much as the mob violence making that action necessary.

Not so long ago, too, the Opposition reaffirmed their determination to repeal the prevention of terrorism legislation. Those people, masquerading as friends of the police, would deprive the police of powers that every policeman in the land knows to be essential in the fight against terrorism. I do not take lectures about my responsibilities from a mess of a party like that. When it faces up to its responsibilities, I shall perhaps be prepared to listen.

Several Hon. Members: *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. A large number of right hon. and hon. Members wish to participate. I ask for brief contributions, please.

11.3 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): It is perhaps a measure of the weakness of the Home Secretary's case that he found it necessary to resort to the jejune arguments relating to police powers and did not answer the substantial questions that were raised earlier on the level of police remuneration and the structure and method of determining police pay. It is bizarre also that the Home Secretary reaffirmed his support for Edmund-Davies, when at the heart of the Edmund-Davies report is a clear message that police pay is to include rent allowances and that the whole structure of police pay was based upon that assumption. Perhaps that was an inappropriate formula for the future, and therefore it was necessary for the Government to raise some of the issues that followed the introduction of the poll tax in the police service. However, it was not appropriate simply to override the Edmund-Davies formula on remuneration, and in so doing to set aside the arbitral process that was so integral to the ultimate determination of police pay.

It is quite clear that Edmund-Davies has been honoured more in the breach than in the observance in this round of negotiations. It would have been better if, as soon as he took office,, the Home Secretary had made clear his judgment that there was a need for a round-table conference on the future of police remuneration, in the light of the circumstances that he has described, and not resorted to the simple procedure of rejecting the findings of the arbitral tribunal. As the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said, they were difficult negotiations. Both sides had to make compromises, which were then embodied in a recommendation. It is true that the Government are not bound in law to accept that recommendation, but most Home Secretaries would regard it as foolish not to do so.

On previous occasions when arbitral findings have been questioned—between 1984 and the time when the Home Secretary took office, there were some six occasions on which the police negotiating board could not reach agreement and the matter was submitted to the arbitral tribunal—those findings were upheld. Even at the time of the ill-fated intervention of the previous Home Secretary on 23 October, when he meddled in the negotiations in the manner described by the Home Secretary, it was thought that it was the Government's clear intention to abide by the results of the process. Why, otherwise, bother to meddle? If, at the end of the day, the previous Home Secretary intended simply to lay down the law and utter his fiat, what was the purpose of his intervention?

Mr. Waddington: Has the hon. Gentleman had the opportunity to read the whole of my right hon. Friend's letter? In paragraph three, he said:

"However, in present circumstances we do not believe that we can commit ourselves to meeting the recommendations of the Police Negotiating Board."

My right hon. Friend fairly intimated, on 23 October, that there would be difficulties if the police negotiating board produced conclusions along the lines of those that it eventually produced.

Mr. Maclennan: I have the whole of the former Home Secretary's letter in front of me. As I read it, the difficulty that he mentioned related to the cost of the proposed settlement. The reluctance of the Home Secretary in his speech tonight, and in answer to my intervention, to reveal the possible cost of carrying out the arbitral finding reinforces the impression that finance is at the bottom of it. Cash is at the bottom of it, not any schematic difficulties. There are always schematic difficulties in dealing with police pay, and there probably always will be —so long as there are 47 different police authorities in England and Wales, and different police authorities in Scotland, there will be no nice solution to these problems. Money seems to have been at the heart of the matter.

The modest changes that have been made as a response to the substantial outburst of anger in all parts of the country from the police, who are not a noticeably militant organisation, have created further anomalies and difficulties. I do not propose to repeat those mentioned by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook in his understandably long speech. However, in this short debate, I wish to draw attention to at least one of the problems that has arisen, and about which concern has been expressed by the Northern constabulary in Scotland, as an illustration of the Secretary of State's failure to deal with the problem.

I refer to the proposed £300 allowance to those living in police accommodation. That has not been a source of gratitude; it has brought about an awareness of the inequity of what is proposed, because many officers who have been living not in police-provided accommodation, but in lodgings that they have had to find, are very much worse off than those who are the beneficiaries of the modest change. I must advise the Home Secretary and the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), who is with him on the Treasury Bench, that there is the gravest anger and disquiet throughout Scotland at what has been done. One letter that I received from the Northern constabulary states:

"The regulations have torn us apart—my telephone is red hot every day and the Force morale as far as rent allowances is concerned is at rock bottom, and I can assure you that it is the same in every Force in Scotland."

It is probably the same in every force in England, too. Evidence that I have received from a number of different forces in England suggests that there is a seething anger about the way in which the matter has been handled. My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) drew attention to the concern on Merseyside about the differentiation between the positions in Cheshire and Liverpool. I have also seen letters from, for example, Norfolk, addressed to Conservative Members as well as to myself, also expressing anger.

The Home Secretary failed to explain why he was not willing to enter into negotiations and discussions with the police, not only about the matters before the police negotiating board, but about his proposition that there must be a wholly new approach to police pay, which departed so fundamentally from Edmund-Davies in ruling out the rent allowances, and which set at nought the long and painful negotiations that had taken place. The Home Secretary has argued that he was not "obliged" to implement the proposals—I acknowledge that he was not "obliged" in law, but he was "obliged" in honest decency at least to recognise that the Edmund-Davies formula on police pay had, in the past, taken into consideration the unsocial hours, the restriction on private lives, the exposure to danger, the need to be on call, and the denial of the right to join a trade union. All those matters were in the Edmund-Davies formula on police pay.

Rent allowances were taken into account when setting the basic pay scales. The increases in the rent allowances were designed to reflect movements in housing costs, not living costs. The Home Secretary has departed from that formula in the regulations. If we assume a continuing rate of inflation at 7·5 per cent., which may not be a fair assumption in the light of current rates, the transitional rent allowance will be worth only a third of the current value by the time it has caught up with the housing allowance.

The Police (Amendment) Regulations were originally laid before the House on 9 March. The right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel) prayed against both the English and Scottish regulations, yet there was no debate. For months a most peculiar silence fell over the Government. Why? It was a bizarre failure of our democratic process to take the necessary step in the implementation of the police regulations. I can assume only that it was because of some internal Government battle about the sum that might be made available as a sweetener to try to rob the debate of some of the bitterness that it has assumed. Perhaps the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook is right in believing that some of the sting has gone out of Tory Members. Perhaps they are no longer so angry as they were when the regulations were first announced. The facts have not changed and it is to be hoped that hon. Members on both sides who expressed themselves so strongly earlier will reject the regulations, which do a serious disservice to the policing of the country.

The police are not a militant organisation, but they rely on us in the House to safeguard their interests so that they do not require the protection that others in the public service have enjoyed. If the Home Secretary is saying that there are grave matters of public import that led him to take the decision to set aside the tribunal, he has not spelt them out tonight. He may have said that there were some anomalies, and certainly there were, but that is not a reason for introducing regulations that in themselves are anomalies. They certainly cannot be regarded as being necessitated by reasons of grave national importance, to use the terms of Edmund-Davies.

Although the problems will be felt throughout the country, in urban and peripheral areas, they will undoubtedly be most acutely felt in rural areas, where those who must live in the village police house will not receive the allowance. Those who live in a tied house do not acquire capital in a house of their own. They have the future disadvantage that they will have no rates allowance.

We are not talking about small sums. The Northern constabulary of the Scottish Police Federation has calculated that there is a difference between the maximum old and new allowances of £1,546·25. By any test, that is a significant decrease in take-home pay. I hope that the House will take the only sensible step open to it, and will avoid continuing widespread discontent and dissatisfaction in an already demoralised police force, by voting against the regulations.

11.19 pm

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): As the House knows, I am parliamentary adviser to the Police Federation of England and Wales, and I want formally to declare that interest.

This debate is not about pay but about the Government's decision to take the unprecedented step of setting aside a decision of the police negotiating board on rent allowances following the recommendation of the police arbitration tribunal.

The people affected by that decision are the men and women who serve the public in the police forces of our country. They do a difficult and dangerous job. They are the men and women in blue who each year sustain serious injuries in the line of duty and who in some cases lose their lives. They are members of a loyal and disciplined force who by law do not have the right to take industrial action.

They expect the Government of the day to abide by negotiations between the official side representatives—the Home Office and local police authorities—and the staff side representing 126,000 police officers. They expect the Government and the Home Secretary of the day to accept the considered verdict of the police arbitration tribunal if there is disagreement during the negotiating process.

They have always believed that the police negotiating board and the police arbitration tribunal were established by Parliament to ensure fair play between the employer and the employee on pay and allowances. But they are not suggesting for a moment that my right hon. and learned Friends the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland cannot disapprove of an agreement.

I am sorry to tell the House that the beliefs of many police officers have been shattered by the decision that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary felt obliged to take. That is why the police believe that, to uphold the principles of democracy, they have no alternative but to have their grievances aired on the Floor of the House, where the decision was taken to set up the police negotiating board and police arbitration tribunal.

Their sense of shock has been all the greater because the Home Office, in its own evidence to the Edmund-Davies Committee in 1977, uttered those famous words:

"The Secretary of State would never withhold approval save for reasons of grave national importance."

My right hon. and learned Friend has not, so far as I know, given specific reasons of "grave national importance" for his decision, but in his letter that he sent to my hon. Friends last Thursday, he stated that his reasons for setting aside the police negotiating board agreement were that he

"could not accept a recommendation which would have meant rent allowances continuing to rise at a rate which bore no relationship to the cost of running a home. And that with pay and allowances taking the lion's share of police budgets, there would have been less and less available for vital expenditure on, for instance, equipment."

Those are not reasons of "grave national importance" of the kind envisaged by the Edmund-Davies Committee. Nor do they appear to take account of the savings made by my right hon. and learned Friend's Department and by police authorities which no longer have to pay rates, water rates and, in rural areas, cesspit charges for thousands of police officers, who since 1 April have had to pay those charges themselves.

I should also like to make it clear that the three small changes to the Police (Amendment) Regulations, made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary last Thursday, in answer to a question from me, are outside the police arbitration award that we are debating tonight. They correct technical anomalies which were unfair to the officers concerned. However, I can tell the House quite

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unequivocally that those changes are most welcome, and that they are typical of the constant care and courtesy that my right hon. and learned Friend so often demonstrates in his handling of police matters. I know that my right hon. and learned Friend will not mind my saying that those changes are not related to the fundamental issues of principle that we are considering.

As the House knows, the relationship between the Government and the police has been good for more than a decade. Therefore, if the Government considered that the arbitration award, which contains a new method of updating rent allowance, and which reflects the need for change, did not sufficiently decrease the bi-annual uprating, at least the mechanism should surely include and reflect the housing index element of the retail prices index, of which only 185 points out of 1,000 bear any relationship to housing costs.

However, my right hon. and learned Friend set that recommendation aside, for the reasons that he gave this evening. In view of that, I hope that the House will bear with me as I explain why so many police officers have been lobbying their Members of Parliament and have attended the House today, and why they are so deeply unhappy about the situation in which they now find themselves. I am afraid that, as the Home Secretary and the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) well know, it is a complex matter, but I shall attempt to state it as simply and as briefly as possible.

First, it is important to understand exactly what constitutes rent allowance and why it is paid. It is paid to compensate police officers who are not provided with accommodation free of charge as part of their conditions of service. It has been an integral part of police pay since the 1920s. It is also paid in lieu of accommodation, because police officers can be, and are, required by their chief constables to move home to meet operational requirements, and because, in many cases, they have no choice as to where they live.

In the past, the allowance has been uprated every two years, following a review of property values, by an independent valuer. For the sake of administrative convenience, roughly half the police forces in England and Wales, and half the forces in Scotland and Northern Ireland, have received their revaluation in one year, with the revised allowance being paid from the following April. The other forces in England and Wales—about 14—and in Scotland and Northern Ireland, receive their revaluation in the following year, with the revised allowance payable from the following April.

The police arbitration tribunal decided that rent allowance should be abolished for all new entrants to the police, with effect from 1 April 1990, but that it would be retained and protected—or red-circled, as it is known in police jargon—at the existing level for those officers in service before the change took place. It was the intention that in future it would be uprated every two years by the equivalent of the increase in the new force housing allowance, which came into effect on 1 April. Unlike rent allowance, which was geared to property values, the new force housing allowance will in future be related only to the movement in the retail prices index. Twenty-nine forces in England and Wales are frozen at 1988 levels, before red-circling.

Instead of agreeing to a revaluation of the existing rent allowance for the 29 forces in England and Wales alone that last had their force maximum uprated in 1988 before they were protected, my right hon. and learned Friend decided in February that their existing level of rent allowance should be frozen at the 1988 level but that the 14 forces in England and Wales that were uprated in 1989 could retain their rent allowance at the higher 1989 level. That was obviously unfair. It discriminated arbitrarily between different police forces.

As a result of that decision, it was calculated by the Police Federation's advisers, Binder Hamlyn, that it would take between 15 and 17 years before the new force housing allowance equalled the existing level of rent allowance, whereas every police officer receiving rent allowance at the protected level naturaly expects it to be increased biennially, as in the past. As a result, most officers will now leave the police before receiving any increase whatsoever in their protected allowance.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): I am following my hon. Friend's argument closely. What will be the position of police officers who, under the existing arrangements and with a certain understanding about allowances, choose to buy their homes? Do they not have a difficult choice to make?

Mr. Shersby: If they bought their homes before 31 March, they will qualify for the existing level of protected rent allowance. If, however, they were unable to do so —and they did not have very much time in which to do so between my right hon. and learned Friend's statement and the end of March—they will not qualify for the protected rent allowance if they decide to buy their own homes. That is most unfair in the case of the officers in the 29 forces whose rent allowance was to have been protected at the 1988 level.

As a result, representations were made by me, the Police Federation and the staff side of the police negotiating board to my right hon. and learned Friend and Treasury Ministers. After the most careful consideration, my right hon. and learned Friend agreed to uprate those officers in the 29 forces concerned by the movement in the retail prices index between 1988 and 1990. I repeat what I said earlier: that that is what we asked him to do and that is what he did, for which the Police Federation is grateful. The increase is equivalent to 16·6 per cent. for all but five forces, depending on the month in which they were uprated.

The increase is most welcome. I pay warm tribute to my right hon. and learned Friend for his unfailing courtesy and consideration and for his recognition of the fact that the original decision that he announced in February was untenable. I am particularly glad that he was able to persuade the Treasury to relent.

The cost of the uprating agreed to by my right hon. and learned Friend was £26·5 million. I think that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook will agree that £26·5 million is hardly "rubbish". I understand that that will bring the 29 forces who last had their rent allowance uprated in 1988 to the same level as those that were uprated in 1989 and that it will cost approximately an additional £30 million annually. We referred to a cost of roughly £55 million to bring everyone up to a common starting point. My right hon. and learned Friend has provided £26·5 million.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): If my hon. Friend's representations on behalf of the Police Federation have been met by my right hon. and learned Friend and if that was all that the Police Federation wanted, why is it seeking a further concession?

Mr. Shersby: The increase to which my right hon. and learned Friend agreed, welcome though it is, falls far short of the level of rent allowance that is being paid to the 14 forces which had their rent allowances uprated from 1989, and which are protected at that level. Despite my right hon. and learned Friend's welcome movement, thousands of police officers in 29 forces in England and Wales, together with half their colleagues in Scotland and Northern Ireland, will be receiving hundreds or thousands of pounds less in rent allowances than their colleagues in the 14 forces in England and those in half the forces in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

I shall give the House an example.

Mr. Waddington: I am sure that my hon. Friend would not think for one moment of misleading the House. I am sure that he will agree with me that officers in the 1988 forces are always worse off than their colleagues in 1989 forces. There are plenty of 1988 forces with rent allowances that are higher than those of 1989 forces. For example, under the new arrangements with the retail prices index uprating for two years, £4,270 is paid in Hertfordshire. The sum paid in Leicestershire, which is a 1989 force, is only £3,350. In 1989, Cumbria was uprated to £2,869. There are may 1988 forces that do much better than that. It is rather simplistic to say that all those in 1988 forces have done badly. There are some that have done very well.

Mr. Shersby: My hon. and learned Friend is right to draw attention to differential housing valuations in different parts of the country. I have a map which illustrates the argument that he is advancing.

I shall give the House an example. Thames Valley police force last had its rent allowance uprated in 1988. It will now receive a 16·6 per cent. increase as a result of the recent uprating. Police officers in that force will be substantially disadvantaged compared with officers living in my constituency of Uxbridge, which is in the Metropolitan police area. The rent allowance in the Sussex force is £3,702, whereas in the Metropolitan police area it is £5,864. That is a difference of £2,162.

Mr. Waddington: Surely my hon. Friend recognises that the Metropolitan police, for obvious reasons, has always had a much higher allowance than those of county forces. Generally speaking, property values are much higher in the Metropolitan police area than elsewhere.

Mr. Shersby: I accept that house prices in London are high. I am talking about rent allowances, which are based on property values, and those values in Sussex are very high. The reaction to the differentials is shown in the number of senior and experienced police officers who are applying to leave their present forces to join the Metropolitan police. That is happening in the Surrey and Sussex forces.

Mr. Dalyell: The hon. Gentleman talks about the difference between the allowance in his constituency, which comes within the Met, and that which is paid in the Thames Valley police force. Would 40 per cent. be an exaggeration of the difference? If it would not, what is the likely recruitment pattern in the two areas?

Mr. Shersby: I quoted figures to demonstrate the substantial difference between the allowances that are paid in the Thames Valley police force and the Metropolitan police. We shall have to wait and see what effect that has on recruitment in the two areas.

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): Until recent times—perhaps this trend is continuing—have not experienced Metropolitan police officers been moving out of the Metropolitan police area into the areas which are policed by provincial forces?

Mr. Shersby: My hon. Friend is right. It has been suggested to me in a humorous way that perhaps that is my right hon. and learned Friend's secret weapon, which is designed to boost the recruitment of the Metropolitan police. I am sure that that is not the position.

The income from rent allowances, which, before the arbitration award, officers in some 29 forces in England and Wales had every right to expect, has been denied them. That has serious consequences for many officers who have decided to buy their homes because they are not being provided with accommodation. Moreover, they have done so encouraged by the Government's property-owning philosophy.

Let us take as an example a police officer in his late twenties or early thirties buying a house in greater Birmingham. He has calculated his ability to meet his mortgage repayments on the basis of his expected pay and rent allowance, which has always been an integral part of police remuneration. Now he suddenly finds that the financial goal posts have been moved. His rent allowance in the west midlands force was last uprated in 1988. It will now go up by 16·6 per cent. to £3,399, thanks to my right hon. and learned Friend's announcement, but it will still fall short of the rent allowance payable to the adjoining force of Warwickshire by £788 to officers doing the same job and buying a similar house. The same officer has to pay the community charge and water rates, and to cope with the current level of interest rates.

The second major problem concerns officers living in police accommodation. The police negotiating board recommends that the 16,000 or so officers living in provided accommodation should receive a force housing allowance and pay rent. My right hon. and learned Friend made that clear. The police accepted that recommendation, but my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has decided to maintain the status quo with officers living in provided accommodation receiving no housing allowance and living rent and rate-free. That includes the payment of water rates, and in country areas cesspit charges.

However, as the House well knows, domestic rates came to an end on 31 March and with effect from 1 April, all police officers in provided accommodation, and their spouses if any, will be worse off in relative terms, by anything between £300 and £1,200 a year, depending on the community charge in the area in which they live, plus water rates and, in country areas, cesspit charges.

The Police Federation accepted that all officers should pay the community charge, but 20 per cent. of the officers in provided accommodation have no choice but to occupy that accommodation. For the first time, they will be

[Mr. Shersby]

financially penalised for so doing. As a result, a police officer earning £10,000 a year with a spouse and two children living in provided accommodation will suddenly and unexpectedly have to find an additional cash sum for which he or she has not budgeted and which he or she had no reason to think would be payable. In other words, up to 10 per cent. of salary could now have to be paid in local government taxation which had not previously been paid by the police but by their employers, the local police authorities.

Clearly that was unfair, and, as my right hon. and learned Friend said, in response to representations that were made to him, he introduced the provided accommodation allowance of £300 a year. That is only £255 after tax. I observe in passing that it was fixed when the Government thought that the average community charge might be in the region of £300.

However, it is still an additional expense for officers in police accommodation to meet from their family budgets. It has been sprung on them at rather short notice and represents a major change in their conditions of service. Up and down the country, officers in police accommodation can be worse off by as much as £1,200 a year. That is a recipe for discontent and a source of grievance.

To sum up, there are two serious disagreements which will not be remedied by the regulations if they are passed without amendment tonight—the two different scales of allowance and the substantial additional expenses to officers living in provided accommodation.

Above all, I believe that it was wrong for the Government, who have constantly urged employers and employees to negotiate and to reach agreement on pay and conditions, to overturn the agreement, particularly as they are the employer. I must ask the House, what sort of example is that?

That error of judgment is compounded by the fact that the police do not have the right to take industrial action. They must rely on the process of negotiation and arbitration for the resolution of their pay and conditions. No trade union or self-respecting staff association that has the right to strike would have readily accepted the agreement.

I repeat, and I stress, that I am most grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend and his Treasury colleagues for the improvements that he has made since he announced his original decision in February. Moreover, I do not wish him to think that either the Police Federation or I are ungrateful. He might wonder what solution I would have adopted had I had the misfortune to be in his place.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): In his summing up, with his deep knowledge of the Police Federation and the personalities involved, will my hon. Friend say whether the leaders of the Police Federation seriously believe that they would be better off under a Labour Home Secretary, given the low police morale under the last Labour Government and the constraints on their economic policy, which the shadow Chancellor keeps spelling out to the country?

Mr. Shersby: As my hon. Friend well knows, the police are non-political; they do not express political views. That is their duty as police officers.

The Government should have implemented the agreement submitted to my right hon. and learned Friend by the police negotiating board following arbitration. Had they done so, the cash difference between what has now been agreed and what they would have had to pay would be relatively small, particularly if one bears in mind the savings being made by local police authorities, which will not have to pay domestic rates because of the introduction of the community charge.

The fact that that has not happened makes it impossible for me to vote for the regulations. Regretfully, I have no alternative but to vote against them, to show the strength of feeling of the police on the major point of principle—the setting aside of the police negotiating board agreement following arbitration. I have not encouraged my hon. Friends to vote for or against the regulations; nor shall I do so. That is not part of my role as parliamentary adviser to the Police Federation. I know that the concern that I have expressed is well understood by many right hon. and hon. Members, and no doubt they will decide for themselves how to cast their votes in the Lobby tonight.

11.48 pm

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): May I first declare an interest? I have recently been appointed parliamentary adviser to the Royal Ulster Constabulary Federation.

The issue that we are debating is one not primarily of detail but of principle. On that basis alone, I intend to question the Government's position. It is imperative that hon. Members who vote, especially Conservative Members, fully understand that they are being called upon to demonstrate the integrity of the House and that no hon. Member is here merely to reflect his or her support of or opposition to Government policy.

At the risk of repeating some of the points to which hon. Members have alluded, I remind right hon. and hon. Members that Lord Edmund-Davies, in his 1978 report, clearly outlined what the powers of the Secretary of State should be in responding to the recommendations of the police arbitration tribunal. He noted the recommendation by all the constituent bodies of the Police Council, except the Home Department, that the findings of a police arbitration tribunal should be binding on all parties including the Secretary of State.

Being assured by the Home Department that the Secretary of State would never withhold approval of a Police Council agreement save for reasons of grave national importance, he conceded that argument in relation to the future arbitration tribunals. In doing so, he took into consideration the fact that should there be any future failure to agree on a pay award or any breakdown of the negotiating machinery, the Government would need the power to make regulations on pay matters for the police, whose efficiency was essential to the maintenance of law and order. Lord Edmund-Davies was influenced also by the unique role of the police and the ultimate responsibility of the Secretaries of State for the maintenance of the Queen's peace. Specifically, on that clearly defined basis, he expressed himself content that discretionary powers would not be used or abused.

In paragraph 117 of chapter 10, Lord Edmund-Davies states:

> "We would, however, like to place on record our view that any award by the Police Arbitration Tribunal should be set aside only for reasons of the utmost national importance."

Could anything be more unequivocal or binding as a matter of honour? In fact, the Secretaries of State have

infringed that stipulation by Lord Edmund-Davies and have abrogated the spirit of the arrangement that has commanded the respect of the police for the past 11 or 12 years. What is the matter of grave national importance that requires the Government to act less honourably today than they did in 1984, when the same issue was referred to arbitration and the Government were then able to accept the tribunal's decision?

It is important that we remember that it is as part of police pay and conditions that police officers, where they cannot be provided with police accommodation, have been granted a rent allowance. Although that rent allowance may be a separate payment calculated through an independent process, none the less it is an integral part of the totality of police remuneration, and was recognised as such by Lord Edmund-Davies. At a time when our police forces have to endure increasing pressures, in terms of public scrutiny and through the advent of more sophisticated and better organised violence, is it not ironic that this Government—the so-called Government of law and order—should unilaterally undermine the confidence of those who serve the community at the coal face?

I cannot help but reflect on the flattering words that are used by the Prime Minister and her Ministers to describe the job that policemen and policewomen do, often under the most trying conditions, but it seems that talk is always cheap. When the community needs protection for whatever reason and whenever Government policies have brought angry, unruly and often violent mobs on to our streets, it is not the Secretaries of State who bear the brunt of that disorder. Are memories so short that the Government cannot remember the poll tax riots, the tragedy of Broadwater Farm or the ongoing courage of the Royal Ulster Constabulary over the past 20 years?

When Earl Ferrers, the Minister of State, Home Office, wrote in *The House Magazine* on 12 February, he admitted that there was absolutely no precedent for the Minister to reject the findings of an arbitration tribunal. He then asserted that this did not signal a change in negotiating arrangements or in the access to arbitration which is provided for in those arrangements. Does he expect a single officer to believe such illogical nonsense? Does he expect hon. Members to do so?

The noble Lord then asserts that there is no question of anyone having money taken out of his present earnings as a result of the decision of the Home Secretary. What is the guarantee for the future? Can we have a similar assurance on that point? The Government have advanced a series of arguments as to why awards should not be agreed in full, and why the Home Secretary should select what someone called the plums within the arbitration award and leave the police with the duff. They have sought to confuse the issue by relating rent allowance to police pay.

We have heard quoted how much better the police have done vis-à-vis the average worker in terms of increases. We all thought that that was because the Government recognise that the police do not do a normal job but a special one and that they are conscious of the danger to life and limb that the police encounter every day. We thought that they appreciated that the police do not enjoy the protection of the health and safety agencies and we are denied the right of industrial action to defend conditions of service or to pursue legitimate grievances. That is obviously not the case.

The Government of law and order clearly show that they value saving to the public exchequer more than they value the good will of the police service. They are callously prepared to sacrifice the basis of trust and faith that has been built up over the past 11 years.

To the shame of the Government, I shall quote from the last paragraph of the final report of the tribunal in November 1989:

"We have felt it necessary to set out these principles at some length for two reasons. There is a natural tendency for each side to cling to familiar aspects of the older arrangements that they feel advantageous, without weighing the compensatory gains. But most important is the fact that any inclination to pick and choose"—

as the Home Secretary has done—

"between the individual changes that we have suggested is likely to destroy, to the advantage of one side or the other, the fairness of the solution we have proposed, which we believe takes account of the need not to add to the expense of the police service and is based on clear and sensible principles."

Both sides of the police negotiating board have accepted and adhered to those principles. But the Government, who were represented on the official side, have chosen to ignore sound advice and the principles that are involved.

If the House is to be the final arbiter and the protector of rights and principles it must vote against any revocation of the criteria laid down by Lord Edmund-Davies for resolving matters pertaining to police pay and allowances. Anything less is a betrayal and must inevitably have the direst short, medium and long-term consequences for policing in the United Kingdom.

11.59 pm

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): I could scarcely believe my ears as I listened to the speech made by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), which must count as one of the most cynical and outrageous pieces of opportunism to have been heard in the House for many a long year. Members of the British police service who are well accustomed to dealing with the overwhelming amount of crime that is opportunistic will fully understand what I mean when I refer to the right hon. Gentleman's speech in that way.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook made several significant spending commitments for the Opposition. All Conservative Members look forward to seeing those spending commitments set out clearly with sums attached so that we may gain a greater understanding of what the tax burden would be were the Labour party, in the unlikely event, to form the Government after the next general election.

During his speech to the Police Federation's conference a short while ago, the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook appeared to make yet another spending commitment. If I understood him correctly, he undertook to establish a third police force that would be responsible for investigating complaints. Complaints investigations would no longer be supervised by the independent Police Complaints Authority. According to my reckoning, that would cost between £10 million and £15 million. I wonder whether the right hon. Gentleman has had an opportunity to confer with his colleagues responsible for the Labour party's financial policies, to put figures to those commitments.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir John Wheeler: No, I have only just started. I hope that the hon. Lady will allow me to proceed.

[Sir John Wheeler]

I want now to consider the Government's record as that is more relevant to the regulations that we are discussing. Under this Government the police service, as every officer knows, has received steady and what I believe the vast majority of British people would agree are fair increases in pay. Within a week of coming to office in 1979, the Government implemented the Edmund-Davies pay formula in full. Since then the Government have stuck to that pay formula. Since May 1979, basic pay has increased by more than 41 per cent. in real terms. I am delighted that the Government have reaffirmed their steadfast commitment to that pay formula and I contrast that with the condition that the police service was in when we came to office in 1979.

It might be helpful if I were to give some figures to show the pay with which we have rewarded our police officers. The figures to which I shall refer to Metropolitan police officers, as that is the force with which I am principally concerned as the Member for Westminster, North.

A police constable in the Met with 15 years' service or more enjoys a maximum salary of £16,521 to which there is added London weighting of £1,089 and a special London allowance of £1,011, making a total of £18,621. A constable—a new recruit—aged 22 years or over will enjoy £14,562 while a sergeant with four years' service and on top scale will receive £20,229. An inspector with four years' service, on the top scale, will receive £23,850. A married constable—as of April 1989—could receive a rent allowance amounting to £7,329, while an unmarried constable under 30 could receive a maximum of £3,665. That will give the House an idea of the extent of the pay and rent allowances that the police will receive from the Government.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Marlow: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Sir John Wheeler: I am being assailed by more than one hon. Member, but I shall give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow).

Mr. Marlow: As my hon. Friend rightly says, the Government's treatment of the police force has been generous, and I am sure that that is recognised; but will he deal with a question to which I have yet to receive an answer? I live in Warwickshire, but my constituency is in Northamptonshire. Housing costs in Warwickshire are lower than those in Northamptonshire, yet the police rent allowance in Warwickshire is higher than that in Northamptonshire. Why?

Sir John Wheeler: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for asking such an interesting question. Were we to have the luxury of sitting late into the night, I am sure that we could contemplate the possible answers in great detail. However, I propose to allow that interesting point to lie "upon the Table" for my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State to pick up.

Mr. Waddington: Does my hon. Friend agree that one thing is certain—that the difference referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) results not from any assessment made by the Home Office, but from an assessment made by the local district valuer? There is no Machiavelli behind the decision; it just happens that the valuation of a typical police house in one area is not the same as the valuation of a typical police house in another area.

Sir John Wheeler: My right hon. and learned Friend is absolutely right. The way in which the rent allowance formula is applied varies from constabulary to constabulary. After all, we have 52 of them—and, as some hon. Members may know, if the matter were left to me, the arrangements would be considerably rationalised. I hope and pray that we shall work towards that in the near future, when our problems may well be resolved through the process of negotiation.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Is the hon. Gentleman thinking of bringing to the police service the expertise that has been demonstrated by the prison service? Police officers are now having to look after many people in the cells.

Sir John Wheeler: Surely the hon. Lady knows the answer to that question.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook seemed to forget the extent of Government funding during the past 11 years—not only of police pay, although I welcome that, but of the service as a whole. Since 1979, there has been an increase of nearly 59 per cent. in total expenditure on the police service. As my right hon. and learned Friend said, the average increase in allowances last year topped 42 per cent., while the allowance to the Metropolitan police rose by more than 57 per cent. The allowance in Warwickshire rose by 67 per cent. Those rises bear no relation to the true rise in living costs. Generous as the Government rightly are to the police, the Police Federation and police officers —men and women of common sense—will understand that there are limits to the amount of money that can be put into rent allowances, which my right hon. and learned Friend has a duty to consider and make a judgment upon, as he is doing tonight.

Mr. Wells: Was not it entirely predictable, given the formula that we agreed under Edmund-Davies, that such increases would take place, bearing in mind property prices, particularly in the home counties and in London? Therefore, if we want to change the arrangements, surely the Home Office should have approached the police and the Police Federation in 1986, 1987 or 1988. It is no good complaining that rent allowances have increased in accordance with the formula subsequent to those events. Surely it is no justification to object to the increases in those years and then to refuse to pay them in the next year and thus disadvantage many police forces.

Sir John Wheeler: I agree with my hon. Friend that this is an immensely complicated subject. I agree also that it is not possible to find an easy solution. However, I remind my hon. Friend that negotiations commenced in 1988 and have been going on for quite some time. It is a matter of regret, but my right hon. and learned Friend and his colleagues in the Government have had to reject the recommendation of the police negotiating board.

My hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) referred to the additional funding that my right hon. and learned Friend had obtained—about £26 million —to try to ease the path of this arrangement. I for one was greatly struck by his remarks in the journal *Police*, the magazine of the Police Federation, a few weeks ago. He wrote that one of the most difficult tasks that he had to

perform on behalf of the Police Federation was to participate in the discussions that he honourably carried out with my right hon. and learned Friend on the issue. In the magazine he referred to

"the new 'Provided Accommodation Allowance' of £300 a year for three years and to an uprating by the movement in the retail price index (RPI) between 1988 and 1990 for the 29 Forces concerned. This is worth 13·7 per cent. While these decisions are very welcome and helpful they obviously do not meet the full expectations of officers throughout the country who had expected the agreement reached by the PNB to be endorsed and implemented."

My hon. Friend implied that he had found a fair balance between the interests of the federation and the Government's position.

Mr. Allason: Does my hon. Friend agree that, although the arithmetic behind the issue may be complex, the principle behind it is terribly simple? In a nutshell, it is that an arrangement that has worked very well for 10 years is now being unilaterally abandoned because it appears to be working to the disadvantage of the Government.

Sir John Wheeler: That is the difficulty of being the Government. *[Interruption.]* There is mirth on the Opposition Benches, for the quite obvious reason that the Opposition will never be in government. They will never need to make difficult decisions about the use of taxpayers' money. That is what my right hon. and learned Friend has had to do. Of course, my hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) was right to say that there is a problem, but that is why the Government must form a view and suggest what decision should be taken by the House.

The figures that I have given tonight and the costs that have arisen in some parts of the country have been so high that the Government have a duty to consider where the emphasis should be placed in public expenditure. It is for that reason that I shall support my right hon. and learned Friend in the Lobby tonight.

12.15 am

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): The Home Secretary is good at correcting his parliamentary colleagues if they fall into error. I hope that he will interrupt and correct me if I am wrong when I ask him three questions. How much money will the Government save by the set-aside of the arbitration award? More precisely, what would have been the total cost of the scheme if they had gone along with the arbitration award and what will the present scheme cost?

I realise that there may be difficulties with the notional valuation of housing. If I asserted that the savings will be between £80 million and £100 million, would I be wrong? The Home Secretary and his advisers must have some sort of figure.

Mr. Waddington: I think that it is less than that for the first year, but that is not the point. I cannot begin to calculate what the additional cost would be, year on year on year, if we were to go down the path recommended by the police negotiating board. I believe that the initial saving will be more like £50 million than £80 million or £100 million, but it is still quite a lot of money. It is £50 million that comes out of total police provision, and therefore means less money to be spent on equipment and so on.

Mr. Dalyell: Many policemen will think that they are being done out of £50 million-plus—*[Interruption.]* Perhaps the Home Secretary will tell us what he really thinks about it.

Mr. Waddington: I made a long speech saying what I thought about it. I said that there had been enormous increases in rent allowances. I quoted the two instances of a 59 per cent. increase in the Metropolitan police rent allowances last year and a 67 per cent. increase in the Warwickshire police rent allowance. I do not think that it is unfair to red-circle officers so that those serving before 31 March lose nothing in cash, but we end the system of bizarre increases that bear no relationship to the true increase in the cost of running a house.

Mr. Dalyell: Many of our police constituents will say that that is all very well, but in scarcely any other job, in anything like the same way, are people ordered to change house at short notice. That point was made by the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby). I want a detailed reply to be made to the Police Federation grievance.

You asked for short speeches, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wish to raise a Scottish point—the question of community police officers in rural areas. The Under-Secretary of State for Scotland—the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) knows the problem in many parts of Scotland. People must live in police houses, to which are attached police officers, so that they can do their job. They will not receive the allowance. They have a much more limited temporary arrangement. By accepting the requirement and living in tied accommodation, they put themselves at a disadvantage anyway because they are not acquiring capital in a house of their own. They are to be subject to a further disadvantage in that they will have no rate allowance now that the poll tax has replaced the rates. Those officers are almost invariably married because it is normally regarded as essential to have a married man in such a post.

That is a genuine problem in many parts of Scotland. Perhaps the Under-Secretary of State will agree that as we Scots are a year more advanced with the poll tax than people in England, extra urgency is added to the problem.

Finally, the Scottish Office brief states that the Secretary of State

"noted that as a direct result of the draft regulations, over 80 per cent. of Scottish Police officers receiving rent allowance would now receive lump-sum back-dated payments to reflect the outcome of the reviews which his decision would make possible. He further noted that these lump-sum back-dated payments would be in addition to the back-dated payments Scottish officers had received a month or so ago when the rates element of rent allowance had been restored to Scottish officers."

What advice has the Home Secretary received from his Scottish Office colleagues on the adequacy or otherwise of the lump-sum payments, because there have been some pretty bitter complaints about their size?

Other hon. Members wish to speak, so I shall leave it at that.

12.21 am

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): Like my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby), I must declare an interest. For the past quarter of a century, I have advised the Police Superintendents Association of England and Wales. If I have not spoken in recent years in the House on police matters, that has been largely because, since the

[Sir Bernard Braine]

advent of the present Government and the Edmund-Davies award, the police have been treated fairly. That was their view and the view of the Police Superintendents Association until my right hon. and learned Friend's decision to set aside the recommendation of the police negotiating board on housing rent allowance. I am saddened by that and must report that I have received more angry letters from police officers since that decision was made public than in all my 40 years in the House. I know that I share that experience with many right hon. and hon. Members.

In defence of all this, my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) says that the police are well paid. The view of the Police Superintendents Association, the rank and file of the police service and, I should have thought, most people in this country is that the police deserve to be well paid. After all, they are paid what Edmund-Davies recommended. Broadly speaking, they have preserved what they gained then, but we should not underestimate their feeling that they have now been sadly let down.

It is true that before 1979 police morale was very low, but that has not been so in recent years. However, since 1979 crime has increased by more than one third; the police work load has increased substantially and its scope has been widened by legislation passed by the House. Every aspect of police work has increased during that time. We have seen the emergence of lager louts, acid house parties, public order problems and racial tensions. The number of people arrested and prosecuted has substantially increased. In addition, the police have been expecred to safeguard public services in disputes. I refer to what happened in the miners' strike and in the ambulance and fire brigade disputes. Huge new burdens have been placed on the police in recent years.

A price must be paid for these extra burdens and risks. The reports of the police convalescent homes in Goring and Harrogate reveal the increased risk. Goring is new but needs to be extended, and Harrogate was extended but needs to be extended further to cope with the increasing flow of officers injured while protecting the public.

Last year, sickness caused by violent assaults on officers outside the London area alone equalled about 190 years. The biggest factors are stress and incidents leading to injuries, all of which can have a lasting effect on officers and their families. None of that has yet been properly assessed.

Today the police service faces increasing criticism, yet never have the education and professionalism of officers been higher. They are necessary because the nature of society is changing, in some respects for the worse. Assaults on children and young people, domestic violence, football violence and racial tension have increased in the past 10 years, involving the police in an increasingly complex world of multi-agency approaches, case conferences, studies and detailed specialism.

It follows that in a period of increasing work, public pressure and risk, the police are entitled to ask to be fairly treated. After all, as the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said, they are forbidden by law on pain of imprisonment from taking industrial action. After the bitter disputes of the 1970s, the Edmund-Davies inquiry set up the police negotiating board as a means of providing a fair way to resolve pay and allowances.

It is true that Edmund-Davies's awards are not set in tablets of stone for ever, but the police are entitled to ask that those who seek to make material changes in police remuneration should place their arguments before independent arbitration and, subject to national emergencies, accept the result of that arbitration.

In this instance, the arbitration award, made by responsible and credible people, did not wholly favour the police. They set out the position clearly in their report:

"We have felt it necessary to set out these principles at some length for two reasons. There is a tendency for each side to cling to familiar aspects of the older arrangements that they feel advantageous without weighing the compensatory gains. But most important is the fact that any inclination to pick and choose between the individual changes that we have suggested is likely to destroy, to the advantage of one side or the other, the fairness of the solution . . . which we believe takes account of the need not to add to the expense of the police service and is based on clear and sensible principles."

The arbitration award in itself and the police negotiating board agreement which followed made substantial savings in the police budget. The Home Office was not satisfied with that, so went much further and set aside many important provisions in the agreement which, I am advised, detracted from the fairness of the award. The police budget had been reduced by several millions, but as a result the excellent relationship built up between the staff association and the Home Office since the Edmund-Davies inquiry was undermined.

The real issue that we are debating, however, is not one of saving money, but the unfair way in which the Home Secretary's discretion has been used to overturn an agreement of the PNB, ignoring the special machinery set up precisely because the police are debarred from taking industrial action. I am worried at the way in which this decision ignores the implications for the future. I refer specifically to the police superintendents, who are the senior officers in the field responsible for the discipline and morale of other ranks. They are filled with concern that there are now fewer superintendents, who are the salt of the earth, confronted by increasing problems and a much higher work load.

Before Edmund-Davies, the police service as a whole, was unhappy. I have a vivid recollection of that unhappiness. Since Edmund-Davies, police superintendents have been busy seeking to improve service to the public and standards of education and professionalism. They are not primarily concerned with money, and acknowledge that the Home Office has, in the short term, preserved the remuneration of long-serving officers approaching retirement. They are concerned not about themselves but about the future of the service and the confidence that it has in its negotiating machinery.

That is why police superintendents are unhappy at the way in which arbitration has been treated. They fully accept that in times of grave national importance the service must take second place. But the public, and bodies such as the Association of County Councils and the police negotiating board have the right to ask what reasons of "grave national importance" arise in this case. If none exists and the Home Office is simply unhappy about part of an uprating system, in my view and that of police

superintendents it should have dealt with the matter fairly and constitutionally, by referring it back to the police negotiating board.

I do not deny that concessions were made as a consequence of the approach by my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge and the Police Federation, but I am unhappy at the way that the issue has been handled since. I am uneasy therefore about the future of the police service in the present social climate, and suggest that the House should be, too. It is a serious matter to overturn an arbitration award, and I do not think that in this case it was justified. Therefore, I am in full sympathy with my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge and find that I cannot go into the Lobby in support of the Government.

12.32 am

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): In the few moments left before the closing speeches from both Front Benches, I will not rehearse the technical arguments that have been made in this interesting debate. I speak on behalf not only of the Scottish National party but also of Plaid Cymru, which are united on this issue and speak with one voice in expressing a view that they share. A matter of principle is at stake, and Conservative Members have clearly expressed their dissent, as have right hon. and hon. Members on this side of the House.

When the Home Secretary addressed the Police Federation conference in Scarborough and made it clear that he did not intend to change the regulations, he expressed his hope that, after this debate,

"we'll draw a line under it and move on to other things."

The Home Secretary cannot dismiss so easily the events of the past months. A line cannot be drawn under such a major issue. It is not a matter of wiping the slate clean just like that. The Home Office handling of the matter has done great damage to the morale, commitment and confidence of police forces the length and breadth of the United Kingdom.

The police representatives negotiated in good faith for many months, believing that the principles enshrined in the Edmund-Davies package would be upheld and honoured. What has been appalling is that Ministers, who asked that trade unionists observe democratically agreed procedures in negotiations and arbitration, throw those procedures out of the window when it suits them. It was clear from the speech of the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) that he did not think that this issue involves principle. I believe that he demonstrated the Government's lack of principle on the issue and he showed that the dead hand of the Treasury is steering through these regulations.

What has happened is wrong in principle and outrageous in practice. We have still not heard a clear answer about the grave national importance that has led the Government to alter their view of the arbitration tribunal.

We seem to expect our police officers to observe matters of national importance in the course of their lives. The men and women of the Scottish police force trawled the hills and fields around Lockerbie after the air disaster. They are the men and women who have to deal with drug addicts and criminals in our society. We expect them to turn out on matters of national importance. No doubt many of them are working tonight, not far from here, on the explosion in London. If they observe national importance, surely they deserve respect and honour from the Government, who should observe the regulations as they were first agreed.

These events have ridiculed the staff side negotiations, have treated the negotiation machinery with contempt, have ignored Lord Edmund-Davies and Professor Sir John Wood, and have demoralised police forces. That is a terrible indictment of the Government's attitude to men and women who deserve our respect.

12.36 am

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): Rather uniquely, I have experienced police matters at first hand at three different levels. As the House knows, I served as a police officer in the west end of London. I have also served as a police authority vice-chairman and here in Parliament as a member of the Select Committee on Home Affairs, when there is an opportunity to study policing matters in considerable detail.

I am sure that the House will accept that that allows me to consider the issue that we are debating tonight from three distinctive perspectives. How do the police see the new regulations? Understandably, they are upset and deeply angry at the Home Secretary's decision. My hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) articulated that anger in his speech. However, I ask police officers to accept that many Conservative Members supported the representations that my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge made to the Home Secretary, and that we were glad about the improvements that my right hon. and learned Friend made. I take the view that he has gone as far as he can to satisfy policemen and women on the matter.

The five years that I served as a policeman in London coincided with the Labour Government of 1964-70. Morale was not good. I was partly attracted by pay levels into the police force in 1965, and it seemed to me that those levels had been eroded by the time I left in 1970. My most vivid recollection was the lack of support that we police officers felt we had in the aftermath of the two Grosvenor square riots, outside the American embassy, in 1967 and 1968. That is all history, but it provides an insight into how police officers feel when there is a Grunwick, a miner's strike, a Wapping, or a Trafalgar square. I think that all serving policemen know that the Government have sincerely supported their efforts in the public disturbances that have taken place in recent years.

Happily, my experience as vice-chairman of the North Yorkshire police authority is much more recent, and I have discussed the issue at length with my chief constable and my chairman. They expressed three major concerns: morale, mobility and finance. Morale was boosted recently by the decision of my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd) when he was Home Secretary to appoint an extra 40 police officers over two years. We asked for 50 in North Yorkshire. We did very well to get an additional 40. It boosted morale.

Morale has been adversely affected by the decision on housing allowance. It would be wrong to suggest otherwise. We must be careful to stress the clear Government commitment to honour Edmund-Davies on pay. The Government's support for the police speaks for itself.

Mr. Allason: When my hon. Friend met the chief constable, did the chief constable reflect the views of Mr.

[Mr. Allason]

James Anderton, who pointed out that the tribunal reached its conclusions on 18 December 1989, that the Home Office received the recommendations on 21 December 1989 and that the Home Office managed, in record time, by 4 January 1990, to produce 20 pages of draft regulations? The view of many chief police officers is that, far from honouring the Edmund-Davies formula, the Home Office set out from the beginning deliberately to delay implementation of the arbitration recommendation and had no intention of agreeing to it.

Mr. Greenway: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his intervention. I cannot answer the point. The chief constable did not articulate that to me, but he did articulate other matters that I am about to address.

I ask my right hon. and learned Friend to recognise the problem of mobility in rural police forces. In North Yorkshire we require all new recruits to serve for the first seven years in a rural beat house. That is why my right hon. and learned Friend is right to reject the payment of an allowance and the payment of rent. It would lead to all sorts of difficulties. However, in due course we should like those officers to move out of that accommodation and to buy their own home. Thereafter, the housing allowance must be adequate to allow recruits to do that. I ask my right hon. and learned Friend to keep an open mind as to future needs.

My chief constable and chairman also discussed finance. It is a concern that manpower costs represent such a large slice of the police budget—at present 80 per cent. Community charge payers have to meet 30 per cent., whatever the police bill may be. Members of police authorities, who are also county councillors, have responsibility for other priorities: education, teachers' pay, and social services, which all place heavy demands on resources, too. The debate would not be about housing allowances if police authorities had the opportunity to choose the issue. Instead it might be about capital spending plans. We cannot ignore the urgent need to make a thorough reappraisal of police buildings and accommodation, including the fabric of many police houses, training facilities, the need for new computer technology and communications equipment.

That leads to my experience of the current work of the Select Committee on Home Affairs. All our inquiries point one way. For 11 years the Government have given top priority—rightly, in my view—to the recruitment and pay of our police officers. The priority now must be to give that manpower the tools with which to do the job. My right hon. and learned Friend supports that view. It was his recognition of the need to reorder priorities that led him to take this difficult decision. It is no more easy for Conservative Members who support the police to support that difficult decision, but I do so in recognition of three facts.

First, we have the best-paid police force in Europe. We now want to have the best-equipped police force in Europe. The Government have the responsibility for ensuring that proper priority is given to all the needs of the police service. This decision I take to be part of that process. Secondly, I invite the police to see the Opposition motions for what they are: cynical opportunism.

Thirdly, and above all, my right hon. and hon. Friends and I recognise that although a decision has been taken that has damaged the relationship between the Conservative party and the police service, the Conservative Government have given the police every support over the past 11 years. We now ask the police service to support us, to understand why the decision was taken, to understand what is being done, to understand that the Edmund-Davies pay commitment will continue to be honoured and to understand that a highly motivated, well-trained and properly equipped force must be, and will continue to be, a high priority for this and the next Conservative Government.

12.45 am

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): We have been dealing with what could fairly be described as a matter of byzantine detail. We have been faced with a complex mass of convention and precedent. We have a system which no one would have designed and which has grown over the years. It has had the great virtues of maintaining the confidence of the police force and offering stability. It is, above all, a system that has worked.

The system has been the subject of a major review. A series of difficulties have been compounded, as in so many other areas of our life, by the introduction of the poll tax. If there is one thing on which there is unanimity in the House, it is that the police are unhappy. There is common ground between those who are unfavourably disposed to the actions of the Home Secretary and those who are bravely supporting him because of party loyalty.

The House will not be surprised to know that in Scotland, as elsewhere, the unhappiness of the police is directly reflected. The reasons for the unhappiness have been made clear during the debate. The hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby), who declared his special interest, carefully documented the reasons for the unhappiness. There were moments when perhaps he documented it too carefully, but I take the points he made and recognise their substance. Undoubtedly anomalies are appearing in the system as a result of the repudiation of the arbitration award, and these will cause much bitterness and unhappiness.

The Home Secretary sounded peculiarly unhappy and unconvincing when dealing with the problems of the Housing allowance and the anomalies between different forces. Comparisons have been made between those which uprated in 1988 and those which did so in 1989. The right hon. and learned Gentleman intervened more than once to tell us that inevitably there were differences, and that those differences have always existed because housing circumstances varied throughout the country. That is true, but differences are now being introduced that are the result of a different method of calculation. That will lead to great unhappiness and deep resentment.

That point was made by the hon. Member for Poole (Mr. Ward) when he expressed his worry about the contrast between Dorset and Hampshire. The hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) talked about the impact on the force in the country of which he represents part and the number of police officers who are trying to transfer to other forces. Despite the interim or halfway stage that the Home Secretary produced under pressure, there remains a major anomaly. That is the difference between £26·5 million and £55 million, the first

sum being the cost of the present scheme and protection and the second figure being the cost of eliminating all the anomalies that have been created.

We must recognise the problem faced by police officers who are buying their own homes. We are told that the rent allowance will be uprated by 16 per cent. over two years, but there was plenty of testimony by Conservative Members to the unhappiness that exists and the substantial differentials that will continue to prevail.

We have heard about the red-circling of rent allowances and mark-time protected incomes under the new system. These devices will not solve the problems or take the edge off the discontent. In a different context, and perhaps at a different financial level, I think of the last occasion when I, as a constituency Member, had to deal with a large number of people who had mark-time protected incomes. These people had been on supplementary benefit and they found themselves with a protected level of benefit as they faced transition to income support. In the first year of transition, many of them said that it was fine. They did not notice any difference. The noticed a difference in the next year and the following year when upratings were introduced and they realised that they would not get a penny piece. The new system bit, and it bit hard. That will be the impact and the effect on the police force in years ahead.

I had the impression that even those Conservative Members who were trying to be loyal were distinctly nervous about the prospects. I respect the special authority of the speech by the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway). He was not representing a particular interest but has served as a police officer. He was particularly unhappy about what he recognised as the damage that was being done to the relationship between the Government of the day and the police force. I do not like that happening. I do not worry so much about relationships within the Tory party, but I accept that there is a problem when the police force loses confidence, in the government of the day, or that confidence is damaged. That is bad for morale, which should concern us all.

The hon. Gentleman argued that police officers were angry, but he went on to say that the Government had done everything they reasonably could, leaving us with the implication that the anger was therefore unreasonable. I do not believe that, in his heart of hearts, the hon. Gentleman believes that, or that any of his former colleagues in the force would feel that they were being unreasonable, even after listening to his arguments.

The anger has been compounded by a sense of outrage over a breach of principle. The arbitration award has been overturned, according to the Secretary of State for Scotland's correspondence with me a month or two ago, "after careful consideration". He told us that it was not done lightly. That is a doubtful plea in mitigation. It suggests that the Secretary of State knew what he was about; it was a premeditated act committed with malice aforethought.

Some of his arguments appear deplorably lightweight. His letter to me dated 12 February displays a curious air of unreality. For example, he made the point that those who live in police authority housing would have had to pay rent and that the rent might have been higher than the allowances. That may be so, but the right hon. and learned Gentleman went on to say, quaintly in view of all the Government's rhetoric over the past few years, that if they paid rent they would have a right to buy and that would be unthinkable because it would have adverse operational consequences for housing stock. Having been deaved by the Secretary of State for Scotland for some five years about the essential virtues of selling off every piece of public sector housing stock that could possibly be put on the market, that seems to me to be a perverse argument.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman then discussed what index should be used to calculate the housing allowance. I understand that, if one uses capital values and the housing element in the retail prices index, one may end up with a significantly higher figure, but, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said, that was carefully considered by the arbitration machinery, which concluded that it was right to do so. I find it remarkable that the Secretary of State for Scotland should lecture me on the fact that the RPI includes mortgage costs and therefore is suitable. I hope that he will have a word with the Chancellor of the Exchequer and persuade him that mortgage costs should remain within the RPI.

However, my central objection concerns the nature of the arbitration. Arbitration is effective and carries long-term confidence only if it is binding on both sides. It does not need to be formally and legally binding, but it has to be an undertaking of honour and an agreement by which both sides will stand if it is to mean anything.

No doubt Mr. Justice Edmund-Davies produced a much-admired and extremely useful report, but in some ways he was lamentably naive. He said that there was no need to make it legally binding because the actions of the Secretary of State were accountable to Parliament, so no further control was necessary. I do not know whether he envisaged that we would be debating these matters at 1 o'clock in the morning with no chance to amend or debate them in any detail or principle. He went on to give that famous pledge that in his view arbitration should be overruled

"only for reasons of the utmost national importance".

The outstanding feature of the debate was that the Secretary of State argued good housekeeping, pleaded poverty and argued about the common sense and the nuts and bolts of a complicated system, but he made no attempt to argue that, in his decision, there were reasons of the utmost national importance. He might have said that he had to overrule arbitration because the general mismanagement of the economy made it impossible to afford the arbitration award, but for some reason he did not advance perhaps his most plausible argument.

The truth is that he is embarked on a course of action that will damage police morale, at a time when we wish to improve and not to undermine it. Having failed to win the argument in the police negotiating board and having faild to carry the police arbitration tribunal, he has decided to take the law into his own hands. I am not trying to argue — I repeat the distinction made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook—that what the right hon. and learned Gentleman is doing is illegal, but I repeat that it is an act of doubtful morality, given the expectation and relationship of trust that has marked the machinery set up by Mr. Justice Edmund-Davies over the past 11 years.

The Secretary of State said that that argument was the usual waffle and that it was complete balderdash. But then he rather betrayed himself, because he said that it was all a matter of honour. It is a matter of honour, nothing to do with waffle, balderdash or illegality. Against that test, the

[Mr. Donald Dewar]

right hon. and learned Gentleman fails. In the end, sadly for him, "the utmost national importance" has been equated with the convenience of the Treasury.

12.56 am

Mr. Waddington: With the leave of the House, I should make a few points.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) said that I was wrong because our decision was all about money. In part, he was right. It was essential that the Government should consider the wider economic interests, because more in rent allowance inevitably means less on other police services. Every hon. Member knows perfectly well that representations are being made even now that there is not enough money for all the other expenses of running a police force, such as vehicles, equipment or machinery.

It is not a serious indictment of the Government that we were concerned with the cost of the proposals put before us by the police negotiating board. It would have been thoroughly irresponsible if we had allowed such massive increases in rent allowance. In the first year, the amount involved may be described as relatively modest, but I cannot believe that any hon. Member believes that if the system as recommended by the police negotiating board had been put in place large sums of money would not have been involved over a period of years.

Therefore, it was important that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook should have made it abundantly plain that the Opposition are pledged to an increase in rent allowances, which would deprive police forces of substantial sums that undoubtedly are needed for other purposes. *[Interruption.]* If the Opposition do not intend to spend those funds on rent allowances when they could be used on other police services, the indictment against the right hon. Gentleman is all the more forceful. He is committing the Labour party to considerable extra public expenditure, but we have yet to hear where the money will be found.

My hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) was more than generous, and I am grateful to him. It is right that we had amicable discussions about how best to resolve the differences between the Government and the Police Federation. My hon. Friend acknowledged, fairly, that the Government were not unyielding and that, in two respects, we had listened to the representations of the Police Federation, heeded its comments and acted accordingly. I do not think that many people would seriously believe that we had not made a big move to get rid of the feeling of unfairness about officers who belong to forces that are uprated in even years compared with officers in forces that are uprated in odd years.

I entirely agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway). The Government have made their commitment to the Edmund-Davies report, but there is criticism about capital spending plans in police forces. We must heed that argument and do our best to meet the representations made to us. The more we refuse to grasp this nettle, when housing allowances have run completely out of control, the less chance we have of meeting the serious objections that have been made to us on an entirely different front.

I do not understand the Opposition's point. They laughed when we said that if we had observed the recommendation of the police negotiating board, those who rented houses would have had the right to buy. They seem to suggest that they would have been happy for that to happen. I cannot understand it. If they think that the——

It being three hours after proceedings on the motion had been entered upon, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded to put the Question necessary to dispose of them, pursuant to the Order [22 June].*

The House divided: Ayes 191, Noes 293.

Division No. 283] **[1.1 am**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*	Fearn, Ronald
Allason, Rupert	Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Allen, Graham	Fisher, Mark
Alton, David	Flannery, Martin
Anderson, Donald	Flynn, Paul
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Armstrong, Hilary	Foster, Derek
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy	Foulkes, George
Ashton, Joe	Fraser, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Galloway, George
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Barron, Kevin	Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Beckett, Margaret	Godman, Dr Norman A.
Bell, Stuart	Golding, Mrs Llin
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Gould, Bryan
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*	Graham, Thomas
Bermingham, Gerald	Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Blair, Tony	Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Blunkett, David	Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Boateng, Paul	Grocott, Bruce
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*	Hardy, Peter
Boyes, Roland	Harman, Ms Harriet
Bradley, Keith	Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard	Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*	Henderson, Doug
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*	Hinchliffe, David
Buckley, George J.	Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Caborn, Richard	Hood, Jimmy
Callaghan, Jim	Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*	Hoyle, Doug
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*	Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Carr, Michael	Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*	Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*	Illsley, Eric
Clay, Bob	Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann	Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Cohen, Harry	Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Coleman, Donald	Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*	Kennedy, Charles
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*	Kilfedder, James
Corbett, Robin	Kirkwood, Archy
Cousins, Jim	Lambie, David
Cox, Tom	Lamond, James
Cryer, Bob	Leadbitter, Ted
Cummings, John	Leighton, Ron
Cunliffe, Lawrence	Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Cunningham, Dr John	Lewis, Terry
Dalyell, Tam	Litherland, Robert
Darling, Alistair	Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*	Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*	McAllion, John
Dewar, Donald	McAvoy, Thomas
Dixon, Don	McCartney, Ian
Dobson, Frank	Macdonald, Calum A.
Doran, Frank	McKelvey, William
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth	McLeish, Henry
Eastham, Ken	Maclennan, Robert
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*	Madden, Max
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*	Maginnis, Ken
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*	Mahon, Mrs Alice
Faichett, Derek	Marek, Dr John

Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shersby, Michael
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wiggin, Jerry
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baldry, Tony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'th's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*

Squire, Robin
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'caster)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alastair Goodlad, and
Mr. Nicholas Baker.

Question accordingly negatived.

CONTRACTS (APPLICABLE LAW) BILL *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 90(6) (Second Reading Committees), That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time and committed to a Standing Committee.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): With permission, I will put together the two motions relating to European Community documents.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(5) (Standing Committee on European Community documents).

Organic Food

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 10499/89, relating to the production and labelling of organic food; and supports the Government's aim of negotiating changes which take proper account of United Kingdom standards and practice in the production, certification and labelling of such food.

Poultrymeat

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 10438/89 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 7th March 1990, relating to marketing standards for poultrymeat; and supports the Government's aim of negotiating measures that take account of the interests of consumers and poultry producers in the United Kingdom. *—[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Question agreed to.

Post Office

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.*—[Mr. Lightbown.]*

1.13 am

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Since my success in the ballot, my argument has been strengthened by two events. First, yet another industrial dispute in north-west London has affected postal services; secondly, increases in postal charges have recently been announced.

The sad, sorry saga of industrial relations in the postal service has given many of my constituents a deep sense of frustration. Only this morning, I received various letters: I shall quote, briefly, from two of them. One of my constituents asked:

"Is there any means of making accountable to the public those responsible for the sporadic, sometimes prolonged, always disruptive and damaging postal strikes which bedevil north-west London, of which we are a part?"

A second wrote:

"I have lost count of the number of times I have been denied this most essential service for my profession recently. What sort of Government is it that cannot control a postal service, and discipline or dismiss the left-wing agitators who terrorise this district?"

Those are two examples of constituents' complaints about the constant interruption of postal services suffered by the people of north-west London over many years.

The second event—the Post Office's announcement of a series of increases in charges—underlines its weakness and inefficiency. I understand from the Post Office business plan, provided by the Mail Users Association—the Post Office was kind enough to give it to the association—that last year the inland letters service made a pre-interest loss of £37 million, and that the most profitable part of the postal service is interest-receivable. The international letters service made a profit of £41 million on sales of £331 million. In the letters business, 64 per cent. of pre-interest profit comes from 10 per cent. of turnover. Interest receivable in the year 1990-91 will be twice the profit from inland letters.

My remarks are not aimed at the chairman of the Post Office, its board or its employers; I believe that the Post Office's problems are an inevitable consequence of nationalising a monopoly. It is no coincidence that the part of the Post Office that is relatively efficient—the parcels operation—is the part that has to operate in a competitive world. I congratulate the chairman of the Post Office on securing the freedom of Giro to prosper in the private sector, and on "divisionalising" the Post Office into Royal Mail, Post Office Counters Ltd. and the parcels service. Those three divisions are a privatiser's dream.

The chairman has also performed a major public service by ensuring that the Post Office lives in the real world, instead of the world of make-believe statistics that dominated public comment on the subject for so long.

Post Office Counters operates in a large number of prime sites, but suffers from several basic problems. First, there is a declining market. The 1987-88 report of the Post Office said that growth was in danger of petering out; certainly, Post Office Counters, basic business is providing pensions and child benefit, and in future many people will want to be paid by Giro rather than in straight cash. Secondly, Post Office Counters lacks the property expertise to redevelop the sites, and the present financial arrangements make it rather unnecessary for it to do so: if

it were to redevelop, the money would go straight back to the Treasury, and would not be reinvested within the business.

When the Monopolies and Mergers Commission looked into Post Office Counters, it was critical of what it saw. It said that working practices and clerical procedures were outdated, that there was less than a full workload for the hours paid and that overtime was institutionalised and often unnecessary. As a result, Post Office Counters operates in many of the prime sites in our high streets, but its open for far fewer hours than many retailers. Apart from Post Office Counters, no other high street retailer shuts on Saturday afternoons. If Post Office Counters were privatised en bloc tomorrow, the result would be greatly beneficial to a large number of its employees and to its customers.

There are many complaints about the cost and quality of postal services. Hon. Members know of the apocryphal evidence. During the Pete Murray programme last week, a listener telephoned to say that a card that he sent for Easter 1989 arrived just in time for Easter 1990. Another listener telephoned to say that a letter that was posted in March arrived elsewhere in London in mid-June. One of the prime cases was of a letter that went 15 miles during five days. At three miles a day, pigeon post would be somewhat more efficient.

When the Select Committee on Trade and Industry examined the Post Office, it referred to the present deplorable performance of the first-class mail service. The Chairman of the Select Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren) said that, over the years, the Post Office had not organised itself as effectively as it should.

When the Consumers Association investigated the Post Office in September last year, it pointed out that the first-class mail service had deteriorated since 1985. Only 85 per cent. of first-class mail was delivered the next day, and only 53 per cent. of long-distance first-class mail was delivered the day after it was posted. That is a much poorer record than the Post Office aims at, and it underlines the difficulties with which the consumer must contend.

It is not only first-class post that is a source of complaint for many consumers. The *Which?* survey found that a large amount of second-class mail was not arriving by the third working day after posting. The survey came to certain conclusions, one of which was to avoid posting first-class mail on Friday or Saturday because it has less chance of arriving on time. Of mail that is posted on Friday, only 50 per cent. would arrive on time.

Not only *Which?* has shown how bad the first-class postal service is. The mail users survey of March 1989 showed that first-class and second-class mail services were quite inadequate. It estimated that the cost of postal delays to industry was £4 billion.

Apart from postal services being unreliable and slow, a significant amount of post is now lost. The Mail Users Association has estimated that 5 per cent. of letters disappear. Regardless of whether we judge the postal service on the basis of price increases or reliability, it is inadequate.

Post Office representatives have periodically referred to the difficulty that the service faces. They have so far failed to produce the goods. The 1978 Carter report concluded:

"If the service becomes much worse than the public expects, it would become impossible to defend the monopoly against those who might offer a better service."

The Post Office has failed to deliver the goods at the speed that it promised. A competitive service would produce a better deal for the consumer.

I have no doubt that my hon. Friend the Minister will make international comparisons. He will compare the British monopoly with the German monopoly. We do not want to say whether one monopoly is better than another —Conservative Members believe that all monopolies are inherently bad and inefficient—but we want to know whether a competitive service would not be better than a monopolistic service. The record of the Post Office in recent years demonstrates that a competitive environment would be better than the present environment. The conclusion can be only that the present position is unsatisfactory.

On Saturday my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made it clear that her enthusiasm for privatisation and greater competition for the state industries continues apace. My hon. Friend the Minister's belief in competition and the evils of monopolies was frequently demonstrated in Strasbourg and on the Back Benches of the House before he became a Minister. I look forward to his reiterating the speeches that he made before the burdens of office came on to his shoulders, where they sit so lightly.

1.25 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Eric Forth): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) on obtaining this debate this evening. I acknowledge the fact that my hon. Friend the Member for Edmonton (Dr. Twinn) has been present during the debate, as have the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) and the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing). I think that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) was here earlier. As ever, my hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench are keeping a close eye on what I say and, I suspect, on how long I take to say it.

This is an important subject, of interest to every citizen. It is one in which my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South has shown a consistent and expert interest since he came to the House. As he is aware, the Post Office is not an ordinary nationalised industry. Whereas many of Britain's nationalised industries came into being only relatively recently, the Post Office's links with the Crown go back a long way. The Post Office has long been at the forefront of the development of global postal services. It is especially appropriate at this time to mention, as an example of that tradition of innovation, the introduction of the adhesive postage stamp and with it the universal delivery and single tarriff postal system, which were introduced in Britain by Rowland Hill 150 years ago and which are now taken for granted throughout the world.

We should also remind ourselves that the Post Office is a very successful organisation. As my hon. Friend anticipated. I shall mention briefly—it is important to do so—that the quality of the letters service in this country is significantly higher than in most other European Community countries, Indeed, the Post Office recently announced that, according to a survey that it commissioned of the quality of the letters service in six European countries, including the United Kingdom, our Post Office now offers the best quality of service of all

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those countries. In addition, I remind the House that, unlike many European postal administrations, the Post Office has throughout the past decade generated profits.

We cannot expect an organisation as big as the Post Office to be without its difficulties and there are several areas in which we would all like improvements. I shall touch on some of those now, and in doing so I shall address the issues that my hon. Friend raised in his speech.

While the Government do not have day-to-day responsibility for the quality of service in the Post Office —that is, of course, an operational matter for the Post Office—I and my colleagues are aware of how important that is to users of the Post Office's services. I say that bearing in mind the point, which my hon. Friend stressed, that the Post Office enjoys a statutory monopoly on the carriage of ordinary letters—a subject to which I shall briefly return later. The Post Office chairman has made it clear on a number of occasions that he regards improvements to the quality of service as a key priority, and I welcome that. I thank my hon. Friend for his tribute to the chairman and his colleagues, and I join him in that. They discharge a difficult task with great vigour and dedication.

For some time, there has been a perception among mail users, including my hon. Friend, that the letters service is perhaps not as good as it should be. Indeed, judging from my hon. Friend's remarks tonight, he may well think that to be an understatement. I remind the House of the protracted national postal strike in September 1988. More recently, we have been faced, particularly the constituents of my hon. Friend and my hon. Friend the Member for Edmonton, with the difficulties caused by the unofficial —I stress that they are unofficial—strikes in the north-west and west London letters districts. The Government consider that industrial relations, while primarily a matter for the Post Office, its employees and the trade unions, are something about which we share my hon. Friend's concern.

I must repeat what I said to the House last week: every time unofficial industrial action is taken that prejudices the level of service offered by the Post Office, it strengthens the argument of those who would like to see radical change in the present status of the Post Office. I hope that Post Office employees will bear that in mind before taking such action.

I am pleased to be able to tell the House that the number of days lost through industrial action in the year to March 1990 was 20 per cent. lower than the corresponding figure for the previous year, even when the effects of the national stoppage in September 1988 are taken out. I look forward to seeing that improvement maintained in future.

Recruitment and retention have been a problem for Royal Mail recently, particularly in London and the south-east of England, and this too has inevitably had an effect on quality of service. I am glad to be able to say that Royal Mail is responding to this problem with imagination and vigour. Regional pay supplements in areas of difficult recruitment area now a well-established feature of Royal Mail's pay structure and their introduction has proved to be a significant benefit.

Royal Mail has also taken a series of direct steps designed further to improve the quality of its services. During 1990, we have seen the reintroduction of Sunday collections, and by the autumn that part of the programme will be complete. Improvements are being made to Royal Mail's transport network, which will enable mail to be moved around the country more quickly. The airborne network, which moves first-class mail around the country, has recently been strengthened by the addition of four new routes, and more mail is now being moved locally by road.

In the sorting offices, state-of-the-art optical character recognition sorting machines which can read typewritten postcodes are being introduced. In addition, we have seen the introduction of the sale of postage stamps through about 40,000 retail outlets throughout the country, and I know what a popular measure it has proved to be.

Complementing those developments, the Post Office introduced for the first time last year an end-to-end quality of service measurement system which measures the quality of the letter service as the customer sees it. At the same time, the Post Office made a public commitment—agreed with the Post Office Users National Council—to improve the quality of the first-class letter service on average by 3 per cent. during the year to the end of March 1990. I understand that, while problem areas still remain—they were highlighted by my hon. Friend—this overall target was slightly exceeded. According to the Post Office's statistics, compiled for it by independent consultants, nationally, 78·1 per cent. of first-class letters were delivered the next day during the year to the end of March 1990 compared with 75·4 per cent. in the previous year.

I hope that my hon. Friend will join me in congratulating the Post Office on this improvement and in encouraging it to continue to work for further improvements. On this point, I welcome the announcement last week that the Post Office has agreed with the Post Office Users National Council a further set of district-by-district quality of service improvement targets for first-class mail for this year of an average of 3 per cent.

I am pleased to say that the improvements that I have outlined are not confined to Royal Mail. Hon. Members will have noticed the relaunch of the Post Office's parcels business under the name Parcelforce. Considerable investment is being made in Parcelforce to enable it to meet the needs of its customers. Hon. Members will be aware that Parcelforce has no monopoly protection—my hon. Friend mentioned this—and has to compete for its share of what has become a very competitive market.

Overall, these developments represent a considerable investment package. In this year's public expenditure White Paper it was announced that the Post Office was planning to spend more than £1 billion over the next three years, about 60 per cent. of which will be spent in Royal Mail. The total planned capital expenditure of around £350 million this year is more than twice as much as was spent in 1987-88.

It is my belief, and I hope that the House will agree, that the package of measures that I have described provides encouraging evidence of the determination of Royal Mail, and of the Post Office as a whole, to meet the needs of its customers by improving the quality of service it offers them. These improvements do not, however, come free of charge. In order to help to fund the major programme of investment that I mentioned a few moments ago—as my hon. Friend acknowledged, or rather criticised—the Post Office has recently consulted the Post Office Users National Council about a proposal to increase the first and second-class letter tariffs by 2p in September. Although none of us welcomes such price increases, we must

recognise that they are needed to fund improvements in quality of service and even after the increases, stamp prices will have risen by considerably less than inflation over the past five years.

I know that there are some, however, like my hon. Friend, who feel that the only way to have a Post Office which is efficient and genuinely responsive to consumers' needs is to subject it to full competition. That was the burden of my hon. Friend's argument. He wanted to abolish its statutory monopoly for the conveyance of letters or to subject it to market disciplines by other means, such as privatisation.

I should say immediately about the monopoly of letter services in general, that the Government attach great importance to the continuation of a letter service which enables letters to be sent from anywhere to anywhere in the United Kingdom at the same reasonable tariff rate. In particular, we fully recognise the significance of such a facility for those living in isolated communities or wishing to communicate with them.

Post Office services throughout the world have traditionally been afforded the protection of a mail monopoly to help them to achieve the twin objectives of universal delivery at a uniform, affordable price. The extent of the letter monopoly varies from country to country, but it may be worth repeating the classic economic arguments for having one.

Other things being equal, there must be scale economies in letter conveyance, particularly in final delivery. It generally costs no more to empty a letter box containing 50 letters than one containing 100. If a postman must walk down one's garden path or climb the stairs to one's flat to deliver one letter, it will generally cost little more for him to do so with three. Consequently, removing letter traffic from the Post Office might not allow it to reduce its costs proportionately, and the average cost of conveying the letters remaining with the Post Office would tend to increase. The result would be either higher stamp charges or a bill for the taxpayer. Neither alternative is attractive. The consequences for the Post Office's costs would be exacerbated by the fact that anyone entering the letter market without obligations would naturally take the lower-cost traffic first.

Arguments about the monopoly are not all one way. We know from experience that the letter monopoly is certainly no panacea. It denies the consumer choice and represses innovation in the development of new types of service. It also protects the Post Office from outside influence, shelters it from the financial consequences of perhaps less-than-perfect organisation and productivity, and prevents direct external comparisons from being made.

It is worth remembering that the Post Office is already subject to some competition. The letter monopoly in the United Kingdom does not extend to letters for which less than £1 is charged. That allows competition for time-critical and value-added mail. There is no monopoly in the delivery of parcels.

Nonetheless, there is no doubt that increased direct competition in the letter market would be beneficial and that some of the financial pressures resulting from any loss of scale economies, or "cream skimming" as it is known, of low-cost traffic could be balanced, or perhaps exceeded, through improved Post Office efficiency. The challenge is to determine the manner in which and the degree to which competition should be introduced so that its benefits can be realised, while allowing the Post Office to continue to fulfil its obligations at a reasonable cost to its customers. Therefore, as the Government have made clear on many occasions, we keep and will continue to keep the options for introducing further competition under review to ensure that the needs of customers throughout the United Kingdom are met as fully as possible.

My hon. Friend mentioned counters. The Post Office operates the largest retail network in the country. It has over 20,000 post offices throughout the United Kingdom —considerably more outlets than any bank or building society and more per head of population than in France, Germany, Japan or the United States of America. That means that, in the United Kingdom, post offices are easily accessible to all but those in the remotest areas. In urban areas, the aim is to have offices distributed so that no one is more than a mile from a post office, and in rural areas no more than two miles.

Only a small proportion of offices—some 1,300 out of over 20,000—are directly owned and operated by Post Office Counters. The vast majority of offices, about 19,300, are already sub-post offices, run under contract to Post Office Counters Ltd. by self-employed sub-postmasters and sub-postmistresses. That arrangement benefits both parties. The post office brings in regular customers to buy stamps, post parcels and collect benefits and pensions, providing potential customers for the sub-postmaster or mistress's private business. Overheads are shared between the two busineses. Sub and agency offices can therefore have significant advantages over directly run Crown offices.

In rural areas particularly, post offices also serve an important social function in their local communities. That was clearly recognised in the Act establishing the Post Office as a public corporation, which imposes on the Post Office a statutory duty to have regard to the social as well as industrial and commercial needs of the United Kingdom in exercising its powers. Because of that, changes in the network require careful consultation with the local community and the Post Office Users National Council as representatives of the customer.

In 1988, Post Office Counters began the process of restructuring its network, which I hope my hon. Friend welcomed, both to give a more cost-effective service and, like any retail network, to respond to movements in population and variations in shopping habits. As part of that process, it has converted about 170 Crown post offices, mostly smaller ones, to agencies. The Post Office is continuing that process. It has completed consultations on some 290 proposed conversions and begun consultations on a further 40. I shall be pressing it to move ahead with the process as quickly as possible.

Before concluding, I will mention one topic of increasing importance to the Post Office and to private sector mail operators—developments in the European Community in the context of the single market. Towards the end of the year, the European Commission plans to publish a Green Paper on Community postal policy, which will be considered by the Council of Ministers before a period of public consultation, which is likely to continue into 1991. Once the consultative process has been completed, it will be for the Council of Ministers to decide on any changes that the Community may introduce.

The Commission, with the help of a senior officials group, has been collecting information and views from member states for several months. It is too early to

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speculate on its final proposals, but the United Kingdom takes the view that those who live in the Community should have access to a basic letter service at an affordable tariff—but beyond that, it believes that the Post Office should be subject to maximum competitive pressures. We believe that there is an important role for competition to play in increasing efficiency and improving services to the customer.

I have tried to do justice to the points raised by my hon. Friend. I hope that he accepts the balance of the arguments that we see—acknowledging the improvements that the Post Office has made to its services and looking forward to yet further improvements, while being sensitive to the needs of my hon. Friend's constituents and their natural desire to see an improvement in Post Office services. I hope also that my hon. Friend and the House recognise the continuing efforts being made by the Post Office's management and employees to do justice to the confidence shown in them by the House, the Government, and users of post office services throughout the land.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at eighteen minutes to Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 26 June 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

EMPLOYMENT

Construction Inspectors

1. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans there are for increasing the number of specialist construction inspectors within the Health and Safety Executive.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Patrick Nicholls): In April 1990, the Health and Safety Executive embarked on a year-long recruitment campaign aimed at increasing the number of specialist inspectors in post across all disciplines, including construction.

Mr. Eastham: Is the Minister aware that in 1988-89 there were 540 fatal accidents, mainly in the construction industry, and that it is believed that 90 per cent. of them could have been avoided? Will the Department get itself organised and do something to help to avoid such unnecessary deaths? Is the Minister further aware that many deaths could be avoided if the Department were determined to follow a proper recruitment policy?

Mr. Nicholls: I agree with at least some of what the hon. Gentleman says. He is right to draw attention to the fact that the "Blackspot Construction" report estimated that about 90 per cent. of fatalities were preventable, about 70 per cent. by management action. But the hon. Gentleman is wrong to assume that one can automatically reduce the number of accidents and fatalities simply by increasing the number of inspectors. The requests of the Health and Safety Commission have been met in recent years, but ultimately responsibility for preventing fatalities and industrial injuries must lie with those engaged in the workplace.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Will the Minister confirm that the Health and Safety Commission's plan of action has been returned to it by the Secretary of State, and is it connected with its bid for a further £7 million of funding? The Minister says that all its bids in recent years have been accepted. Will the present bid be met in full?

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Commission must discuss with my right hon. and learned Friend its plan of work. Those discussions have taken place and my right hon. and learned Friend has made it clear that sufficient resources to enable it to carry out that plan will be found from within our own resources, so the assurance that I gave the hon. Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) remains true.

Labour Statistics

2. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total work force in employment in *(a)* the second quarter of 1979 and *(b)* the second quarter of 1989.

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Michael Howard): The work force in employment in the United Kingdom stood at 25·4 million in June 1979 and 26·8 million in June 1989, an increase of 1·4 million over the period.

Mr. Thompson: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that, during a similar period, the number of people employed in the Norwich area, in particular in the city of Norwich, increased by 5,000, coupled with a downward trend in unemployment in Norwich, particularly among women? Does he agree that all of that would be put at risk if the Opposition's policies were put into effect, and that they would have a particularly disastrous effect on East Anglia?

Mr. Howard: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. There can be no doubt whatever that the policies that would be pursued by the Labour party would work not only to the detriment of my hon. Friend's constituents —very serious though that would be—but to the detriment of the country as a whole.

Mr. James Lamond: Before the Minister becomes too complacent about the statistics, may I ask him to bear it in mind that within the figures are concealed sectors such as textiles and clothing, which have been faced with massive reductions in the number of employees? For example, Courtaulds has recently been closing mills in the north-west of England. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman see that those who are negotiating on behalf of the Government, including through the EC, ensure that the multi-fibre arrangement is retained for at least another 10 years, bearing in mind how important that arrangement is if the textile industry is to remain on its feet?

Mr. Howard: Those matters are taken into account by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in the negotiations to which the hon. Gentleman refers. But the country has learnt increasingly in the past 11 years that the key to success is to adapt to change and not simply to preserve existing patterns of employment wherever they may be. That is the basis for the extra 1·5 million jobs that have been created since 1979, bringing the total to 27 million.

Mr. Riddick: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that a higher proportion of the adult population of this country is in work than in any other European country? Does he agree that the greatest threat to the excellent figures that he announced this afternoon comes from some of the madcap socialist policies put forward by the European Commission and Mrs. Papandreou, which would simply make it more expensive and bureaucratic for employers to take on more employees?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend's analysis of the social action programme is entirely accurate. There is no doubt

that those proposals would destroy jobs and make it infinitely more difficult for us to maintain the record of success that we have had for several years.

Ms. Short: Does the Secretary of State understand—if I can help to persuade him, perhaps he will explain to his Back Benchers—that having a high proportion of one's work force in employment is not a sign of a developed, healthy economy? Britain is backward in that it has high numbers of young people who do not receive education and low levels of people in training. Labour's programme, which places great emphasis on those issues, will help Britain to catch up with the rest of Europe, rather than fall steadily behind, as it has done under this Government's policies.

Mr. Howard: I fancy that if there were fewer people in work in this country, the Labour party would not entirely welcome that. We can justly be proud of the fact that we have a record number of jobs here. It gives people the opportunities for employment and earnings that they want. It is shameful that the Labour party's policies would act to the detriment of those opportunities.

Employment Legislation

3. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what benefits he estimates have accrued from the changes in employment legislation over the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: By ending abuses of trade union power, such as secondary action and flying pickets, which disfigured British industrial relations for so long, our legislation has helped to attract massive overseas investment to this country, create record numbers of new jobs and reduce the number of strikes to the lowest level for more than 50 years.

Mr. Thurnham: Will my hon. Friend remind the public of the dangers of repealing that legislation and returning to the anarchy of trade union bosses and their flying pickets? Will he go on reminding the public that those are the policies that the Opposition want?

Mr. Nicholls: My hon. Friend is entirely right to draw attention to the fact that any conversion by the Labour party to the virtues of responsible trade unionism is extremely short lived and skin deep. My hon. Friend should bear in mind the comment that the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) made in his letter to *The Times* yesterday. He glibly said that it would be wholly unfair to ban lawful secondary action.

Mrs. Fyfe: Have the Government finally stopped abolishing wages councils? If they have, is it because they are ashamed of their actions? Might they restore the wages councils that previously existed?

Mr. Nicholls: I can well understand that, on a question that highlights the Labour party's deficiencies, the hon. Lady would want to talk about the wages councils, but perhaps we can talk about them on another occasion. The point that arises out of this question is that trade union reforms that the Government have introduced have been overwhelmingly popular with the public and are seriously under threat, as anybody who takes the trouble to look at Labour party policy in detail will see.

Labour Statistics

4. **Mr. Barry Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment by how much unemployment has fallen *(a)* as a percentage of the total and *(b)* in numbers since June 1987.

Mr. Howard: Since June 1987, unemployment in the United Kingdom, seasonally adjusted, has fallen by about 44 per cent., and by just under 1·25 million.

Mr. Porter: Is not it somewhat strange that Labour Members find the undeniable fact that more people are employed in this country than ever before sad and the sign of an underdeveloped country? I fail to understand that. Perhaps my right hon. and learned Friend will confirm that the figure that shows that our unemployment level is well below that of our European partners is more important. I join my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) in seeking reassurance that the bizarre and restrictive schemes of the social aspects of the Labour party's policy and our record on job creation should be brought to the attention of our partners.

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. With the exception only of Luxembourg and West Germany, we have the lowest rate of unemployment in the European Community. There is no doubt that the policies that have led to our success in job creation would be substantially more difficult to carry out if the social action programme were implemented. I lose no opportunity to point that out to my colleagues in the European Community.

Dr. Reid: Is the Minister aware that the demise of the threatened steel industry in Lanarkshire would produce unemployment figures that even he, practised though he is, could not fiddle? Does he recognise that if the steel industry in Lanarkshire were to go, unemployment in the area would be 33 per cent. among males, 13 per cent. among females and 25 per cent. overall? Perhaps he intends to try to fiddle those figures, but would not it be easier for him to make representations to his colleague at the Department of Trade and Industry and ask him to get off his butt and do something to save the steel industry?

Mr. Howard: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has made clear the Government's concern about the future of the steel industry, to which the hon. Gentleman refers. If the hon. Gentleman looks elsewhere in the United Kingdom, he will see that adjustments have taken place on a scale that has ensured that those parts of the United Kingdom that were most affected by closures in the steel industry now have a rate of unemployment that is lower than the national average. That proves that it is possible to adapt to change in a highly successful and effective manner.

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the tremendous reduction in unemployment that we have seen in the west midlands owes a great deal not only to our legislative changes but to changes of attitude in the workplace, especially in manufacturing? Does he further agree that the co-operation of the workers to become multi-skilled creates not only a more flexible environment in the workplace but adds to the career potential of the workers? Would he like to add his good wishes to two companies in my constituency that this week

received the Queen's award for export and technology? Those companies are Lucas and Yales and the workers deserve congratulations.

Mr. Howard: I am delighted to join my hon. Friend in congratulating the two firms to which she referred. She is right to identify the enhanced skills among our work force as one of the key factors responsible for our recent success. We want to build on what has been achieved over the years.

Safety Representatives (Building Sites)

5. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement about employment of safety representatives on building sites.

Mr. Nicholls: Safety representatives make a valuable contribution to ensuring satisfactory standards of health and safety, both on building sites and in other workplaces.

Mr. Bennett: Does the Minister accept that in Question 1, my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) emphasised the appalling safety record on building sites and the need for action? In answer to that question the Minister said that he did not envisage the appointment of more inspectors. If he will not appoint more inspectors, will he make sure that there are safety representatives on all building sites and that they are there for the duration of the contract so that we can have an improvement in safety? That applies especially to management-only contracts and where there is a continuing changeover of subcontractors, because that makes the continuity of safety difficult and contributes to the high level of accidents and deaths.

Mr. Nicholls: I respectfully correct the hon. Gentleman in his recollection of what I said. I did not say that the Government were not prepared to appoint more inspectors, but that the mere appointment of more inspectors would not automatically ensure that there were fewer fatalities and accidents. The figures show that there are more inspectors in post in construction than the target. The hon. Gentleman makes a perfectly fair point in talking about the need to have special regard to multi-contractor sites. He will be aware that the commission has issued a consultative document about that and we shall be interested to see the response to it.

Mr. Bellingham: Does the Minister agree that if we are to have high safety standards in the construction industry, we must have proper training? Is he aware of the excellent work carried out by the construction industry training board in raising the standards of training in the construction industry? Does he further agree that the CITB has an important future role?

Mr. Nicholls: My hon. Friend is entirely right to make the point, made by Ministers on numerous occasions, that training is very much the key, and that also means training of awareness and getting over to workers the fact that in the end they have to be responsible for their safety, as do employers. That is an uncomfortable message and therefore one that Opposition Members wish to obscure, but it is true nevertheless.

Mr. Crowther: Does the Minister accept that the report to which he referred earlier showed clearly that a large percentage of the appallingly high level of fatalities and serious injuries in the construction industry is due to lack of proper supervision and training in safety matters? If the hon. Gentleman cannot persuade employers, or many of them, to accept their responsibilities, will he consider giving more power to the safety representatives, so that they can stop potentially dangerous practices without going through the present bureaucratic process of filling in numerous forms while the dangerous practice continues?

Mr. Nicholls: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that there is no question of having to fill in some form or of going through a bureaucratic procedure to stop an unsafe practice. If the workers on a construction site or in any other workplace feel that something is unsafe, a single telephone call to the Health and Safety Executive will enable the matter to be dealt with at once. I do not accept that merely giving extra powers to safety representatives in a situation that may require a high degree of knowledge and expertise is the way forward. Where I can agree with the hon. Gentleman—I am grateful to him for giving me the chance to reiterate it yet again—is that management has the key responsibility, and it is wholly unacceptable, as the "Blackspot Construction" report made clear, that 90 per cent. of accidents were preventable, 70 per cent. by management action. That is a message that management must take on board and I accept it to the hilt.

Travelling People (Salisbury)

6. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement about unemployment benefit claims by travelling people at his Department's Salisbury office.

Mr. Nicholls: I understand that there are 1,509 people claiming unemployment-related benefits at the Salisbury office, of whom 150 are registered as not having a permanent or fixed address. Claimants in that category are subject to the same rules and responsibilities for receiving benefits as anyone else who claims, including those of being available for and actively seeking work.

Mr. Key: I have no wish to see the children of travelling people further disadvantaged, but will my hon. Friend have another look at the requirement that claimants should be actively seeking work, because it is increasingly difficult to explain to pensioners and low-paid rural workers why more than 100 hippies, who do not pay poll tax and make no contribution to society, can claim benefit all the year round in Salisbury?

Mr. Nicholls: My hon. Friend makes a fair point. As a Member with a rural constituency who has also been plagued by bands of brigands, I have considerable sympathy with what he says. It is relatively early days to know whether the actively seeking work provisions work. Clearly, those who have an interest in making them work to their advantage will try to do so. In the light of his experience, my hon. Friend may feel that the actively seeking work provisions are not having the effect that they should in particular cases, so if he wants to come and see me, I shall be more than happy to co-operate.

Labour Statistics

7. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total unemployment figures and the rate of unemployment in May 1990, and May 1980.

Mr. Howard: In May 1990, the seasonally adjusted level of unemployment in the United Kingdom was 1,611,000, or 5·7 per cent. of the work force, compared with a level of 1,224,400 in May 1980, or 4·6 per cent. of the work force.

Mr. Welsh: How can the Minister justify an economic policy that keeps unemployment low in and pumps massive wealth into the pampered English southern regions at the direct expense of the rest of the United Kingdom? Does not he know that the Low Pay Unit report shows that more than half the Scottish work force is on low pay at a time of high unemployment, and all that in one of the potentially richest countries in Europe? How can the Government call something that harms so many and helps so few an economic policy?

Mr. Howard: Unemployment in Scotland during the past year has dropped by more than 16 per cent. compared with a reduction in the United Kingdom as a whole of just over 12 per cent. Scotland is fully sharing in Britain's prosperity, which is a direct result of the Government's policies.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Has my right hon. and learned Friend noted that unemployment in Gravesham has more than halved since the most recent general election? Is not it the case that long-term unemployment has also substantially reduced?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is right. There has been a proportionately greater reduction in the number of long-term unemployed even than in unemployment as a whole. I hope that Opposition Members welcome that.

Mr. Lewis: Is the Secretary of State aware that in the Bolton and Bury travel-to-work area, 9,500 jobs have been lost in manufacturing industry over the past nine years? Is that good for the economy of the Bolton and Bury travel-to-work area?

Mr. Howard: As I said, if we are to continue achieving success, we must adapt to change. That has been happening in the area to which the hon. Gentleman refers, as it has in all other areas. One must examine all the unemployment figures to reveal the truth, and the true picture that has been developing is one in which every right hon. and hon. Member can take pride.

Mr. Bill Walker: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that in Scotland, as in other parts of the United Kingdom, the unemployment figures show clearly that more people are in work? The Governor of the Bank of England commented only yesterday how well Scotland has done in the transition from the old smoke-stack industries to today's modern industries, whereby people are much better off.

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is right. I never cease to wonder at the amount of time, effort and energy devoted by Opposition Members to denigrating the Government's record, when we ought to be debating policies that will help take the country forward on the most secure basis. On reflection, perhaps the reason why the Opposition do not want to discuss policies is that they know that theirs would work to the detriment of us all.

Low Pay

8. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many representations he has received concerning low pay for people under the age of 25 years following the publication of the last edition of the new earnings survey.

Mr. Nicholls: Since 1989, my right hon. and learned Friend has received 11 representations on that subject.

Mr. Jones: Is the Minister aware that since the Wages Act 1986 the United Kingdom has stood alone in not protecting young people on low wages, in contrast to our EEC counterparts? Is he further aware that young people are paid scandalously low wages in many parts of the United Kingdom? The Low Pay Unit has found some youngsters working for hairdressers earning less than half what they would if protected by the wages councils. When will the Government adopt the social charter to prevent young people being exploited in that way?

Mr. Nicholls: The hon. Gentleman has achieved a first today in managing to craft a question in which every single judgment that he made is precisely wrong. If he examines the evidence, he will find that the structure of wages councils, minimum wages, and all the other apparatus that Opposition Members like so well has the effect not of creating jobs but of destroying them.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: Does my hon. Friend agree not only that a minimum wage would increase unemployment among the low-paid but that the best way of helping those people is to ensure that they do not pay national insurance contributions, as under the present Government? But they will if, by some mischance, a Labour Government are elected.

Mr. Nicholls: My hon. Friend is right to remind us that one of the effects of the draft directive on temporary work would be to ensure that 1·75 million low wage earners who do not pay national insurance contributions now would have to pay them. Apparently, that policy has the support of the Opposition—but it does not have the support of the Government.

Training in Work

9. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how he intends to increase the numbers receiving training in work.

Mr. Howard: The number of people in work receiving training increased by 70 per cent. between 1984 and 1989. The employer-led training and enterprise councils that are coming into operation around the country will actively promote measures to continue that encouraging trend.

Mr. McAvoy: Is the Secretary of State aware that according to the European Commission's 1989 labour survey, the United Kingdom has the lowest-skilled work force in Europe, with only 38 per cent. classed as skilled compared with the EC average of 63 per cent? Is he further aware that the National Council for Voluntary Organisations is quoted in today's issue of *The Times* as

saying that it will have to axe thousands of training places because of Government cuts in training expenditure? Why do the Government still refuse to support the long-term future of this country?

Mr. Howard: I look forward to meeting the national council tomorrow, when I shall explain to it that the Government are spending some £2·7 billion of taxpayers' money in the current year on training, that we are seeing an increase in employers' contributions to training, and that the extent to which our work force is beginning to become well trained is increasing apace, and will continue to be enhanced as a result of the activities of training and enterprise councils.

Mr. Rowe: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the people who most need training are school leavers, who go into work instead of further education in one form or another? Will he consider making a link between employers' national insurance contributions and the level of qualifications that young employees manage to achieve while working for that employer?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is known for his ingenious suggestions and that is one which we shall certainly consider, as we consider all suggestions to help performance in that area. I certainly agree with my hon. Friend that it is important that young people who enter work receive training, and I am delighted that employers are increasingly recognising their responsibilities in that area.

Mr. Blair: Will the Secretary of State confirm that training organisations throughout the country are considering withdrawing from Government training schemes because of cuts in this year's budget, and will he deny that he has already agreed to cuts in next year's budget? When will he start to stand up for the interests not merely of his Department but of the future of training in Britain?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman's question is entirely inaccurate. Well over 90 per cent. of the recontracting exercise on employment and youth training has been completed. Possibly unlike the hon. Gentleman, I accept a responsibility towards those who have received training and are in need of it, but I do not accept responsibility for those who provide training, if they do not do so in the most cost-effective and efficient way.

Mr. Conway: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that British employers are spending £18 billion a year of their hard-earned cash on training? Is not that encouragement by the Government much more effective than the compulsion offered to British employers by the Opposition?

Mr. Howard: The cost to British employers was £18 billion in 1986-87—the latest year for which we have full statistics. It has certainly increased since, and is a sign of the extent to which training takes place throughout the work force. Of course, we must do even better, but it is wrong to denigrate our present performance.

Skill Centres

10. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the progress towards the privatisation of skill centres.

Mr. Nicholls: The sales of the training businesses at 51 of the 60 skill centres plus the Skills Training Agency's head office, mobile training service, sales teams and colleges have been completed.

Mr. Evans: Is the Minister aware that very few people understand why the Government have given a few selected individuals £14 million of taxpayers' money to take away valuable skill centres, including the one in St. Helens, which have an asset value in excess of £100 million? Does the Minister agree that if a group of Labour councillors had attempted to give away public assets on that scale, they would probably have been had up for corruption?

Mr. Nicholls: It is not for me to comment on the possibility of Labour councillors being accused of corruption. The hon. Gentleman is entirely wrong. If he studies the profits of the STA, he will see that it broke even only once in the past five years. In 1989-90, there was an estimated loss of £30 million. The tender was conducted properly after professional advice was given. The National Audit Office is carrying out its usual value-for-money audit, and I am perfectly satisfied that when it announces its findings they will show that the hon. Gentleman's suspicions are entirely ill founded.

Mr. Mariand: Will my hon. Friend take the opportunity to condemn Labour-controlled Chesterfield city council for forcing the closure of its local skill centre?

Mr. Nicholls: My hon. Friend is entirely right. He has referred to one of the more unpleasant and nasty examples of a Labour-controlled council acting for wholly doctrinaire and political reasons, in this case, by refusing to extend leasing facilities to the new owners of a skills training centre simply because it disapproved of the act on political grounds. It would be difficult to find a more shameful example of political interests being put above the interests of those whom the training schemes are there to serve, but of course the Opposition will defend such action.

Mr. McLeish: The privatisation of the Skills Training Agency is a public scandal. Why have £120 million worth of assets been given away, why has £25 million in sweeteners been given to the private sector and why was £40 million of employment training budgeted funding taken out and used to adjust the accounts and estimates of the Skills Training Agency? When will the Government pursue practical policies to improve our skills performance with the same enthusiasm as they pursue privatisation and profits for the very few?

Mr. Nicholls: The only scandal that emerges from this exchange is the hon. Gentleman's extraordinary inability to understand that an organisation capable of losing £30 million is not the sort of concern that can be sold for an immediate profit. The hon. Gentleman can scrabble round and cast aspersions as widely as he wants, using words like "scandal", but the sale represented a good deal for the taxpayer and a good deal for those who need training. The one thing of which we can be certain is that when the National Audit Office produces its report, the hon. Gentleman will not have the good grace to apologise to the House.

Training Schemes (Funding)

11. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will review the arrangements for the funding of training schemes.

Mr. Howard: Funding arrangements of training schemes are kept constantly under review.

Mr. Bowis: Will my right hon. and learned Friend join me in congratulating the many people who have worked hard to make a success of our employment training schemes? I acknowledge that some of the schemes may now qualify for fewer places as unemployment falls, but does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that that should not be the case in respect of disabled people and others with special needs? Will he ensure that, as the TECs formulate their plans, they will be required to provide funding for the adequate training of those people?

Mr. Howard: I am happy to join my hon. Friend in congratulating those who provide training places and to give him the assurance for which he asks. The guarantee of a training place for every 16 to 18-year-old school leaver who cannot find a job and for the longer-term unemployed and other priority groups remains in place. We are committed to that guarantee and it applies, in particular, to people who are disabled and have special needs. I confirm that the arrangements that we are making with the training and enterprise councils take full account of the requirement to meet those needs and discharge those responsibilities.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman examine some of the problems that have been thrown up by cuts in training budgets? For example, in Truro, trainees in information technology have been thrown off the course half way through and have not attained the qualifications for which they were half-trained. Similarly, special groups which have been trained by voluntary bodies—such as refugees, who clearly have special training needs—are finding that the number of places has been cut.

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman will find that all those to whom he has referred have alternative facilities available to them so that they will not be disadvantaged. In ensuring that the taxpayer gets full value for money, and thus looking critically to ensure that the most cost-effective and efficient training is provided, we are absolutely clear that none of those in receipt of training should be disadvantaged in any way.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that, by increasing the training budget no less than threefold in real terms since 1979 and by providing 450,000 places on employment training, the Government have allowed the resources to be used more effectively through the training and enterprise councils? Will he also confirm that the TECs will be able to change the current rule under which victims of widespread redundancies cannot enter into employment training schemes for 26 weeks?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is right to point to the exciting future in training that the training and enterprise councils will be able to provide. They will, of course, have greater flexibility in dealing with those who suffer as a result of large-scale redundancies. But that is only one respect in which they will be able to provide improved training.

Youth Training

12. **Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the availability of youth training places in each local labour market.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. and learned Friend is satisfied that there are sufficient training places to meet demand.

Mr. Field: How many training places for young people in the Wirral have been deliberately axed by Government policy? Will the Minister guarantee that every young person in the Wirral who wants a training place will have one?

Mr. Nicholls: I entirely accept the premise in the hon. Gentleman's comments. I repeat what I said a moment ago: my right hon. and learned Friend is satisfied that there are sufficient training places to meet demand. Those places must exist to meet the guarantee in the Wirral and elsewhere. Although particular trainers may not succeed in having their contracts renewed in successive years, that is entirely different from the guarantee not being met. If the hon. Gentleman knows of a case where a potential YTS trainee has not been satisfied by the guarantee, we want to know about it. Our concern in that respect at least is the same as the hon. Gentleman's.

Mr. Favell: Does my hon. Friend share my suspicion that much of the clamour for even more money to be spent on training, despite the amount having risen threefold since 1979, is union-inspired? After all, unemployment has dropped dramatically, the number of school leavers has decreased and trainers are desperately looking for customers. Is not it about time that we considered the amount of money that we are paying out?

Mr. Nicholls: It is a rather curious and conservative feature of the Opposition that they believe that no adjustment in training provision is necessary when there are fewer people to be trained. When we take account of the effects of demography, which means that there are fewer young people, and the fact that employers are prepared to take a greater share of the burden of training, we can certainly strike a better deal for the taxpayer and for the individual trainee.

Mr. Fatchett: Is not there a danger that the Minister is misleading my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) and the House when he says that the Government can deliver the YTS guarantee? Is not the reality that the Government are cutting this year's youth training budget by 10 per cent? The outcome will be that the Government will either be unable to deliver the guarantee or will reduce the standard of training available to youngsters on youth training. The Minister must come clean: either the guarantee has been dropped or standards have been dropped. Which is it?

Mr. Nicholls: The yawning gap in the hon. Gentleman's thesis is that he does not accept that, increasingly, there are fewer young people to be trained. To be fair, that is not a mistake that the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) made earlier. Between 1988 and 1993 the guarantee group

of young people between the ages of 16 and 19 will have decreased by about 20 per cent. It is complete nonsense to say that it matters not how many young people are available to be trained or by how much the numbers decrease, and that the training provision must remain the same. That is not a sensible use of taxpayers' money.

Social Charter

13. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment has been made by his Department of the implications for job creation in the United Kingdom of the implementation of the measures contained in the European Commission's social charter.

Mr. Howard: The implementation of the social action programme would increase the burden of regulations on employers, impose new taxes on workers on low pay and deny workers legitimate opportunities for employment and earnings. It would put up employers' costs, damage the ability of firms to compete in world markets and destroy jobs.

Mr. Knapman: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that most people who work part time do so because they want to and that there is no point in smothering them in red tape and bureaucracy? Is the social charter absolutely necessary for the completion of the single market, or would the whole affair be better referred to the European Court of Justice, which has views on absolutely everything these days?

Mr. Howard: It is certainly unnecessary to have the social action programme to complete the single market. Although we hope to support some of the proposals contained in that programme, many of them would undoubtedly be damaging in precisely the way which my hon. Friend suggested.

Mr. Cryer: Is not it true that, behind the rhetoric of the social charter, the provisions of health and safety at work put forward in EEC directives will mean an erosion of standards—often absolute standards—in United Kingdom health and safety legislation, such as section 14 of the Factories Act 1961? Its words would be replaced by the words "so far as reasonably practicable". Does not that mean a lowering of health and safety standards in our country?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman can rest assured that I shall do everything that I can to make sure that our health and safety standards are not lowered. On the contrary, I am keen that other European countries increase their standards of health and safety to match those in this country. That is one point that I shall make when the social action programme is under discussion.

Training Credits

14. **Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement about the progress of the training credits initiative.

Mr. Howard: Thirty-three training and enterprise councils and local enterprise companies have submitted outline proposals to operate pilot credit schemes. I have invited 17 of those to develop more detailed proposals by 27 July. In consultation with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science and other ministerial colleagues, I shall then select about 10 training and enterprise councils and local enterprise companies to set up and run credit pilots.

Mr. Porter: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the training credit initiative is a world first that augurs well for the work force in this country in the climate after 1992?

Mr. Howard: Yes, Sir.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Bevan:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 June.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is attending the European Council meeting in Dublin.

Mr. Bevan: Will my right hon. and learned Friend care to advise voters at the by-election on Thursday in Acocks Green in my constituency what action they should take in a city where nearly half the population has still to pay its community charge, largely because of the Labour council's shambolic administration and failure to collect, where Labour councillors have openly urged non-payment, where they have threatened to open more council offices and close all grammar schools, and where bankruptcy beckons?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend makes his points very well by way of criticism of Birmingham council. The best advice that I can offer his electors is to vote Conservative because Conservative local government delivers good services and costs less.

Q2. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 June.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Dunnachie: In a recent interview in a women's magazine the Prime Minister advised mothers with young children to take up part-time employment. When do the Government intend to create wealth and jobs in Scotland, in particular in my constituency?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman seems to overlook the fact that in his constituency unemployment fell by about 773 last year, and unemployment in Scotland fell by 1·5 per cent. to 8·1 per cent.

Q3. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 June.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hayward: Will my right hon. and learned Friend take this opportunity to condemn the outrage of the bombing at the Carlton club last night, particularly as it

appeared to be aimed at civilians and people who are not involved in Northern Ireland in any way? Will he remind the House and the nation that that is what people in Ulster have been suffering for more than 20 years and that one of the best ways to resolve the problem is continued international co-operation?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Of course I join my hon. Friend, as I am sure the whole House will, in condemning the dreadful brutality involved in the bombing in London last night and in expressing sympathy with all those who were injured. The whole House will agree that whoever did that dreadful act can be sure of one thing—we shall not be intimidated by violence. If the IRA was responsible, nobody should doubt the determination of the House to build good relations between the Governments, peoples and the communities that share the British Isles together. To that end, I entirely endorse what my hon. Friend said about the need for improved and steadily improving international co-operation on the widest scale.

Sir David Steel: Will the deputy Prime Minister accept my warm congratulations and convey them also to the Foreign Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer on at last overcoming the Prime Minister's prejudices and securing Britain's commitment to economic and political union in Europe? Does he accept, therefore, that many of us hope that last weekend's press reports of his forthcoming exile to South Africa were completely unfounded?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am content, of course, to accept the right hon. Gentleman's congratulations to the whole Government on the measured progress that we are making towards membership of the exchange rate mechanism. As for the fevered speculation about my possible translation to the South African or any other embassy, I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will join me in referring those speculations to the press complaints commission that will be appointed as a result of the Calcutt committee report.

Q4. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 June.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Marshall: Will my right hon. and learned Friend assure the House that the Government will not seek to increase public expenditure by £50 billion, and confirm that such a course of action could lead only to higher prices for all, higher interest rates for all and higher taxes for all?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I confirm that no Conservative Government would dream of following the policies that my hon. Friend has described. The policies advocated by the Labour party would require a massive increase in taxation, probably on the scale of 25p in the pound on income tax. In contrast to the Labour party, we shall continue to finance our programmes honestly by taxation, not by ever-mounting borrowing.

Mr. Hattersley: While the Lord President is in the mood to speculate about economic matters, will he tell the House whether he believes that the Chancellor's proposals for a hard ecu will lead to a single European currency?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As the Chancellor said, they are perfectly capable of doing so. As the Prime Minister said in Dublin today, that is not inevitable, but they are perfectly consistent with that objective.

Mr. Hattersley: I am conscious of what the Prime Minister said in Dublin today; that is why I asked my question. According to the official report of her statement, she said that one day the pound might disappear. As she expressly ruled that out in the House last Thursday, may we be told when she changed her mind?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The points made by the Prime Minister in Dublin today are entirely consistent with those made by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor last week when he said that in the very long run, if peoples and governments so choose, the ecu could develop into a single currency.

Mr. Hattersley: The Lord President is right that the points made by the Prime Minister today are entirely consistent with the Chancellor's speech. However, they were not consistent with her answers in the House last Thursday. May I thank the Lord President for at least making it absolutely clear that the Government are in the same sort of divided shambles over monetary union as they are over the poll tax, changes in the health service and the new agenda that the Prime Minister announced on the hoof last Saturday morning?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The right hon. Gentleman should understand that our policies on the European monetary system, including our prospective membership of the exchange rate mechanism, are entirely consistent with the Government's anti-inflationary policies and are a total negation of the inflationary policies of the Labour party.

Q5. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 June.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Devlin: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that many people throughout the length and breadth of the land are much heartened by the fact that London is currently hosting the international conference on the ozone layer and CFCs? Will he give the House the commitment that Britain, which has already reduced its CFC production by 50 per cent. in the past five years, will continue to make leading progress in this area, and that we shall try to take as many other countries with us as we can at the conference?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's tribute to the Government's actions thus far. We are, of course, determined to achieve global agreement on the strengthening of the Montreal convention and are working to that end at the conference. It is crucial to make progress in that direction not only for the sake of achieving a depletion of ozone, but to set an example of the way in which international progress can be made on these matters in other areas.

Mr. Bidwell: Is there any truth in the story that the Government are working on a scheme to modify the poll tax before the next general election?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As the hon. Gentleman and the House know every well, the Government are engaged on a review of the operation but not the structure of the community charge.

Q6. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 June 1990.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Colvin: With Government spending on the arts up a full third since 1979, in real terms, and with a further 27 per cent. increase planned for the next three years, does my right hon. and learned Friend know why the Conservative party is still regarded as philistine by the Opposition? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This takes up a lot of time.

Mr. Colvin: Would it help if our excellent and longest serving Minister for the Arts were given a seat in Cabinet with full responsibility for all arts issues, including the heritage, education, television and broadcasting? That would, incidentally, give him equal status with arts Ministers on the continent, with whom he will have increased contact as 1993 approaches.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am glad that my hon. Friend was able to complete his question. I join him in paying tribute to the work done by the Government in promoting progress in the arts, ranging from the decisions taken last week on the film industry to the major decisions taken on the national gallery extension and the national library. I join him in paying tribute to my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts, who is a former Parliamentary Private Secretary of mine. It would give me great pleasure to see him join me in the Cabinet, but that is a matter for the Prime Minister, not me.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Is the Leader of the House aware that 35 years ago today—known as South African Freedom Day—at Kliptown, near Johannesburg, the African National Congress adopted its freedom charter which declares, among other things, that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, irrespective of race, creed or colour? Does the Lord President of the Council endorse those statements and can he guarantee that his Government will support all measures to make South African Freedom Day a reality rather than a campaigning objective?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful for the opportunity to agree with the hon. Gentleman. The entire House shares the objective of bringing apartheid to an end at the quickest possible pace. We believe that the best way to help the African National Congress is by retaining our influence with the South African Government and that that means maintaining a measured relaxation of pressure in response to change. The whole House will be glad that in Dublin today the European Community has endorsed that approach, welcomed the steps taken by President de Klerk and intimated that it is willing to relax pressure in response to change of the kind that we would all welcome.

Q7. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 June.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Gill: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that when it comes to interest rates, inflation rates and exchange rates, membership of the exchange rate mechanism cannot do for the United Kingdom more than we are prepared to do for ourselves?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that membership of the exchange rate mechanism is very far from being a free ride. It would be a reinforcement of the kind of policies that are natural to a Conservative Government but are wholly anathema to the Labour party.

Mr. Lewis: Is the Lord President of the Council proud of the fact that the Telecommunications Act 1984 has opened the door to sexual pornography and all manner of moral corruption on the telephone, such as that which has been published today in the *Daily Mirror?*

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman knows that that is only a very small aspect of what can be said about the Telecommunications Act. The whole House shares his affront at that sort of thing, which is being investigated. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will join us on this side of the House in welcoming the immense liberation of industrial energy as a result of the Telecommunications Act.

Q10. **Mr. Bell:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 June.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bell: Is the Lord President aware that the first stage of the Delors proceedings come into effect on 1 July, yet we are the only country that will not be participating in the exchange rate mechanism? Is not it a fact that the only consistency about the Government's policy towards Europe is its inconsistency?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am astonished to hear that proposition being advanced by a spokesman for the Opposition, who for years have twisted and turned their whole attitude towards the European Community. It is the Conservative party, under successive Prime Ministers, which took Britain into Europe and achieved an increasingly important place for us in the Community. We are only glad that the Opposition have finally decided to join us in that endeavour.

Q11. **Mr. Mills:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 June.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Mills: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that, despite the very welcome establishment of the European bank for reconstruction and development in London, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will be pressing, as she and the Government have been doing, for

the completion of the single market on the important issue of establishing a common trade marks regime and the establishment of the trade marks office in Britain, ideally in London, to the benefit of the United Kingdom and Europe?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: First, I agree about the importance of the common trade marks regime and, secondly, I confirm that for many years the Government have been supporting the objective of the location of the trade marks office in London.

Bombing (Carlton Club)

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Waddington): With permission, Mr. Speaker. I should like to make a statement about the explosion at the Carlton club, St. James's street last night. In view of the fact that that matter was raised on the Floor of the House last night, when the Lord President indicated that I would consider whether I should make a statement today, I thought that this was the right thing to do.

The explosion occurred at the Carlton club, 70 St. James's street, London, at 8.39 pm yesterday evening. Seven persons were injured by the blast and were taken to Westminster and St. Thomas's hospitals for treatment. None is in any danger, and three were discharged without being detained overnight. The injured include the porter of the club, a former Member of this House and now a Member of the other place, and two uniformed police officers. Our sympathies go to all the injured and their families and we wish them a speedy recovery.

The explosion has caused severe damage to the premises, the extent of which has yet to be fully assessed. Forensic examination of the scene is under way. The police believe that a large explosive device had been left in or near the doorway of the club. No one has claimed responsibility for the attack, but it appears to have been the work of the IRA.

The emergency services reacted with great speed, arriving within minutes of the explosion. I pay tribute to them. It should always be remembered that they face the additional hazard of injury or death from secondary devices designed to kill those who come to save life.

The House is united in condemning the attack. Following the recent one on Lord McAlpine's former residence, it does appear as though the IRA is being driven to attack different sorts of target. Whether it strikes at military or civilian targets, barracks or private homes, it is attacking democracy itself and it does not care who is killed or injured in the process.

The apparent change of tactics requires renewed vigilance on the part of everyone. The police, for their part, are constantly reviewing the means by which the threat, as it varies, can be met. I have this morning discussed developments with the commissioner and there is absolutely no doubt about the determination of his force, and other police forces in the United Kingdom, to continue to do everything possible to prevent such outrages and to track down the perpetrators. The House should be aware that much is done every day of the week to prevent, to deter and to combat terrorist activity, and most of it cannot be safely revealed. However, terrorists operate by stealth, surprise and with a callous disregard for life, and from time to time they may register what, by their perverted standards, they regard as a success. It is not something against which, in a free society, anyone can provide an absolute guarantee.

What is needed to support the efforts of the police is renewed and constant vigilance on the part of every citizen. I ask people to report any packages left in public places and suspicious behaviour by individuals. They must not be worried about troubling the police unnecessarily.

We have been here before with the bomb attacks against the public in the 1970s. They did not succeed then, nor will they now.

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): The Opposition utterly condemn the outrage at the Carlton club last night. We express our relief that no one was killed, and we offer our sympathy to those who were injured and our congratulations to the emergency services. We join the Government in making it plain that those who perpetrate such acts have no hope that their savagery will result in a change of policy. The more they use the bomb and the bullet in attempting to achieve their aims, the less likely is it that their campaigns will succeed. We support the Home Secretary's plea that while such threats remain we should all be more vigilant. In a free society it is never possible to provide complete protection against indiscriminate terrorism, but clearly we must do all that we can to reduce the chances of such criminal lunacy killing and maiming innocent men and women.

I have a question for the Home Secretary that he may regard as more contentious. Last night's outrage, like those which have gone before, was in part designed to achieve publicity for the cause that the perpetrators support. May I suggest to the right hon. and learned Gentleman that all of us—politicians, journalists and broadcasters—consider ways in which publicity can be reduced for people who are prepared to kill and to maim in order that their murderous deeds should be reported in our newspapers and on our television screens? Does the Home Secretary agree that we should be careful not to play into their hands in that regard?

Mr. Waddington: I agree entirely with the right hon. Gentleman's closing remarks. I thought long before making this statement, but the matter was raised on the Floor of the House last night and, as a result of the intervention of the Leader of the House at 10 pm, if I had not risen to make a statement today I think that many people would have wondered why. None the less, the point made by the right hon. Gentleman is extremely valid. We must be extremely reluctant to give unnecessary publicity to the perpetrators of such outrages.

I agree entirely with the right hon. Gentleman that we must stress throughout that, whatever the terrorists do, it will not lead to a surrender of democracy and a change in the policies agreed upon in this democratically elected House. The need for vigilance is obvious and there is much that every individual citizen can do to help the police.

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): The whole House will endorse what my right hon. and learned Friend said in response to the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) about publicity for such mindless events. I am sure that the House will also join in the sympathy that my right hon. and learned Friend expressed to those involved, and his tribute to the police and to the ambulance and emergency services.

Is not the real tragedy of such terrorist outrages the fact that they are utterly pointless? They cannot possibly achieve their objective in a democratic society. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree with the speaker on "Thought for the Day" on the BBC, who said that the only effect of such incidents is to put the terrorists outside the ranks of humanity?

Mr. Waddington: I think that such events harden our resolve in this place to stick to the policies that we believe to be right. My right hon. Friend is absolutely right to stress that point.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): On behalf of my right hon. and hon. Friends I express our sympathy with those who have been injured and our admiration for the security services on their prompt and helpful intervention.

I reaffirm that the only news worthy of promulgation following such an episode is that of steadfastness of the British people—in keeping with the sterling lead set by those in the Province of Northern Ireland through 23 years of terrorism—in rebutting any suggestion that we should change our policies in the face of such outrages.

Mr. Waddington: I agree entirely with the hon. Gentleman. Such barbaric acts have not forced on a democratically elected Government a change in policy in Northern Ireland and they certainly will not have that effect here. A statement of this sort serves another purpose, however—to remind individual citizens of the contribution that they can make. That also makes my statement today worth while.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): The whole House will be pleased to know that Lord Kaberry, whom I saw a short while ago, is making a remarkable recovery from his ordeal with his usual courage and undaunted spirit. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that this despicable act only serves to strengthen the resolve to defeat terrorism in all who value human life, freedom and justice? Will he look into the measures that can be taken to improve devices to detect bombs and see that they are made as freely available as possible?

Mr. Waddington: I shall reflect on what my hon. Friend said in the last part of his supplementary question. As each month and year goes by, one sees the development of new devices that help to prevent outrages of this sort. My hon. Friend echoed the sentiments of other hon. Members in saying that what has happened in the past 24 hours, and what has been happening in recent months, only reinforces our resolve.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for mentioning that our noble Friend, Lord Kaberry, has made a very good recovery. The porter at the club, Mr. Charles Henry, had an operation last night—he suffered head and other injuries from flying glass—and was put in an intensive care ward. Everyone will be glad to hear that he has since been moved into an ordinary ward and that his condition is stable. We wish him a speedy recovery.

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): On behalf of my party, I wish to express relief that nobody was seriously injured or killed in the explosion. Having said that, I hope that I shall not be misunderstood—I echo what the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said about getting things in perspective—when I say that I do not remember a statement being made in the House when Corporal Maheshkumar Islania and his six-month-old child were killed, or when Private William Robert Davies was killed at Litchfield, or when Heidi Hazell, the wife of a British soldier serving in Germany, was killed. There are many occasions when our soldiers, policemen and civilians are killed in Northern Ireland.

It is important that we do not, because an incident such as this happens on our own doorstep, get things out of proportion. The terrorist is not a mindless animal. He calculates carefully the effect that his violence will have on the community. He never seeks justification. He seeks only to add terror to the community that we represent. We must not assist him by overreacting to his actions.

Mr. Waddington: I have a certain amount of sympathy with what the hon. Gentleman said. Before deciding to make this statement, I reflected on it, and it has given me an opportunity to warn. My officials looked up the precedents and I discovered that in 1986, my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw) made a statement in the House when there was an explosion in central London in the British Airways office which resulted in an injury. It seemed to me that in view of the request made in the House last night, and that statement in 1986, it would not be entirely improper for me to make this statement today.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I sense what the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) said meets the mood of the House. I shall take one more question from each side of the House and then we must move on.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): Is it not, nevertheless, significant that the last organisation to bomb the Carlton club was Nazi Germany?

Mr. Waddington: Indeed, I think that one can bracket members of the IRA who perpetrate such outrages with some of the worst villains of history.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): As you, Mr. Speaker rightly interpreted the mood of the House and the needs and wishes of Parliament and the British people that today, tomorrow and the rest should be business as usual and we shall not be influenced by any bomb or bullet on the mainland or elsewhere, will the Home Secretary confirm that there was no warning of the bomb? Does that not add to the mindlessness of the event?

Mr. Waddington: So far as I know, no warning was given. If one had been given, I think that I should have learnt about it by now.

BILL PRESENTED

Licensing of Ticket Sales

Mr. Menzies Campbell presented a Bill to provide for the licensing of ticket sales for sporting events and entertainments and to make further provision with respect to the powers exercisable by local authorities in relation to such sales: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 6 July and to be printed. [Bill 168.]

County Councils (Abolition)

3.46 pm

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to abolish non-metropolitan county councils; to transfer their functions to the other local authorities in their areas and, in some cases, to other bodies; and to provide for other matters consequential on, or connected with, the abolition of those councils.

I imagine that a great many of my right hon. and hon. Friends—those who remain—suspect that my intention with the Bill is to entertain them with the misdemeanours of Derbyshire county council. I am afraid that I shall disappoint them.

I shall resist the temptation to spend a full 10 minutes giving chapter and verse about how Derbyshire county council spends more on education than most counties, but gets worse results. I shall resist the temptation to spend too long telling the House how Derbyshire county council spent £2,000 on a party to celebrate the release of Mr. Nelson Mandela.

I shall also resist going into the full details of how Derbyshire county council behaves like a giant jobs agency for the National Union of Public Employees and has taken on an extra 8,000 staff in the past 10 years. I shall also resist explaining how the council rejected one low tender because it came in the wrong colour envelope.

I shall not go fully into the details of how the council's pension fund invested £305,000 in the failed Left-wing *News on Sunday* newspaper, before getting further embroiled with a former estate agent called Owen Oyston in a series of sleazy deals—including building a resort in the Soviet Union, dubbed by the county council leader as a millionaires' playground, which now looks as though it will never be built despite substantial investment by the council.

I shall not elaborate on the details of how a well-known Labour activist, a road ganger dismissed by the council for gross misconduct in the 1970s, was reinstated last year to a well-paid job showing Japanese executives around the county. I shall not go into details of how one defeated Labour county councillor was given a £40,000 per year council post, nor how another ex-Labour councillor was made a director of education at an even larger salary. I shall not go into too much detail——

Several Hon. Members: Tell us the details.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Oppenheim: My right hon. and hon. Friends tempt me, Mr. Speaker, but I shall resist.

I shall not go into too much detail about how a former Member of the House, Mr. Reg Race, was appointed as a £46,000-per-year county director, before the relationship turned sour and led to his resignation not long afterwards, when he was given a large golden handshake to buy his silence about the goings-on in the council.

Finally, I shall not ask the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) to enlarge on his comment that the aforesaid Mr. Race was

"sacked by Derbyshire county council because he was giving it the sort of information about its activities that its members did not want to hear."

I shall not develop those themes.

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman is not going to do that, perhaps he will get on with what he is going to say.

Mr. Oppenheim: I was about to explain that I do not intend to develop those themes because 10 minutes would be far too short a time to tell of all the idiosyncrasies and profligacies of Derbyshire county council. To use Derbyshire county council as a stick with which to beat other county councils, or as an example to justify their abolition, would be wrong and unfair.

In many ways Derbyshire county council is unique, untypical, the exception and way out on a limb. I wish to make a case for the abolition of the generality of county councils or at least to make a case for giving district, borough and city councils the right to opt out of county council control. In doing so, I should like to pay tribute to my hon. Friends the Members for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) and for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) who previously introduced Bills for unitary local authorities.

Unitary local authorities, replacing two layers of local government with one, would lead to more effective provision of services and greater accountability. As many of my hon. Friends know, the two-tier system which prevails in most of the country leaves many people confused and unsure about which council is responsible for which service and, just as importantly, for its cost. Education and social services could be far better provided at a more local level, especially as the increasing complexity of local government means that services which might logically have been run as large units could be better operated as smaller ones.

Abolition will also make life easier for councils. At the moment many of the most talented councillors have to split their time between two bodies, which adds to the difficulty of finding suitable people to be councillors, as most of my hon. Friends are aware. I accept that larger administrative units can be more efficient and can save on administrative costs, but the past 20 years have shown that that is not always necessarily the case, as evidenced by a recent report which showed that in some counties 25 per cent. of the education budget was spent on administration. I accept that some services such as transport would need to be run by larger bodies. Delegated county-wide organisations could best handle such services.

I know that some people doubt whether the boroughs and districts could handle this and they argue for the necessity of a higher tier of what they call strategic planning. I remind hon. Members about the GLC. I realise that many of my hon. Friends are racking their brains to try to recall exactly what the GLC was. People outside certainly have difficulty in remembering exactly what the GLC did for them. Despite all the expensive hype during the abolition of the GLC, few now mourn its passing and in general the London boroughs have made a very good job of taking over the services that the GLC once ran—*[Interruption.]* I accept that there are some exceptions.

That brings me neatly to the Opposition's policy on county council abolition. We all know that in recent years the Labour party has been trying to upgrade its image. Some say that it has achieved some success. Unfortunately, all too often that success is of a faltering kind and there is more to the image than to the substance. For example, we hear that the Opposition have come round to believing in markets after all, but they believe

[Mr. Oppenheim]

that the markets should be servants rather than masters, for which read, "We politicians will override your free choice when it suits us to do so."

The same applies to county councils. I am delighted that the Opposition have shown some progress by coming round to abolition. As always, however, they have ruined it by proposing in part to replace county councils with a regional tier of government which many people will see as super county councils with all the inherent faults of the current system magnified several times. The Opposition should realise that we need fewer tiers of government, not more. We already have the European Community and a national Parliament, as well as county, district and parish councils in most areas. We need to sweep away a layer of government, not add another which will inevitably become a platform for yet more empire-building and expense.

I urge hon. Members to support the Bill. It will not abolish counties, which will remain in place, but it will abolish county councils and bring local government closer to constituents, making it more accountable and helping it to deliver services more effectively.

3.53 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Does the hon. Gentleman seek to oppose the Bill?

Mr. Barnes: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Bill should be entitled "the Abolition of Derbyshire County Council Bill" because that is clearly the intention of the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim). At every opportunity he seeks to attack Derbyshire county council and to denigrate its activities. I therefore wish to take this opportunity to defend the council and to argue against the hon. Gentleman's bill which, in any case, is inappropriate to the restructuring of local government.

Despite many attempts in the House, the hon. Gentleman has failed in his attacks on Derbyshire county council. He mentioned the pension fund, on which he had an Adjournment debate which turned out to be a damp squib, containing nothing that could be levelled against the Derbyshire county council. All the arguments were answered before the debate. Derbyshire county council runs one of the best pension schemes of any shire county.

Despite competition, Derbyshire county council, through its professionalism—not through the efforts of the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie)—attracted Toyota to Derbyshire. Conservative members were annoyed at Derbyshire county council's entrepreneurial professionalism which they think should be their preserve, but the council beat them at their own game. In addition, Labour won the Derbyshire county council election, despite its being targeted by the Conservative party with Ministers attending in droves in an attempt to achieve a Conservative victory.

The hon. Member for Amber Valley has adopted the Prime Minister's approach to the GLC and other metropolitan authorities such as South Yorkshire, which had the best transport policy in the country, both in terms of future developments and the environment. The policy is, "If you can't beat them, abolish them." The only advantage of such measures is that the Labour party has benefited from the arrival in the House of Members such as my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), with his previous experience on the GLC. If the hon. Gentleman's Bill were enacted, we would presumably see leading politicians from Derbyshire county council, such as David Bookbinder, in this House dealing readily and easily with Conservative Members.

Derbyshire county council has a fine record in areas such as education. It is top in its pupil-teacher ratio, and in special and primary education, and it comes a close second to Nottinghamshire county council in secondary education. Yet such provisions are now being attacked by the Government's poll tax. Any attack should be directed not at Derbyshire county council but at the Government and their stupid formula which, year after year, has attacked Derbyshire's grant. They have even introduced something called grant capping, which few authorities experience. Then the Government introduced the nonsense of the poll tax, from which some Conservative Members in Derbyshire have benefited considerably, making them free riders on the backs of others.

If Derbyshire county council and others were abolished, the services that they provide in a wide range of areas such as planning, highways and education, would have to be picked up by the district councils; yet the Bill does not provide for the reorganisation of district councils. District authorities which are perfectly capable of running services such as council housing would have a massive additional burden placed on them. That shows that the Bill is a deal of nonsense. It is not there to tackle the problems of local government or to restructure it. It is merely another example of cleverness on the part of the hon. Member for Amber Valley, in trying to attack Derbyshire county council. It is as clever as his other moves, which were also utter failures, when he also tripped up and fell on his face.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill order to be brought in by Mr. Phillip Oppenheim, Mr. Ian Gow, Mr. Robert B. Jones, Mr. Donald Thompson, Mrs. Edwina Currie, Mr. Michael Grylls, Mr. Teddy Taylor, Mr. Charles Wardle, Mr. Andrew Mitchell, Mr. Kenneth Hind, Mr. Nicholas Bennett and Mr. Gerald Howarth.

COUNTY COUNCILS (ABOLITION)

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim accordingly presented a Bill to abolish non-metropolitan county councils; to transfer their functions to the other local authorities in their areas and, in some cases, to other bodies; and to provide for other matters consequential on, or connected with, the abolition of those councils: And the same was read a First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 6 July, and to be printed. [Bill 169.]

Opposition Day

[16TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Railway Policy

4.1 pm

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): I beg to move,

That this House condemns the Government's failure to produce a co-ordinated transport policy which would allow British Rail to provide a more reliable, safer, more efficient and better quality railway service to maximise its economic and environmental contribution to Britain; deplores the lost opportunity to provide a high speed, high quality, rail link to the Channel Tunnel, an essential requirement for the industrial areas of Britain, which requires a modern freight rail route of European standards; and calls on the Government to appoint a Commission to assess the various proposed alternatives for the link, its funding, and its extension beyond London.

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Prescott: After 10 years of the present Government's policies of privatisation, cuts in public subsidies, continual reorganisation and an anti-rail attitude, British Rail has produced the most expensive, least reliable, less safe, most congested, most uncomfortable and most under-invested rail system of any of the developed European economies.

It fails to make its potential contribution to reducing congestion and to relieving environmental damage, and to provide the necessary high-speed channel tunnel link, thereby reducing the possibility of carrying more freight from rail to road, and from road to rail. All that is primarily to be blamed on the impossible financial framework that the Government have imposed on British Rail and their ideological obsession with private ownership and private financing, so preventing the long-term development of British Rail's full potential, particularly with the arrival of the single European market in 1992.

This month marks 12 months in office for the Secretary of State. The present Government have appointed seven Secretaries of State for Transport, who have each shuffled through the door and changed bits of policy. I recall from previous occasions associated with our mutual former responsibilities for energy matters that the right hon. Gentleman served as Secretary of State for Energy for two years. Anyone who listened to last night's debate on electricity privatisation will appreciate how much of a mess he made of the policy of that Department. The question whether nuclear energy could possibly be part of privatisation was an issue between us then, when I told the right hon. Gentleman that it would be impossible to privatise the industry with a nuclear element. His response was to refer to me as an economic illiterate. If the right hon. Gentleman will read last night's debate, he may learn who was right and who was wrong.

The right hon. Gentleman has managed to produce in 12 months at the Department of Transport the mess that it took him two years to create at the Department of Energy. He has done serious damage to transport and continues to do so, and that is part of our charge against him. While being concerned constantly with presentation, he has discovered that the reality is dealing with difficult policy decisions. One thing that is regrettable about the Secretary of State is the way that he runs away from public debate on television or radio and in the other media. The televising of Parliament has been enhanced by the fact that the public can arrive at their own judgment when they watch televised debates. The Secretary of State constantly lays down conditions: he wants to go on first; he wants the last word; he is not going to this studio; he wants to sit in a radio cab somewhere else.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East) : He is frit.

Mr. Prescott: Yes, as my hon. Friend says, on this occasion he is frit. He will never debate the issues.

This is the third transport debate that we have had in the House, and they have all been called by the Opposition, and not once by the Government wanting to debate their own policy.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): I am pleased that the hon. Gentleman has given way. At least when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State appears on television, he makes sense. What did the hon. Gentleman mean when he appeared on BBC's "On the Record" and used the following phrase:

"if you provide on a bus a kind of camera that can catch people using modern technology and say, 'These lanes must remain free, 'cause we want to provide the bus . . . ' which already is 1 per cent. of the vehicle movements, carries 30 per cent. of the people . . . whereas with cars, they're 30 per cent. of the vehicle movements—only carrying . . . far less people in movement"—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order, Even I do not understand it. Will the hon. Member please come to the point?

Mr. Leigh: I shall ask the hon. Gentleman a simple question—can he explain himself?

Mr. Prescott: The hon. Gentleman is an idiot. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr Leigh *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us get back to railways.

Mr. Leigh: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have been called an idiot, and I was merely reading the hon. Gentleman's words from a transcript.

Mr. Speaker: I am a little perplexed, as I thought that this was a railway debate, and I do not think that that has anything to do with it.

Mr. Prescott: It is quite clear that one does not want to give way to fools when we are dealing with serious transport issues. There seems to be a great deal of laughter from the Conservative Benches. For people who have to wait for a bus, a train or any other form of public transport in this country, it is not a laughing matter. I was offered the opportunity to debate with the Secretary of State on "On the Record". However, as I understand it, his policy is quite clear—he does not appear with the Opposition and there is no evidence that he has, in whatever office he has held.

Issues of public importance are best dealt with when people have the opportunity to debate them on the public media rather than in the House. The only chance that we

[Mr. Prescott]

get to debate transport here is when the Opposition table a motion, and if the hon. Member was provided with an opportunity to speak on such an occasion that might be it.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Clearly, my hon. Friend has touched Conservative Members on a raw nerve. I try to do justice to the Minister, but the reality is that he is not a free agent. In the press this morning, it was revealed that massive cuts will now invade the south-east to try to balance the books so that we do not need cash subventions. We are the only nation which does not have large cash subventions for the railways. Conservative Members know that, and they know that they are wrong; hence their ill temper this afternoon.

Mr. Prescott: Yes, we are seeing more and more signs of a departure from policy and a move towards abuse—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Yes, abuse. There is no doubt about it. Abuse seems to take the place of debate with the modern Tory party. Conservative Members do not want to debate the issue; they merely want to abuse. They do not want to listen to the argument or to participate.

Transport is a critical matter. People want to change things and there is a fundamental difference of opinion between the two sides of the House on the issue. Unfortunately—this may seem peculiar coming from me—transport has become an ideological issue in this country. In Europe, public money and planning are not ideological issues, to be disputed between the left and the right, that happens only in Britain. Unfortunately, our transport system is suffering because of it. That is the reality of the transport debate, and I hope that we can deal with some of those arguments here today.

The question whether we can deal seriously with transport was brought home to me again this weekend because of Conservative abuse. I was addressing a transport conference in Nottingham about the electrification of the east midlands line, and the desirability of connections with the channel tunnel. When I got out of the conference, I was approached by the press, asking me about a speech made by the Secretary of State for Transport. I was asked nothing about transport issues—purely about the terms of abuse. The Secretary of State was appearing before the Tory ladies' conference. He is a real tiger when he appears before the women of his party. It is at Tory conferences that he gets a standing ovation and is prepared to debate with the people of Britain. On such occasions, he is a real personality.

It seems that I have been promoted from the rottweiler of the Conservative party conference to the political vulture of the Tory women's conference. If I am supposed to be a political vulture because I express my views on transport, I feel entitled to say that it is the Prime Minister herself who is to be found running from hospital bed to hospital bed followed by the cameras. I am not saying that that was necessarily wrong—merely that it did not lead the Secretary of State to make similar charges about the right hon. Lady going from accident to accident.

I greatly regret the Secretary of State's remark that I exploit personal grief. I refer the House to a letter to *The Guardian* from Dr. Jim Swire, who, as the Secretary of State knows, speaks on these matters for the United Kingdom victims' families. He made himself absolutely clear:

> "Mr. Parkinson should know that our feelings are not the issue; the prevention of a recurrence is. He agreed an inquiry was necessary and then failed to launch one. Mr. Prescott has now also promised an immediate, comprehensive and independent inquiry into air security. We have no reason to doubt his word."

That is what the relatives want and that is what we are prepared to promise them. Dr. Swuire continued:

> "We might as well allow the vulture Prescott to tear at the corpse of the Government's anti-terrorist position."

I am prepared to allow the relatives of the victims of the Lockerbie tragedy to answer for me the Secretary of State's cheap abuse.

Perhaps more relevant was the Secretary of State's remark about me, reported in *The Sunday Times:*

> "He can't make the facts fit his case."

He was referring to safety in the railway industry. [HON. MEMBERS: "Come on."] It is our debate and it has to do with safety; indeed, the amendment tabled by the Secretary of State mentions the safety of the railway system. I want to bring to the attention of the House the fact that one cannot accept what the Secretary of State says in his parliamentary replies.

In his remarks about railway safety at the conference, the right hon. Gentleman referred to making the facts fit the case. He expressed his concern that I was not telling the truth about safety problems in the railway industry when I said that the number of deaths had increased. I tabled a number of parliamentary questions on the subject.

The railway inspectors' report showed that, in the four years to 1988, deaths on the railway system had increased from 355 to 693. That was a considerable increase and some terrible tragedies were taken into account in those figures. The trend had been noticed prior to that, however. That information prompted me to look at the facts concerning deaths and serious accidents in the railway industry and, again, I tabled a number of questions. I was anxious also to look at accidents involving railway staff, and was concerned to discover that, although deaths had fallen by a third, serious injuries had increased by nearly 30 per cent.

I tabled further questions, primarily because I was concerned about cuts in the safety inspectorate. The Secretary of State knows—he said it in his reply—that the safety inspectorate was at full strength until 1984 but since then the position has deteriorated. There were 17 in 1987 but only 16 in 1988, which meant that the inspectorate was under-represented by one third. In 1989, at the behest of the Fennell inquiry, the inspectorate's establishment was increased to 32 but, to date, only 24 inspectors are employed. The inspectorate is undermanned by 25 per cent. I was worried by the criticism of the railways in the Fennell report, which said that the inspectors were confused, did not know what their obligations were and had ignored their responsibilities. My inquiries into the railway inspectorate led me to the view that we should remove the inspectorate from the Department of Transport because it has failed to face up to its responsibilities. I believe that the Secretary of State is slowly having to accept that.

I was concerned about the figures in the parliamentary replies. Indeed, I was surprised by the figures provided by the Secretary of State, which were different from those that I had seen in the inspectors' report. I asked for the figures for 1979 to the present day. Ever helpful, the Secretary of State gave me the figures from 1974 to 1979 because he wanted to make a political point about Labour's record. I

do not know whether Secretaries of State normally give more information than hon. Members ask for, but I could see that the Secretary of State was making a political point. He was also making a point of presentation, about which the Secretary of State claims to be an expert. He wanted to present the argument in a better way.

To that end, the Secretary of State gave us the figures for 1974 to 1979. According to him, deaths and serious injuries had increased by 13·1 per cent. under Labour while during a similar period under a Conservative Government, the figure had been reduced by 6·5 per cent. *The Sunday Times* reported the Secretary of State telling the Conservative women's conference that there had been a 40 per cent. drop in accidents. I am sure all hon. Members would welcome that if it was the truth.

I took the Secretary of State's figures to the Library because I found the figures for 1974 to 1979 most surprising. I did not ask for the figures that far back, because the classification base changed substantially in 1979. Indeed, the Library confirmed that. It is not possible to separate serious injuries from minor injuries for the period 1974 to 1979. The Secretary of State, or whoever prepared the figures for him, had calculated serious injuries at 11 per cent. of the total. Why is it an 12 per cent. guesstimate under Labour, while for every year after that period the figure is 7 per cent.? Something smells. Something is wrong. The figures do not fit the facts, as the Library confirmed this afternoon.

The Government do not fiddle the statistics in only one or two areas of policy. I have outlined my accusation about the Secretary of State's figures, which I asked the Library to check. Perhaps the Secretary of State cannot be aware of all the figures. I am prepared to accept that, although he has often said in the House how he is intelligent and has an ability with figures and that the Opposition do not understand them. I will give the Secretary of State some figures to consider now.

With regard to the figures for deaths and accidents, the Secretary of State's first fiddle was that the guesstimate of 12 per cent. should have been 7 per cent. on average. That would have reduced the Secretary of State's figure of 13·1 per cent. to 8·4 per cent. The second fiddle was the underestimate of the deaths for 1979 to 1983. I have checked the inspector's report and the figure is not 153, it is 157. The former figure is favourable for the Secretary of State's argument.

The third mistake with the figures for 1974 to 1979 arose because the population figures were taken into account. I am not sure what those population figures are because they are not spelt out. However, I suspect that the Secretary of State has not considered the qualifications in the statistical changes. Those should have been considered if the Secretary of State wants to get into the political argy-bargy about what happened under Labour as opposed to what happened under the Tories. I am concerned about the trend in deaths and accidents, and not about political points.

The Secretary of State should have considered the way he handled the statistics. If he had done that, his mistakes might have been evident to his accountant's mind. In his written answer to my question, the Secretary of State gave the percentage expressed as a proportion of 1,000 deaths. Is he really trying to tell the House that for the period about which I am interested, the number of deaths was 5·9 per 1,000? That is wrong. The real figure is 0·59. He overestimated the figure by 10 times the amount. The Library confirmed that point.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Cecil Parkinson): In his question, the hon. Gentleman asked: "how many railway staff have been killed or suffered major injuries for the period 1979 to 1983 and 1984 to 1988; and what they represent as a proportion per 1,000 railway staff employed."—[*Official Report*, 24 May 1990; Vol. 173, c. *294*.] My reply was prepared for me by my Department in good faith. I trust my officials, and I stand by them. I will have the figures looked at. However, my point is that the proportion of deaths and major injuries per 1,000 was 5·9, not the proportion of deaths alone.

Mr. Prescott: But it is expressed as a proportion per 1,000. I shall not prolong the argument—*[Interruption.]* I can do so if Conservative Members wish. The information is in the railway figures. It is 10 times the number of people who died or were seriously injured. It is a simple statistic. Conservative Members should look at the facts. The Secretary of State says that a mistake may have been made —clearly, it has been. British Rail has written to him and protested that the numbers appear to be 10 times greater. The Secretary of State may not know about that. He should ask Sir Humphrey—he might be able to tell him.

The Secretary of State concentrated on a party political presentation rather than on the real issue—deaths and accidents. He is often loose with the interpretation of data in the House. When he wanted to say that the channel tunnel was not important, the proportion of freight went from 20 per cent. to 7 per cent. Mr. Morton, the channel tunnel chairman, was furiously trying to raise money in Japan. The Secretary of State told him that it was an insignificant amount of freight. There are many such examples, and they are not helpful to politics. If the Secretary of State is to change those things—*[Interruption.]* I have made the relevant point, and I hope that the Secretary of State will look at it.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): I agree with the hon. Gentleman that it is unsavoury to make party political points out of accident figures. On accident ratios, does he agree that all the evidence demonstrates that it is far more dangerous to travel by road than by rail? Is not that a good reason for investing in rail? Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the latest figures that are emerging from West Germany show that it is 24 times more dangerous to travel by road? Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, in this country and in the European Community, we need the proper collation of statistics on an equal basis so that we can make a better quality of judgment?

Mr. Prescott: I entirely endorse what the hon. Gentleman has said. That is why I want the railway inspectorate out of the Department and a common approach to independent statistics, so that we can make proper judgments. As the hon. Gentleman knows, I was concerned about the wholesale indictment of the railway inspectorate in the Fennell report and the reduction in the number of safety inspectors, which has long been a Government policy. That is a signal that, for the Government, safety is not as important as it was. That is the issue. It is not right for us to cut safety. If we do that, we shall pay the consequences in deaths and injuries. It is a simple point, but it is critical.

Mr. John P. Smith (Vale of Glamorgan): Does my hon. Friend agree that an important statistic in assessing the safety of British Rail is not just accidents and injuries to staff and the public but the number of near misses, in particular the overshooting of red lights? Will my hon. Friend confirm that those matters have increased in recent years and are very worrying?

Mr. Prescott: Yes, I confirm that. We are all worried. I am sure that the Secretary of State is extremely concerned. The Department is conducting some studies of those matters. However, they are also connected with fatigue. Another lesson from the inquiry is that, if workers are worked for far too many hours because other employees have been sacked—as British Rail has done—and we try to compensate with a smaller work force, there is less vigilance and safety and the possibility that such incidents will increase. Fatigue is a major concern for bus drivers, train drivers, pilots and so on, and we must be concerned about it.

It was unfortunate that, at that same conference, the Prime Minister announced her great transport initiative —toll roads exclusively for lorries. Would not it have been great if she said, "It would be nice to do something about rail"? That was her first statement on future transport policy—yet again, a road solution—when she had already sabotaged the channel tunnel rail link.

I do not intend to reiterate the arguments that I have put in previous debates about the cut in the quality of services. The consumer body for the railway service made it absolutely clear—I have the relevant quotes, but time has been taken up by interventions [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] I have tried to allow as many hon. Members as possible to intervene.

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Prescott: No.

My response to the quotation about whether the quality of the service has deteriorated, is that it clearly has. The Secretary of State often refers to investment—no doubt we shall hear a lot more about it today—so I must advise the right hon. Gentleman that the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission made it clear, when comparing the investment made by the Labour and Tory Governments at 1985-86 prices, that that investment was far better under Labour than under the Tories.

I shall not ignore the fact that more money is going into the railway system. However, the right hon. Gentleman knows as well as I do that the average age of the equipment in 1979 was 19 years. Once that equipment is 27 or 28 years old, it begins to get clapped out and investment decisions cannot be put off. I hope that we can all agree that capital investment decisions have been affected under both Labour and Tory Governments because the Treasury takes a short-term attitude to capital investment in British Rail.

The tragedy for the Government is that the profile age of the capital equipment was about 28 years. That means that it had to invest, because the equipment could not keep going any longer. Therefore, I readily accept what the Secretary of State says about the current investment rate being the highest for 25 years. Indeed, the last time it was really high was in 1955, when the same thing happened and the equipment had to be replaced because it was totally clapped out.

In 1981, the British Railways Board issued a warning to the Government:

> "A crucial decision has to be taken soon about the future of British Rail. BR must be prepared to take either the path of progress by re-equipment and modernisation, or that of decline through a gradual but deliberate run-down of the system. We cannot continue as we have done in the past. We are reaching the dividing of the ways."

The Government's answer was to bring in Professor Walters, slash the public service obligation from the 1983 levels at a loss of about £2 billion to BR and, through its financial framework, to make it much more difficult for British Rail to make adequate provision of services and proper investment. The Government ignored that need, saying, "We will cut your public services. We will give you higher rates of return. We will make that much more difficult to achieve. We hope that, when we have done that you will sack more workers, sell more land, privatise the sector, and make up the difference." Basically, that is what British Rail did, and that is how it ran its finances.

When the Secretary of State tells us about investment, I hope that he will tell us how much of the investment is provided by the Government. Conservative Members often tell me that the Government have put money into the railway system, so I hope that they will tell us what proportion of investment has come from fares and how much has come from the Government. I hope that the Secretary of State will not tell us how much investment the Government have sanctioned, because legislation requires them to give that sanction. I want to know how much the Government have actually given. That is the key question. Because of this system, the passenger is taking the strain, not the British Rail system.

The Government's attitude has created real problems. The financial framework has caused considerable difficulties. Today's edition of *The Guardian* provides further examples. We see that the public service obligation target for the south-east region might have to be reduced and that it is hoped to eliminate it by 1992. That will mean higher fares. Because the corporate review assumed that growth would be twice the rate that it is, and that property prices would be higher than they are, British Rail is now facing a financial crisis. In the next month, it will make further great losses and will be unable to meet its financial targets. Once again, it will be on the financial rack and no doubt the Government will come along and change the corporate plan. The Secretary of State knows that, when he announced the corporate plan, I said that it could not work, that there would be financial difficulties and that he would have to review it. I shall wait, and then I shall again say, "I told you so."

Although the Secretary of State need not take any notice of me because many other people are saying the same thing, he should consider whether there is any substance in those arguments and if there is, he should heed them. The Secretary of State fails to listen to any arguments——

Mr. Robert Hayward (Kingswood): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Prescott: That is why we legitimately make the charge——

Mr. Hayward *rose*——

Mr. Prescott: No, I shall not give way again—[HON. MEMBERS: "Give way."] No, I shall not give way.

That is why we legitimately charge the Government with being Tory luddites towards high-speed rail. I often hear the Secretary of State talking about the train grand vitesse as if we do not understand it. I do not know whether the right hon. Gentleman has been on a TGV—we have only just managed to force him on to the railways in Britain—but I was on a TGV only last week, yet again, and can advise him that travelling at nearly 200 mph is an impressive experience.

However, I must now shock the right hon. Gentleman by telling him that that train carries post and high-value freight. The Secretary of State should understand that that train does not only carry passengers. It carries freight of considerable value. The Secretary of State often says that we do not understand that. However, when he made his decision about the tunnel, he denied us the opportunity of achieving a high-speed link this century.

If the Secretary of State cannot accept our criticism of this country's infrastructure, I refer him to what was said by John Banham at a conference that I attended. *The Times* reported:

"An image of Britain paralysed by traffic jams, scorned by its continental counterparts and isolated economically on the edge of Europe was outlined yesterday by John Banham"—

hardly a Labour party member. *The Times* reported John Banham as saying:

"The government had to overcome its 'allergy to strategic thinking' and begin work on a national transport strategy, backed by public funds, if Britain was to avoid entering the 21st century with 'the worst transport infrastructure in northern Europe.'"

John Banham could have taken that from "Moving Britain into the 1990s." We said it 12 months ago. Even the CBI, therefore, makes the same criticisms about Britain's transport system as we make.

When the Secretary of State came to the House to make that statement——

Mr. Hayward: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. [HON. MEMBERS: "This is organised; it is cheating."] This is an Opposition day, but is it acceptable for the Opposition spokesman to speak for 29 minutes without outlining one aspect of their policy?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): The hon. Gentleman ought to know that that is not a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Prescott: The hon. Gentleman was a Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Department at one time and knows all about discipline in the Department of Transport.

Since we have been so right on many issues, I hope that the Secretary of State will listen to us on this occasion, so that we do not have to keep on saying, "We told you so." The Secretary of State made a statement last week about why he could not accept the joint project. He made it clear, as did the Prime Minister, that £1·9 billion would be needed to subsidise the project. When one inquires into that figure, however, one finds that £400 million is accounted for by terminus costs and improvements at King's Cross to cater for express trains from Kent. That is part of the developments in the south-east and ought not to be charged against Eurorail. A further £310 million is for freight trains. That cannot legitimately be charged to Eurorail. Then, £700 million is for the rolling-stock at Waterloo and for the rolling stock to take passengers and freight to the north.

The Secretary of State told the House that repayment would not be due until 2010. I accept what he said about that. However, he did not tell the House that the total amount would be repaid on that date. The debts will not start to be repaid from 2010. Will the Secretary of State confirm that all the money, plus interest payments, will be paid in 2010 and that the debt repayment will not just begin in 2010? That is important to the financing of such a crucial project.

The £500 million deficit between estimated revenue and the amount that Eurorail has provided is almost wholly due to Government intervention. They demanded a private partner. British Rail could have started this project two years ago. When they insisted on a private partner for British Rail they demanded that the rate of return should be 18 per cent. instead of 8 per cent. That adds to the cost when assessing whether a project will be profitable—a point that was made by Bob Reid. He pointed out that one can borrow at 8 per cent. from the Treasury.

When the Prime Minister was engaged in electioneering during the Kent county council elections, she said, "Don't worry: vote Tory; we'll build tunnels and your environmental concerns will be looked after." Such a costly tunnelling operation for the line would certainly cost more than £500 million.

The Government say that they do not believe in intervention, but by their own actions they scuppered the project. Therefore, Britain has been denied the opportunity to invest both private and public money in a high-speed link. In its editorial, *The Daily Telegraph*—hardly a militant in the Labour party—said:

"In isolation, a refusal to commit public funds to support a project that is ultimately expected to benefit private shareholders may sound rational. But this newspaper sees the decision as an example of the muddled thinking which has bedevilled the Government's transport policy in recent years."

The article concluded by saying:

"For the time being, however, it is dismaying to note that Mr. John Prescott, Labour's front bench spokesman, has sounded considerably more convincing than his government counterpart in his analysis of the transport issue this week."

I am not inclined to blow my own trumpet, but it was nice to read that in *The Daily Telegraph*.

The Government's two-year delay has damaged out prestige and made it more difficult for British Rail to move into the 21st century. The way forward must be to review all the options. I asked the previous Secretary of State for Transport the same question 18 months ago and was told that that would cause delay. There is, however, to be a review of all the options, so there will be further delay. It is a pity that the Government did not take any notice of what we said 18 months ago.

On section 42, the Secretary of State said in his last statement to the House, that there would be no subsidies and that I was a firm advocate of that policy. I hope that he will withdraw those comments when he has checked the facts. I asked for evidence of that, but his Department failed to produce it. I can explain why—there was no debate on section 42 as such; it simply passed through both Houses, for a number of reasons. I was not involved and it is incorrect to say that I was. I believe that there should be a review of section 42. I assume that public money is now becoming available because section 56 was mentioned at the conference, when it was suggested that there was a possibility of using it to help in the channel

[Mr. Prescott]

tunnel investment. Are we already witnessing public money coming along, with a review of the alternatives of King's Cross and Stratford?

The Secretary of State made great play of the fact that, according to him, I said on "Newsnight" that Labour's alternative of taking the high-speed link to Scotland would be financed by the infrastructure fund. He knows that to be untrue, because he has the script. If he would like me to quote it, I will. I did not say that it would be financed by the fund. I said that, if we were prepared to support the building of an enlarged fund—which we are—more resources could come with the support of Ireland, Belgium and France because they want a high-speed European link. Britain would be in the same position in relation to the infrastructure fund as the French are to the agriculture fund. We could then begin to do it.

Nobody knows what would be the costs of that link. Even the Government do not know, after years of studying the cost of the connection from Folkestone to London. That is why I advocate a review of the financing—wherever the money may come from—of the environmental damage, and of how we can improve the commercial viability of the link, the recommendation for its structure and ownership and the best connection to London. Those are the criteria that could be involved in a new link, and I hope that the Secretary of State will reconsider.

I am bound to say that it is beginning to appear as though the Government are adopting the Labour party policy that we have advocated for the best part of two years—that is reviewing the options, reconsidering public money, considering the EC structure fund and studying the possibility of introducing high-speed trains, as defined in Europe, with speeds up to 200 mph. The Government's policy on that is a total failure. They fail to understand the potential of a high-speed rail system. It offers the greatest potential to help us to reduce congestion; to reduce the ever-increasing environmental damage to our system; to provide a fast, safe, modern transport system for passengers and freight; and to take British Rail into the 21st century.

That is necessary for Britain, not only so that it does not remain geographically on the periphery of Europe, but so that it gets into the centre by the provision of high-speed links. If the Government fail to provide that, as they appear to be doing, this century, the next Labour Government—who are surely on their way—will ensure that it does happen. Indeed, we are actually planning now to ensure that it is brought about.

4.37 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Cecil Parkinson): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"congratulates the Government for pursuing a balanced transport policy involving record investment by the public and private sector in every aspect of the nation's transport systems; recognises that this is the only way to give the customer more choice and a better quality of service; applauds the Government for the high priority it gives to all matters of safety; welcomes the contribution that the Channel Tunnel can make to improving links to the Continent of Europe and the £2 billion of investment in road and rail which will ensure the tunnel is fully serviced from the day it opens in 1993; commends the Government's support for the development of high speed trains which will be jointly owned by Britain, France and Belgium and which will operate in all three countries; commends British Rail for developing plans for high speed freight services from all parts of the United Kingdom to the tunnel; and calls on the Opposition to cease its policy of denigrating Britain.'."

It would be a relief to everybody if the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) stood by what he said he would do today and stopped constantly appearing on the television the moment after an accident, trying to blame it on something he calls "cuts". I shall tell him what prompted my remarks on Saturday, and it might actually interest him to know that many people recognised what I was referring to. The Labour party's document states:

"The tragedies of the 1980s—Zeebrugge, Lockerbie, Clapham, Kings Cross—are symbols of a government which has put cost cutting before people's lives."

This is a disgraceful allegation. The hon. Gentleman knows that the Lockerbie incident is under investigation by the police. It involved a terrorist bomb, which was probably put on a plane in Frankfurt. The hon. Gentleman has already made up his mind.

Dr. Swire is a reasonable man and he wants a public inquiry. He believes that the hon. Gentleman shares his desire, but the hon. Gentleman has already said in the Labour party document that he does not need an inquiry because it is all down to cost cutting by the Government. That is a disgraceful slur and I invite the hon. Gentleman to withdraw it.

Mr. Prescott: Inquiries have not been conducted into the tragedies of Lockerbie and the Marchioness, but all the other inquiries pointed to the inadequacies of the Department of Transport and the cuts that contributed to the deaths. That is what we said in our report.

Mr. Parkinson: The hon. Gentleman just demonstrated that he tries to turn every tragedy into a party political matter and to cash in on it.

I apologise to the hon. Gentleman for referring to the television programme in which he appeared when I meant to say that it was a radio programme. I recorded a similar programme a couple of nights later. During the programme the hon. Gentleman said in response to a question on the infrastructure fund:

"Britain's infrastructure is so bad we would get the majority of claims upon it and therefore we'd be a bit like the French with the Common Agricultural Fund."

In other words, we would get all the money out of it. Later the hon. Gentleman went on to say that the route up to Scotland would cost between £10 billion and £15 billion depending on what route was decided upon. He said:

"I think that the Community will be quite prepared to give it as a European infrastructure of a . . . quite a proportion of that."

I do not know quite what that sentence means as, in common with most of the hon. Gentleman's sentences, it does not finish. As I understand it, he acknowledged that his plans would cost between £10 billion and £15 billion. He said that quite a proportion of that cost could come from the infrastructure fund, but at that time the fund stood at £40 million. Last week, the Council of Ministers unanimously agreed to an ad hoc fund for another three years totalling £80 million. The final amount has yet to be settled, but that sum was the Commissioner's ambition. If the hon. Gentleman expects to receive quite a proportion of a fund totalling £80 million only, it is clear that £10 billion will account for many, many years of the accounts of that fund.

The hon. Gentleman is sponsored by the National Union of Seamen of which he is extremely proud and he

speaks out for it. That union was violently in favour of section 42. At that time, did he disagree with his union? In the recent debate the hon. Gentleman said that he had changed his mind. Does that mean that he was never in favour of section 42 or that he previously supported it, but no longer?

Mr. Prescott: Circumstances change.

Mr. Parkinson: So the hon. Gentleman did support section 42, but he has changed his mind. I thank him for acknowledging that.

Mr. Gregory: Can my right hon. Friend clarify whether we have had a clear statement from the Opposition on transport? We have not had such clarification from the Opposition. Are we to assume that the hon. Members for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) and for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) are speaking as the paid hacks of the National Union of Seamen and the National Union of Railwaymen? There appears to be no clear distinction between their remarks on behalf of those unions and the Opposition's transport policy.

Mr. Parkinson: That is a matter for the hon. Gentlemen.

This is the fourth debate that we have had on the railways in the past four months—three of them have been initiated by the Opposition, as the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East reminded us. Railways are an important part of our transport infrastructure, but, unlike the hon. Gentleman, we accept the need to keep their contribution in perspective. The hon. Gentleman is aware that the railways carry 7 per cent. of our freight and 8 per cent. of our passengers. We want to see those percentages grow and we are giving substantial backing to that end. Even if those percentages doubled—that would require huge investment and cause huge problems—it would still mean that 86 per cent. of our freight and 84 per cent. of our passengers would use other means of transport.

We recognise the contribution that the railways can make, but, unlike the Opposition, we are not obsessed about that. We are not unbalanced in our attitude to the railways. We see the railways as an important contribution towards solving our transport problems, but we do not consider them as the answer to those problems—that is the impression that the hon. Gentleman gives the whole time.

Mr. Snape: Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that the percentages quoted are typically misleading and are, unfortunately, the sort of statistics that have emanated from the Department of Transport for too many years? The figures on freight include local deliveries, milk floats and all sorts of deliveries that are carried on the road, with which the railways would not and could not compete. We are talking about the contribution that rail freight could make at the heaviest end of the freight market over long distances. Given the right hon. Gentleman's palpable ignorance, he should be told that as his Department has, in the past 10 years, twice increased lorry weights and once increased lorry speeds, it is not surprising that the rail freight business is now facing a financial crisis.

Mr. Parkinson: Even if we doubled the percentages for rail freight and rail passengers, 86 per cent. of our freight and 84 per cent. of our passengers would still travel by other means of transport. Those figures are accepted and are comparable with the figures for other countries.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central) *rose*——

Mr. Parkinson: I shall not give way as I want to press on.

My second criticism of the Opposition is their reluctance——

Mr. Adley: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Parkinson: No, not at the moment.

My second criticism of the Opposition is their reluctance to say anything good about this country and anything bad about others. The implication is that Britain in general and British rail in particular are totally out of step with other countries.

Recently I was looking at *Railway Gazette International* and I read about a railway system that is looking to reorganise itself. The article said:

"The chosen management matrix mirrors British Rail's sector structure of five businesses that has stood the acid test of survival in a fully deregulated transport environment . . . The changes spring from a management audit by four consultants completed last September and concluded that insufficient attention was being paid to economic realities, that trains were run with little concern for profit".

That railway organisation, which is looking to model itself on British Rail, is SNCF. It has decided that it must move towards an organisation similar to British Rail and to start to put economies first.

I also read about another railway company much admired by my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley). It has appointed a commission to look at the intractable problem of the long-term financial stability of its railways. We are told:

"The model chosen has leanings towards the business sector approach pioneered by British Rail".

The article said of that much admired railway system:

"Can it be that"

the chairman's team

"is at last getting a hold on the dinosaur?"

That is what is happening in the German railway system. The French and German railway systems do not regard British Rail as a joke, but are modelling their management structures on it.

The European Commission does not think that the Government's transport policy is wrong. We are in the process of creating a common market in transport and in road, rail, air, and sea transport Britain is taking the lead in promoting liberalisation. A vital part of the Commission's transport policy is the removal of subsidies that distort competition while recognising their acceptability for social reasons in special circumstances. The Commission is not planning to see Europe with a huge range of heavily subsidised railways. So the Commission is planning to follow precisely the policy of the Government —*[Interruption.]*—of eliminating subsidy and concentrating it on areas where there are special reasons for it.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): I urge the right hon. Gentleman to recall the words in the Government amendment, which commends

"British Rail for developing plans for high speed freight services from all parts of the United Kingdom".

That aspect applies in particular to my part of the north-west because, if the channel tunnel is not used and developed properly, it will be a disadvantage rather than an advantage to us. It will place us further from the centre of Europe if its lines are not developed through to the north-west. The freight depot in my constituency concerns me most, as the right hon. Gentleman is aware. We do not

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want to remain on the periphery, but we fear that we may become even more peripheral as the tunnel proceeds. We want to be integrated into the railway network of the whole of Europe.

Mr. Parkinson: I was about to deal with the channel tunnel and discuss the point that the right hon. Gentleman raised.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Parkinson: I must get on.

Mr. Adley: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Parkinson: I hope that my hon. Friend will permit me to continue. He has many opportunities to voice his opinions about the railways, and I am sure he will have an opportunity again.

I wish, in dealing with the channel tunnel, to start by referring to the reaction to my announcement, and in particular, to the Opposition's reaction, which showed the lack of balance that is rapidly becoming the hallmark of Labour Members. I announced that the Eurorail joint venture would not go ahead, and I gave the reasons for that decision. I shall be happy to send the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East a copy of the letter that I sent to British Rail and to Eurorail explaining my reasons.

I pointed out that the £500 million direct grant might have been acceptable, but that, coupled with a demand for an additional £350 million to £400 million of investment by British Rail to support the commuter link, it represented too great an expense to be covered by the benefits to the commuter link.

I also pointed out that it was an investment of £1 billion —the hon. Gentleman was right to quote that figure—in all the equipment for phases one and two of the channel tunnel. The consortium wanted to take over all those assets and all the income from them and to repay in the year 2010. So the assets would have been acquired—taken over—the loan would have been outstanding, ranking behind every creditor in the event of anything going wrong, and no repayment of any sort would have been made until 2010. That is why I mentioned £1·9 billion, being the investment, the grant and the soft loan.

I went on to say that in addition, in practice the Government were substantially underwriting any cost overruns. When I questioned that, I was told, "If anything goes wrong, you can put in a receiver, buy the assets cheaply and finish it as a public sector project." That would have been unacceptable, so we came to the conclusion that that link was not a sensible proposition.

What I announced, and what the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East ignored, was that the line to the north downs would be confirmed, that Kings Cross was agreed as the second terminal and that the new chairman would appoint consultants to examine all the proposals and decide the best way to get from the north downs to Kings Cross. In other words, the idea that the project was scrubbed was totally and utterly wrong.

There are certain basic points that the hon. Gentleman and others should remember. The first is that freight was never part of the Eurorail proposal. The proposal was for a 72-mile passenger link from Folkestone to Kings Cross. The freight arrangements that Eurorail envisages are those that we have put in hand. The equipment and carriages have been ordered and British Rail is now searching for the depots, and I appreciate that the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) wants one in his constituency.

The notion—also referred to in the Opposition motion —that the regions are in any way disadvantaged by my decision is, from the freight and business point of view, wrong. Our freight will run with the most modern fleet of freight trains at comparable speeds to those in Europe. They will go straight through the tunnel and all the regions will be served.

In considering passengers, again there have been many misunderstandings. British Rail will be putting on 3 million seats from areas outside the south-east and the trains will go through by direct line—direct route without stop—to the tunnel.

Mr. Prescott: What trains?

Mr. Parkinson: The hon. Gentleman suggests that we do not have any trains. We authorised the first 30 trains. We authorised the freight trains——

Mr. Prescott: When?

Mr. Parkinson: We authorised them some time ago, before Christmas. We have done more. The first tranche of trains to service the tunnel has been ordered. The freight trains were ordered subsequently and the North Pole and Waterloo were recently authorised. We give the approvals as applications come forward.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford) *rose*——

Mr. Parkinson: The first tranche of high-speed trains has been ordered, and when British Rail comes forward with its proposals, they will receive the normal consideration. We are ordering trains as they are recommended to us and, as I say, we have ordered the first 30 high-speed passenger trains. They have already been ordered.

Mr. Prescott: What about the rest?

Mr. Parkinson: The others will follow—*[Interruption.]* As applications come forward, they are approved and no twisting is involved. It is clear that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, having had little experience of running anything, does not understand how these things work. We do not order everything simultaneously. The trains will be ordered and they will run through.

Mr. Snape *rose*——

Mr. Parkinson: No, I shall not give way.

We are talking of a common pool of trains, which will be ordered by ourselves, the French and the Belgians and which will be jointly owned. The trains that come through the tunnel will be the trains that leave Paris and go to their British destinations. As we order new trains, which will be there in time for the opening——

Mr. Prescott: Really?

Mr. Parkinson: The hon. Gentleman expresses doubt about the freight trains. They have been ordered. He expresses doubt about the fast trains. They, too, have been ordered. He expresses doubt about the freight terminal. It

has been authorised. Everything will be ordered and the tunnel will be serviced, and all the regions will be serviced, from the day the tunnel opens.

Mr. Lofthouse *rose*——

Mr. Parkinson: No, I must get on.

Mr. Prescott *rose*——

Mr. Parkinson: No, I have already answered the hon. Gentleman's point. He is attempting his usual trick of trying to dance on a pinhead, which nature did not design him to do.

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): Before my right hon. Friend leaves the question of investment, may I inform him that I am receiving from my constituents —a typical letter yesterday came from a Mrs. Guaschi— complaints that we are favouring road against rail. They say that far too much investment is going into roads from Government funds and too little into rail. Will my right hon. Friend explain how much uneven treatment we are giving to the roads as against the rail system?

Mr. Parkinson: On the national roads programme, in the three years starting this year, we shall be spending £5·7 billion. On the rail and underground systems—public transport—we shall be investing £6·2 billion. On local roads, a further £2 billion will be invested by local authorities. The sums to be spent on the national road network are less than the sums to be spent on rail and the underground.

We have heard today from the Opposition about policy. I kept a note. The first 14 minutes of the speech of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East were devoted to personal abuse and the next 14 to a ramble round the thicket, and finally the hon, Gentleman said that he was in favour of some sort of fast link, which would be funded in a way about which he would let us know at some future time. It was an expression of hope rather than a commitment.

As the hon. Gentleman knows, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands East (Mr. Smith) and the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) have said that they are not committed to anything other than uprating child benefit and pensions, and everything else will have to compete for available resources. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East today offered us nothing except an expression of vain hope.

While the Opposition dream their dreams, we are getting on with the business of modernising Britain. We shall invest——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The Secretary of State has made it abundantly clear that he is not prepared to give way. I hope that hon Members will resume their seats.

Mr. Parkinson: Over the next three years, British Rail will invest in rail some £3·7 billion—the largest sum that it will have invested for some time. Its new chairman told me that the sum is bigger than the combined investment programmes of Shell and Esso UK—two huge companies. The Opposition want to know how that will be financed and I shall tell them if they will listen.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, said that that would be paid for out of fares. That is his favourite assertion and he even got the Leader of the Opposition to make it. The fares paid to British Rail will produce a loss of £600 million over the next three years. Therefore, in addition to funding that loss, it has to find a further £3·7 billion, making a total of £4,300 million. Therefore, I hope that we have made it clear that the investment will not be paid for from fares because the fares do not even cover the expenses.

The sum of £1,600 million will come from grants, directly or indirectly, from the Treasury. The £900 million will come from the realisation by British Rail of property assets that belong to the taxpayer. Some £800 million will come from the reinvestment of the depreciation, which every sensible Government and organisation carries out, and the £1,000 million will come in the form of loans from the national loans fund at favourable rates of interest. That is a balanced way of funding a huge programme. At the end of an investment period in which British Rail will have lost £600 million and invested £3.7 billion, its debt will have increased by less than £1 billion.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Is the Secretary of State saying, in answer to the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page), that the national roads programme—which I think he said was £5·7 billion—will come out of taxpayer' money, whereas the money from central Government for this massive rail investment programme is £1·6 billion? That is the answer to the question posed by the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, South-West.

Mr. Parkinson: The taxpayer owns British Rail. Therefore, if assets are realised, it is perfectly reasonable for the money to be reinvested. That is how British Rail will fund its programme. It is turning assets into cash and reinvesting it. The notion that the reinvestment is being paid for by the fare payer is raging nonsense. British Rail has a balanced way of funding a huge investment programme.

I shall translate that money into projects. The east coast main line electrification will be finished by the spring of next year. Network SouthEast will have modernised lines on the north Kent and Chiltern lines. All the provincial network—everything but Network SouthEast and InterCity—will have modernised trains within two years. They are being introduced now in a steady programme. Thameslink is to have massive investment to improve north-south connections.

I am sure that hon. Members will have read last week that British Rail announced a £700 million plan for the total upgrading of the west coast main line. A huge investment programme is under way. It is being translated from money into improvements, which will appear progressively for the benefit of British Rail users. The Government support that programme.

Some £6,200 million is being invested in British Rail and London Underground, and over the same period the Underground will invest some £2·5 billion. The London Underground subsidy will double during the next three years, and total more than £1,700 million.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, talks about the £85 million reduction over three years in Network SouthEast and the £55 million reduction in the provincial lines. However, London Underground is colossally subsidised and backed up by huge investment programmes to provide modern rolling stock to reduce costs. Will the hon. Gentleman bear it in mind that, at the

[Mr. Parkinson]

same time, we are adding more than £1,000 million to the subsidy paid to London Underground compared with the previous three years? Therefore, far from reductions in subsidies to public transport, there has been a huge change.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): In the Confederation of British Industry brief that we have all received, the CBI says of grants that it wants recognition of

"the environmental benefits of rail by providing environmental grants where necessary, or by reducing the rate of return required on investment."

When it is convenient in his speech, will the Secretary of State reflect on the CBI's suggestion?

Mr. Parkinson: I can give the hon. Gentleman my answer now. In the business plan for the next three years that we agreed with British Rail, we stated that cost benefit could be taken into account in making rail investment and giving grants for transferring freight from road to rail. I have just said that, in the proposal for the channel tunnel rail link, we were prepared to look at the benefits to Network SouthEast commuters and make a contribution towards the cost of that link. However, at the end of the day, the contribution desired and the support needed were too big. But the principle was there, and we were prepared to make grants up to £500 million.

I have talked about the huge investment programme in the railways and the biggest ever investment programme in the underground. We also have huge programmes for the extension of the docklands light railway, the modernisation of the Central line and the replacement of the rolling stock on all the underground lines by 1994, other than the Northern line, which should be completely modernised by 1995. A huge programme, including new lines, is in hand to improve London's underground system.

During the survey period of three years, we shall invest £5,700 million in the roads programme—the biggest investment programme for many years. The reasons for that were set out in the White Paper, "Roads for Prosperity". They are to improve our economic performance, the environment and safety. It is a huge programme, involving the improvement of our trunk roads and motorways.

We have released the ports from the iniquitous dock work labour scheme. The net result is that all our ports are looking forward to investment and expansion.

I opened the third London airport terminal, which has been totally modernised, enlarged and improved. It is effectively a new terminal, adding to the new terminal at Heathrow opened a couple of years ago and to the one at Gatwick opened a little before. Next year a new terminal will open at Stansted and that will make a massive improvement to London's airport capacity. There are effectively three new terminals and the fourth will be opened next March. People criticise Britain and say that the French are thinking of building a new airport, which will make them enormously strong, but as I say, next March will see the opening of a fourth new terminal serving London.

We recognise the importance of rail, but we do not overestimate, as the Opposition do, its significance. We recognise the need to modernise the whole of our transport system. In spite of predictions from the Opposition, the results of negotiations with the Treasury, which were announced last year, have shown that over the previous three years the Department of Transport had an increase from £8 billion to £14 billion in its budget for the infrastructure and improving our transport systems. In addition, the private sector is investing in airports, roads and light railways. More money than ever is being reinvested and invested in Britain's transport systems. We are playing our part in Europe by leading the way for liberalisation in aviation, shipping and road cabotage.

While the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East flies over to France in his helicopter and has his little trip on the TGV, we stay at home and get on with the business of creating a modern system. We cannot take the hon. Gentleman seriously. We reckon that if he were ever in government—which is highly unlikely—he would be lucky to get from the Treasury enough money to pay for the letters of apology that he would have to write to all the people whom he has been misleading. He knows that the Labour party has never been a reliable investor in transport and that it will not be in future.

5.11 pm

Mr. John P. Smith (Vale of Glamorgan): Having listened to the Secretary of State, I wonder what world he lives in because it is not my world or that of the people whom I represent. The Government's 11-year record on transport is a disaster. We are experiencing a transport crisis. I do not propose to become embroiled in arguments about relative investments, the building of additional motorways and plans that are in the pipeline. I shall speak of the reality that people experience every day. That experience tells them that, no matter how much argument takes place in the House, we are experiencing a transport crisis.

I challenge any hon. Member to deny that the transport system throughout the country is in a mess. It is obvious to anyone who tries to drive in and out of London or to travel anywhere at all on the M25. The motorway was planned and opened by the Government, and on the day it opened it had one of the largest traffic jams in the country. That is the sort of thing that people are exeriencing. Anyone who tries to travel through the Dartford tunnel will see the misery that faces our motorists. Anyone lucky enough to catch an InterCity train anywhere near peak travelling times will have to sit or even stand in crowded and often dirty carriages.

Mr. Hayward: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that from last month the InterCity service that he and I use has had increased capacity as a result of line electrification on the east coast? Units have been transferred from the east coast to the Cardiff service and the capacity on each train has been increased by one seventh.

Mr. Smith: I am not aware of that. Is the hon. Gentleman aware that by the mid-1990s Bristol and Cardiff and south Wales in general will be the only large population centres in Europe without an electrified main line link, and that may soon include eastern Europe? I am sure that the hon. Gentleman shares my worries about the effect of poor rail links on the economies of the areas concerned. That needs to be addressed rather rapidly by the Government.

There may have been some minor improvements, but anyone who manages to catch a train on Network SouthEast will suffer the experiences that I have described.

Such experiences are not confined to London and the south-east, as anyone who tries to cross the Severn bridge at peak hours and is subject to the delays caused by repairs and the toll will testify. Hon. Members should try to drive past Manchester on the M6 during the rush hour and see the sort of traffic jams that people there are experiencing.

I vividly recall the unfortunate experience of having to drive from Cardiff to Glasgow during the spring bank holiday last year. Near Telford I hit a traffic jam on the M5 which stretched for almost 80 miles. I am told that it was because it was bank holiday weekend and because there was an important cup match in Liverpool between Arsenal and Liverpool. There is no excuse or explanation for such congestion.

The focus of the crisis in our transport system was highlighted a week or two ago when the Secretary of State for Transport made his disastrous announcement about the cancellation of the high-speed link to the channel tunnel. I do not share his view that in the short and medium term that does not matter much. It matters a great deal. It was a disastrous announcement and will have considerable consequences, not only for our transport system but for Britain's credibility.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that there is a long lead time from a decision to the moment when a road or any transport project is opened? The hon. Gentleman spoke of the M25. Does he accept that part of the reason for the appalling congestion on that road may be decisions made some time ago, some of them by Labour Administrations, especially in relation to the inner London ringway?

Mr. Smith: I agree that there is a long lead time on large projects. I understand that the lead time for the high-speed link to the channel tunnel is about 11 years, which makes one wonder whether anything will ever be done now that everything seems to be back in the melting pot.

The decision about the high-speed rail link will give rise to even more overcrowding on our trains, especially in the south-east, and it will lead to more worry. That point has been missed. If we do not have a direct service, even more heavy freight will be squeezed off our railways and on to the roads resulting in even more congestion. That is worrying.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Is not the real point that, whether or not we had the high speed rail link that was being proposed, the freight plan would in no way have been altered? A number of us are pleased about the present delay because it gives us one last chance to reassess the freight link to see whether British Rail's original proposal stands up to the potential of a freight-carrying capacity on British Rail which we believe could operate in the 21st century.

Mr. Smith: My understanding is different. I understand that it is a question of capacity. Trade and passengers will be competing for the same line and that will push yet more on to the roads.

Even worse is the effect of the Government's decision on Britain's reputation. On the day that the announcement was made, south Wales business men, with the assistance and co-operation of the Welsh CBI, were hosting a tremendous European business initiative. At the height of those worthwhile endeavours, they heard that the Government had cancelled the high-speed link to the channel tunnel. I understand that that became a bit of a joke with their French and German counterparts. Fast trains from Frankfurt or Paris will have to travel much more slowly on the English side of the channel because of the track here.

For me, the reality is not the gloomy national picture that everybody experiences either directly or through their television screens. The real illustration of the present transport crisis and the Government's disastrous record over the past 11 years is the experience of my constituents and those of many other hon. Members.

I represent an area which is predominantly rural and suburban. My consitutents are experiencing a transport crisis because there has been a breakdown in the area's transport system. Just as there are trouble spots in Britain, so there are in my constituency. My constituents cannot get into their cars and be sure of arriving at work on time. They do not have the choice of catching a train because there is no passenger service. They reach the trouble spots, particularly in the east of my constituency, such as Culverhouse Cross, and find themselves stuck in a traffic jam.

My constituency has developed, and its population has grown, but its transport system has not grown to meet its needs. My constituents, like those of many hon. Members, experience traffic jams in the morning and heavy traffic as they travel through tiny villages, such as Lysworney in the west of my constituency which has a single lane road going through it carrying heavy lorries laden with stone and industrial freight from the nearby industrial estate. In the east of my constituency two popular suburbs, Dinas Powys and Sully, experience heavy traffic and high volumes of traffic. That is now becoming a safety issue for parents of young children and an environmental issue because of the exhaust fumes and other environmentally hazardous products that are emitted. Similar problems are experienced throughout the constituency. Even our national airport is served by a single carriageway road interspersed with roundabouts which one cannot get round. It is a mess.

Yet a solution has existed for a long time—to invest in the existing rail link which runs through the constituency like a spinal cord. That would solve not all but most of our transport problems and would assist in cleaning up the environment. Everyone who lives in the area recognises that the solution to our transport problems is an investment in the railway, opening a passenger rail link to the airport and those rural and suburban towns in the west of the constituency as soon as possible.

That is not the decision that British Rail has reached, or can reach, however, because investment in our railways has been neglected for so long. The absurd accounting system for our railways and the introduction of sectorisation makes it difficult if not impossible to reopen that rail link. It is a tragedy. Every sensible person and organisation living in or operating from my constituency says that there is one, and only one, solution to our transport problem—the reopening of the passenger railway.

That is the case that I put to the House, and I do so because it reflects the problems throughout Britain. If the Government fail to take up the challenge and to invest quickly in our railways, escaping the ideological dogma which prevents them from subsidising a fast, efficient network in any way, we shall be in trouble. I look forward to a change of Government and to a Secretary of State for

[Mr. Smith]

Transport who takes a far more pragmatic approach to the problems that we face and who is prepared to use public and private investment in the creation of a fast, efficient rail network.

5.27 pm

Mr. Edward Heath (Old Bexley and Sidcup): Rail transport, with its associations with other forms of transport in Britain, is a major issue which deserves serious treatment and which should rise above petty personalities and party quarrels. That is what the country expects and it is certainly what my constituents expect.

I propose to devote my time to the questions which affect my constituents, and I do so quite unashamedly because they tend to be overlooked, certainly in Government quarters and in other quarters of the House. Those who share their anxieties with me will, given the opportunity today, doubtless explain them.

We all welcome what the Secretary of State has said about the amount to be invested in transport generally during the next three years. I do not believe that it is possible to review transport problems in three years. That is a short-term view and it is certainly not one which the Japanese take. One has to take a long-term view when dealing with roads, rail and airports. But we welcome my right hon. Friend's announcement.

I wish that my right hon. Friend had clarified to a greater extent how much is being contributed by the Treasury to particular forms of transport and how much is coming from other sources, in particular for rail. Major and smaller roads are financed by central or local government, and the amount involved is vast, but the sum invested by central Government in rail is much smaller. I wish that that had been made clear from the beginning.

Perhaps my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will say how he views the overall transport problem, because there can be no doubt that it is enormous. When the M25, for example, was designed, obviously the wrong judgments were made about the required capacity. It is said that, when the demand for a better rail link arises, it will be met, but that is a fatal approach. When the demand arises, it will be too late to meet it, and one will have another M25 situation. One must think ahead, if only because new transport facilities create their own users. That is what happened with the M25.

When the fast link in available, it too will create its own passengers. People will prefer to go to a railway station close to their home or place of work and use a fast link, rather than have to drive to the airport, to arrive there half or three quarters of an hour early, and on returning have to wait for baggage and then face a lengthy journey back to their home or office. A fast rail link would create its own market.

My right hon. Friend emphasised the importance of achieving the correct balance, but there is a danger that one may not pursue the right priorities. Tht happened with motorways. One can think of numerous motorways that have not been fully completed, in the sense that they go so far but then come to an abrupt end. The M27 in the south of England is an example. That happens because we have never said that the priority must be to complete a motorway to its full extent before starting work on another. If we had done so, the motorway network would have been completed more speedily, and much more would have been achieved overall. It is on the question of balance that the rail link will also suffer.

In the case of the M4, only a two-way highway connects it to London, yet high-rise buildings are still being constructed alongside that highway. Does anyone imagine that that highway is adequate today? It is hopeless. Does anyone imagine that we shall go on to eternity with just a two-way highway leading to the west? One finds that new construction is also being permitted alongside inadequate roads leading in and out of other cities. A long-term overall strategy is required, by which we will say, "Such construction cannot be undertaken because we need better road facilities to help our economy in years to come."

The situation in London is catastrophic, yet apparently there is no plan for dealing with it. The Government have no intention of doing so, and there is no overall authority that will even consider tackling that task. It would have been helpful if my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State had devoted at least part of his speech to acknowledging the problems that affect so many people.

I have often wondered whether it would be possible for some clever group to calculate the loss of time, energy and cost, in terms of strain, to the workers of this country resulting from the failure of our traffic system. If anyone made such a calculation, they would be absolutely shattered, and would see how necessary it is to spend money and to make an effort to achieve solutions.

I unashamedly turn to my constituency problem, which concerns the fast rail link—an issue that has been going on for two and a half years. We thought that British Rail had reached a firm decision on the route to be used. Many right hon. and hon. Members have had a close association with British Rail over that time, and it was sad to find that it was inadequate to deal with a new rail link—but as it would be the first this century, perhaps that is understandable. Nevertheless, British Rail did not appear to have the technical knowledge required, nor had it surveyed the technical progress made by countries on the other side of the channel.

At the enormous public meetings that we held, which could in no way be called political occasions, there were people who had taken the trouble to visit France, Germany and even Japan to study the rail systems there, and whose knowledge left the British Rail representatives standing silent. They had nothing to say. They did not have that information themselves, and could not comment on it. I was glad that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State quoted the praise given by other countries to British Rail. That made me wonder why it is necessary to privatise it, but that is something that I would not mention except in polite company.

The continuing difficulties with the fast rail link presents personal problems for many people. I quote from the letter that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State sent to me after I had written to him with the views of a particular constituent:

> "I hope that at least I have reassured"

my constituent

> "that the question of the route into London is an entirely open one, which is being looked at afresh by British Rail, and that at this stage no particular route is earmarked or about to be announced."

Far from being reassuring, that is a fatal condemnation.

At this moment, the whole of south and south-east London, as well as an area in the country that extends to

the north downs, is under blight. If one of my constituents is promoted to or offered another job in a different part of the country, he cannot accept it because he cannot sell his house. As soon as people know the location of the property, they say, "The fast link may be routed through here, or there, or somewhere else. In any case, we wouldn't touch it." Similarly, people who want to move to the coast or some other part of the country to retire cannot do so because they are unable to sell a house that is under blight.

We thought that the issue was settled when British Rail announced its preferred route, but that scheme was killed and a new one begun with Eurolink. That too appears to have been wiped out, and nobody knows where they are. The only certain thing is that property owners are under blight, and that is ruining their lives. Leaving aside the great strategy involving roads, rail and airports, one must take into account the ordinary citizens in my constituency, and in those of many right hon. and hon. Members, who cannot live their lives.

Mr. Parkinson: I am not sure whether my right hon. Friend was present when I made a statement about 10 days ago, saying that the only proposal that has ever been made is still on the table and that the compensation scheme applying to that particular route is being retained. If anyone is threatened by that proposal, compensation is available. There are no other proposals on the table. The only one that exists is protected by a compensation scheme.

Mr. Heath: With respect, my right hon. Friend completely misunderstands the position. His letter to me says that the new chairman of British Rail will examine all possibilities. Even more frightening is his comment:

"our main concern is to get the right route and to give the new Chairman of British Rail all the time he needs to decide what proposals in his view"—

and so on. My constituents will say that, if the new chairman is given

"all the time he needs",

there is no knowing how long that process will take.

If one was starting from scratch, one might say, "Yes, this is the right approach", but after all that we have gone through in the past two and a half years, and after all the anxiety that my constituents have suffered, that is horrifying.

So much emphasis has been placed on the fact that the link will be largely used for freight. Also, there is the question of helping commuters, which is where the issue begins to get muddled—but perhaps I am a very suspicious type. When there is talk of helping the commuter, I wonder whether that is a way to get money into the system for the link.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): What is wrong with that?

Mr. Heath: There is nothing wrong with it, but it goes against everything that has been said about section 42, which has bedevilled the whole discussion. *[Interruption.]* With great respect, it has. It was never discussed in Committee and was brought about by the lobbying of the ferry people, who are terrified of what would happen with the chunnel. As a result, section 42 was put in.

Mr. Prescott: Quite right.

Mr. Heath: I shall not blame the Opposition spokesman, because the Government are responsible for legislation. I am not interested in him; I never have been.

I have challenged with my right hon. Friend's predecessor whether section 42 precludes the Government from making allowances for expenditure to protect the environment. I have never had an answer.

I believe that section 42 refers to the channel tunnel and the rail link in it. I do not see how it could possibly have referred to a fast link which was going from the channel tunnel right up to Inverness, Liverpool or to the other great cities of this country, which is what is intended. How could one say, as is said in section 42, that there must never be any money to deal with such a situation, unless it is in an attempt to force a cheap privatisation?—and I say that quite bluntly.

We shall never get proper environmental protection unless railways are provided with the funds, and it has to be public funds—no private investor will provide money to protect the environment.

Mr. Prescott: Joint financing—public and private.

Mr. Heath: One can juggle the figures how one likes, but the money has to come from the Treasury. People say that we must think of the Community and the fact that it does not want to use public funds for environmental protection, because that means taxation. But the Community does want it. Even though some people's homes are affected, the people of Kent want the link. But they want to see proper environmental protection throughout Kent—and I admit that it is my own county. Other hon. Members representing constituencies there will say the same thing equally strongly.

As regards south London, Bexley, Sidcup, Bromley and the rest, under the last proposal the link was to be tunnelled underneath, which would protect that area. Now that has all been wiped out. Why? Because we are bedevilled by section 42. When the Department of Transport examined the total figures, it said that they were too high, and that, because of section 42, the funds could not be granted. Either section 42 has to be interpreted as I and other hon. Members have suggested—the Department of Transport has never denied that it could not be so interpreted—or section 42 has to be removed. It would only require a one-clause Bill to remove section 42, and then the hands of the Government would be freed to follow a proper environmental policy.

In the past week the Prime Minister has placed enormous emphasis upon the environment. Very well, that is quite right, and I fully support it. She has emphasised the problem of the hole in the ozone layer, which I do not understand. When we had the best summer in our history last year, and everybody said that it was due to the hole in the ozone, I said, "Well, then make the hole a bit bigger." *[Laughter.]* Then we had the worst storms that we have had for a long time, and people said that that was due to the hole in the ozone, so I said, "Okay, then—close it up again."

What immediately concerns my constituents is not the hole in the ozone layer, but what will happen to their houses and their lives with a fast link. It is already happening. In my constituency, night freight traffic has increased enormously. One reason, obviously, is the building of the channel tunnel, because they have to

[Mr. Heath]

transport all the materials needed and get the empty trains back. However, it is making the lives of my constituents unbeliveable at night.

The Government tell us that there is no means to compensate people if traffic increases. Perhaps there ought to be. When a motorway is built and it passes through a built-up area, people are compensated for having to install double glass and all the rest of it, to save them from noise and vibration. The Government are bound to do that. That is not the case with the railway, and so houses are damaged and people's lives are suffering.

What will it be like when the same lines are fully utilised for all the Channel tunnel freight? It makes one shudder to think what people will have to put up with, unless a proper tunnel is developed under the houses. It has even been suggested that another line should be put alongside the existing line. A large number of houses will have to come down if that happens and the route comes through my constituency, or many of the adjacent constituencies. Then what will happen?

I notice that the Prime Minister mentioned in an interview the other day that there ought to be proper compensation. On such questions, we British are the nastiest, meanest people in the world, in my experience. For example, consider what happened with motorways in my constituency. People are entitled to compensation, and the district valuer is told to put a value on the property and to start at the lowest possible value. If people want more, the valuer is told to make them work up. Therefore, a group of people have to get a solicitor to enable them to continue to argue the case. In my experience, it sometimes took two or three years to get compensation. That is not tenable. Sometimes, even after that length of time, people did not get the value of the land which was taken away.

If that happens, it will make life impossible for my constituents. Compensation should be considered and dealt with properly. I should like us to go as far as the French. When they build railways, they ask the value of the property and give an increased amount in compensation, because the fast link is passing through and causing disturbance. That is what I should like to see in Britain, but I do not think that the Treasury will ever agree to anything like that.

All these practical points face us at the moment. The letter to which I referred was from a man who wants to sell his property. Someone came along and agreed to sign a contract, but asked whether the fast link would affect the area. He said, "I don't know," and they said, "I'm sorry —we can't sign." His one chance has gone. Those are the human questions which affect this country's rail policy, and I hope that the Secretary of State will concentrate on the issue. It is a question of time.

The new chairman of British Rail has the same advisers as the last one. Are they going to advise him any differently? Are they going to suggest any new ideas? Hon. Members have suggested all sorts of new ideas. Will British Rail now come to any different conclusion? I very much doubt it.

I urge the Secretary of State to realise the human aspect of the issue. We are committed to the tunnel. We ought to have a fast link. The tunnel will affect the country as a whole. Therefore, it is a national issue and environmental expenditure is entitled to be covered by the Treasury. Those are the facts, and I hope that the Government will acknowledge them, accept them and act upon them.

5.48 pm

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): Once more we have an opportunity to debate railway policy. Unfortunately, the fact that we are debating it means that the Government have failed to learn the lesson of the previous debates.

Of course, we cannot debate railway policy in isolation from the rest of transport policy, as they are interrelated. I welcome the starts mentioned by the Secretary of State today, but they are only starts. It is incredible to think that, four years after the House passed the Channel Tunnel Act, we have not yet been able to agree whether to have a high speed link. More importantly, we do not have any strategic plan or forethought as to how the country can benefit from such major events. That is even more incredible, given that they coincide with the opening up of borders and the breaking down of barriers that 1992 will bring.

It is perhaps part of our heritage that we have never quite managed to take advantage of the innovative capacity and skills that we undoubtedly have. We have set the pace in democracy, in the industrial revolution, in the welfare state and in many other matters—including the building of railways—but each time we have allowed the rest of the world to catch up and pass us by. We are about to allow that to happen again. Our European partners are way ahead of us in devising new transport and implementing systems. It is they who have cornered the markets for 1992. By the time we catch up, there will be little left to capture. In my area, the north-west, transport infrastructure will determine how we can capitalise on the economic opportunities of 1992.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): No doubt the hon. Gentleman has learnt of the plans for InterCity, which will reduce the journey time from Manchester to London to under two hours. That will also improve the service to Preston and the area that I represent. We should encourage British Rail in the efforts that it is making.

Mr. Fearn: I am sure that the hon. Lady is right. As I travel on that Preston train I realise that we may now arrive half an hour sooner—if the trains get there on time, as they seem to nowadays.

Not counting the south-east, the north-west is the largest regional contributor to national GDP, and the largest market area for international freight and passenger services. As the plans stand now, the north-west will not realise its potential. Congestion on the roads and railways in the south-east will make the north-west less attractive to tourists, passengers and freight movement. The North West Channel Tunnel Group has produced a report entitled "Capitalising on the Channel Tunnel", which contains excellent ideas for action, including the development of major regional freight terminals in areas such as Merseyside, and calls for a higher level of direct international freight services from the north-west to mainline European cities. All hon. Members should now have received a copy of the report, and I recommend it to the Minister.

I should stress that I am not merely lobbying for the interests of the north-west, as all our regions can and should benefit from the opening of the channel tunnel. It is important that all regions are given the opportunity that

good and fast rail links to Europe will provide. A national strategy for our rail network is necessary but, more than that, we should seize the opportunity to introduce strategic analysis and planning for all our transport needs. The congestion that we now face on all our major forms of transport, on our roads and in our towns, is costing the country billions of pounds. More important, it is having devastating environmental and social consequences. We cannot afford to leave those matters to the vagaries of the market as the Government seem to want to do.

When considering transport we must determine what our social, economic and environmental needs are. We must not allow our railways and other transport systems to drift without any clear objectives except the need to make a profit. We must decide what our priorities are and what part public transport and our railways play in them. Any transport policy should have as its objective the freedom of movement of people, goods and services. Access should not necessarily depend on our social or economic circumstances. The most central theme should be the protection of the environment. Land and land use must play an important part in the process. An integrated transport system is the only way forward.

Public transport must play a major part in the achievement of many of those objectives. The railways are an important part of our public transport. They have the potential to relieve congestion on our roads and in airways and they are more environmentally friendly. We must change our attitudes. We must begin to address the imbalance between the investment in roads and investment in railways. In the seven years between 1983 and 1989, public expenditure on roads totalled £22,965 billion whereas expenditure on our railways totalled only £573 billion. We must recognise the true value of our railways. Not only can they ease congestion; they are less destructive to the environment and they provide the means by which we can develop our regions and take advantage of the opportunities that 1992 has to offer.

Railway travel is also safer. Despite the room for improvement in the safety records of British Rail and London Underground, the fact remains that the number of deaths and serious injuries on our roads vastly outweighs the number of deaths and injuries on our trains. During the 10 years between 1978 and 1988, there were 62,740 deaths on our roads and 791 on our railways. I do not have the figures for serious injuries, but it is evident that any move to improve rail transport will be beneficial in terms of human costs. In economic terms, it will save some of the many hidden costs attached to road accidents. It is time to apply true cost benefit analysis to potential rail investment. We should treat our railways as a national public utility, in much the same way as we do our roads.

On 12 June the Prime Minister said in the House:

"We take the view that international services should not have subsidies . . . we do not believe that we should subsidise an international rail service."—[*Official Report*, 12 June 1990; Vol. 174, c. 133.]

Yet the British taxpayer subsidies international road passenger and freight services every day. I am well aware that if the Prime Minister had her way, our roads would no longer be regarded as a public utility, but merely as a tool of private industry. The idea of the private sector providing roads which would run alongside existing motorways fills me with horror. The possibility of the country being strewn with even greater masses of concrete and the consequential environmental effects do not bear thinking about. I am not against new roads as part of an integrated transport policy, but the fact that, in the Prime Minister's proposals, road provision would be determined by market forces and profitability scares me stiff. I hope that the House will strangle such an idea at birth; I am sure that the electorate will.

Railways need far less space than roads. They have a greater capacity and they are faster. With proper investment and the latest technology, even the existing reserve routes could provide reliable, efficient and safe transport for more freight and passengers.

The Secretary of State has said:

"It is a fundamental part of the Government's approach that people's aspirations to have and use a car should not be artificially constrained."

That policy, like so many Government policies, should undergo a review. I should like to make two contributions to that review. So that that policy may succeed, the Secretary of State discriminates against those who, through no fault of their own, do not own a car and against those who choose not to have a car—by penalising the railways and other methods of public transport.

Secondly, and perhaps more important, he penalises all of us by allowing the damage to the environment to continue. In 1987 road traffic emitted 98 million tonnes of carbon dioxide, 1·3 million tonnes of nitrogen oxide, 4·47 million tonnes of carbon monoxide and 664,000 tonnes of hydrocarbons into the atmosphere. A time may come for some form of artificial constraint on the motorist, and perhaps the policy of subsidising company cars is a good candidate for change. Certainly the congestion in many of our cities calls for some constraint, but penalties should not be introduced without some form of compensation and to provide that, we must make our public transport systems more accessible, more frequent and cheaper.

Heavy duty lorries cause much congestion and pollution and we should be looking at ways to transfer freight from roads to rail. Yet British Rail is to close Speedlink, which is arguably one of the most effective services to compete with the lorry. Claims that the Speedlink represents only 2 or 3 per cent. of BR's freight hide the damage that the closure may cause to certain areas.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) has written to the Secretary of State for Transport expressing his concern about the number of lorries that cause damage, congestion and pollution in towns and villages in Somerset. He gave an example in his letter of the effect of abolishing Speedlink. He referred to the Taunton Cider company and said that the closure of sidings would put 2,000 extra 38 tonne lorries a year on to the streets of Norton Fitzwarren—which is a very small village. My right hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil also made suggestions for encouraging the transfer of freight from road to rail including a national drive to promote grounds for private sidings and for the criteria of section 8 grants to be relaxed.

With the postponement of the high-speed rail link, the number of lorries on our roads will increase even more. British Rail claims that its existing plans for freight will not be affected by the failure to build a high-speed link. However, it is widely recognised that British Rail has a capacity for under-estimating. There is no doubt that bottlenecks on the lines in the south-east will push more freight and passengers on to already congested roads.

[Mr. Fearn]

Some people will just not bother to come to Britain and we shall lose out on commercial and business opportunities. The Confederation of British Industry has already claimed that congestion on our roads costs £15 billion per year. The CBI and others have called for greater investment in our railways to relieve congestion on our roads and in the air. The CBI has provided us with an excellent list of suggestions, but as usual I expect that the Prime Minister will choose to ignore the advice.

It is strange that the Prime Minister should ignore her friends in business because she sometimes puts great faith in them, but so often they fail to come up with the goods as the saga with the technical colleges clearly shows. Indeed, in that regard I could also refer to the Government's failure to attract private money for the new underground link and also to the failure of the high-speed link.

The Prime Minister may be asking her business friends to take too much of a risk for little return or guarantee. Our European partners and competitors do not have that problem. They can attract greater private finance. There are financial and borrowing restrictions on British Rail, but our European competitors have national strategies. They take into account social and economic factors and work on the basis of the national interest. They are not afraid to plan ahead and they work in partnership with the financial institutions and with developers.

In Germany, the railway is a Government entity. It is run by civil servants and it is successful because it is provided with adequate funding. It is seen as a national asset that is essential to Germany's economy. In this country, under this Government, the railways are seen as another drain on the public purse. Our railways should be seen as a major part of an integrated transport system. We must have a national strategy with clear objectives and guidelines. The Department of Transport and the Department of the Environment should work closely together. The commission into the high-speed rail link might be the beginning of that. It may expand into a commission for transport in general.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I appeal for shorter speeches because time is moving on very quickly.

6.2 pm

Sir David Mitchell (Hampshire, North-West): The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) accused my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport of ducking difficult decisions. I believe that a fundamental policy decision faces any Government with regard to British Rail: do we go for low fares, high subsidy and low investment or do we cut the operating subsidy and force modernisation and high investment?

History records that Labour and Conservative Governments react differently in practice when faced with that choice. The previous Labour Government had high subsidy and low investment. One wonders what Labour's policies are today. Today, Labour's policy seems to be low fares and high investment. That is all very well, but it involves a huge subsidy. As the Labour party initiated this debate, we must ask Labour Members what their proposals will cost. Has their policy been approved by the shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer? Can we have a little more information about it, because we are being left very much in the dark with a lot of windy promises and blather, but no hard facts on which to form a judgment?

This Government's policies have been clear. We have set quality standards and we have pressed for efficiency by lowering the public service obligation subsidy and encouraging investment. When my hon. Friend the Minister replies, I hope that he can tell us whether the new chairman of British Rail accepts that there is no incompatibility in the current reduced PSO subsidy and BR achieving the quality standards that have been set for it.

There are huge discrepancies between the best and the worst in British Rail. Very often those differences can be identified as areas in which investment has been ploughed and has now come to fruition and areas in which no investment has yet occurred or has yet to come through. There is a limerick which says

"When she was good,
She was very, very good,
But when she was bad she was horrid."

That applies to parts of British Rail.

The best of British Rail includes much of InterCity and the fact that British Rail runs more trains at over 100 mph than any other country except France. The best also includes the Wessex electrics from Waterloo to Winchester and to Bournemouth. Those are superb. The Portsmouth-to-Southampton electrification is very welcome, as are the 50 new stations which have been opened in the past decade. The provincial sprinters, the fast diesels, are of a high standard and are very desirable. Today's investment programme is the highest for 20 years and it is set to rise. That is the good part of British Rail, but the worst is very bad.

To illustrate the very bad, I unashamedly refer to my constituency and the Exeter to Waterloo service. That service has 20 locomotives to sustain only 13 in action. The situation is now so bad that a fitter has to travel in the cab of the train as it travels from Exeter to Salisbury so that he can carry out any necessary repairs en route. British Rail has set special low-quality standards for that route, expecting only 80 per cent. of the trains to arrive within five minutes of their scheduled time.

I want to draw back the veil on the history of that route. In 1984, I drew British Rail's attention to the unsatisfactory nature of the route and hoped that something would be done. In 1985, vigorous representations were made by my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop). In 1986, British Rail began an assessment, and in 1987, 1988 and 1989 we heard reassuring noises. It was death by a thousand assessments, by a thousand appraisals and a thousand assurances.

This morning, the hon. Members who represent constituencies crossed by that line met British Rail representatives, and we were told that there were no options available. We were told that the locomotives on the line are so clapped out that they cannot continue beyond 1992. Therefore, we have to have the quickest solution, whether or not it is the best. Electrification cannot be considered, and we have to have the new class 171 western turbos, at a cost of £40 million. They will take 20 minutes off the journey time to Exeter, which is welcome and will be a considerable improvement.

However, why was that step not taken ages ago? It has been a matter of order, counter-order and disorder. British Rail should have come up with that solution years ago, when the writing was on the wall and it could see that the existing rolling stock and locomotives could not continue for much longer.

British Rail must put more staff resources into its investment appraisals. The new chairman should cut the cackle and get cracking on the route straight away. My hon. Friend the Minister should undertake today that there will be no delays in his Department in granting the approval for the line, which has suffered so much, once British Rail, after all this time, presents its investment appraisal to the Government for approval.

I make a brief comment about section 8. Hon. Members will recall that that is the arrangement under which capital grants are given to ensure the transfer of freight from road to rail. That is a valuable part of the Government's expenditure programme. The criterion is whether there are regular loads on unsuitable roads. It is a worthwhile investment. Will my hon. Friend the Minister advise us on the effect of retrenchment in Speedlink, to which section 8 grants have been given in the past? Will he set out his policy and his thinking? Is he inclined, or does he intend, to encourage the continuation and expansion of section 8?

I confirm my question: has the new chairman accepted the Secretary of State's quality standards? Has he confirmed that there is no incompatibility with the reduced PSO? Will my right hon. Friend encourage British Rail to put more resources into investment project assessment and stop dawdling? In view of the delay in the Exeter-Waterloo rolling stock solution, will my hon. Friend undertake to reach a decision on the British rail investment case within, say, six weeks of it going to his Department? Finally will he clarify his views on section 8?

I am grateful to have had an opportunity to contribute to the debate.

6.10 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): The hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell) was a hard-working and caring Minister. Although I did not agree with many of his decisions, they were always taken from a commitment to wanting transport to be a working and useful system. The hon. Gentleman may have inadvertently highlighted one of the many problems that a Conservative Government present to the electorate when he said that, during the period that he mentioned—during some of which he was a Minister—British Rail had not come up with a solution to a real problem not only for his constituents but for many people in the west country. That is because the balanced transport policy on which the Government congratulate themselves is not in evidence to anyone anywhere in the United Kingdom. It seems to us and, I am afraid, increasingly to many people who endeavour to get around the country that the Government have handed over responsibility for transport planning in the most extraordinary way.

The capital city is quietly grinding to a halt outside this building. Large numbers of multinational firms are increasingly considering other countries as suitable sites for their factories and freight depots, because they cannot get their goods from the point of manufacture to the market. Still the Government appear unable to come forward with an integrated plan that will show some clear evidence that they understand the problems, let alone are prepared to do anything about them.

Whatever it says, the Department spends the majority of its time considering roads. The Minister talks about how pleased he is with the White Paper on experimental roads. The Select Committee on Transport took clear evidence that the solutions that were being suggested—involving a large input of private money into the development of roads—do not commend themselves to the very people whom Ministers are asking to find the cash. The railway desperately needs Government support.

I was impressed with the Secretary of State's Will Hay arithmetic today. It seemed to prove conclusively that of course we are spending more money on railways than we are spending on roads. However, I thought that it was terribly impressive—I did not believe it for a second—and it made the Government's attitude clear. They are prepared to calculate the use of roads—that is, buying the land, creating the road and using and developing the road—in a completely different way from the way in which they calculate the use of railways. The result is an absolute disaster for the passenger. That is becoming increasingly clear.

The railway system is perfectly capable of being developed to carry more freight, but it requires a great deal more investment. It requires a running programme that will make it possible for whoever is in charge to look forward 10 years and say, "These are the challenges that we have to meet. They include providing a high-speed rail link with the tunnel, but they also include the need to provide high-quality freight depots." It is simply not good enough to say that those things are being planned.

The European Community is coming forward with a rail policy. It has a system—it is totally unworkable—that seems to envisage the division of railway systems into two—one on the operating side and one on the provision of facilities side. Nevertheless, it has at least made an attempt to look at transport policies. In this country, even the CBI, when it knows that there is to be a transport debate, is prepared to say, "It is clear that the transport system that is available for us is failing commerce." If that organisation clearly says that and quotes the amount of money that it is costing industry to be unable to move freight and people around the country, surely someone must listen.

The railway system of this country was built up because it was capable of providing a cheap, efficient and useful means of transporting people and goods around the country. It now requires massive investment to bring it up to modern-day requirements. It is getting that investment, but it is getting it too slowly and often, without the support that will make it usable by the passenger and by many outside industries. We can argue about the reasons for that, but unless the United Kingdom does something very energetic in the next 10 years, we shall have almost a caricature of a transport system. It is very nice to have toy railways—when I was a child, it was nice to ride on the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch tiny railway on the beach—but they are not the solution to becoming an efficient 21st century country.

Every day of my life, I work with railwaymen who are increasingly worried about safety standards and about staff cuts. I talk to women's groups who, although they need and desperately want to use public transport, are frightened by the lack of staff at night, unmanned stations

[Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody]

and trains that are increasingly dangerous for them to use. However, the House of Commons still does not seem to be capable of putting sufficient pressure on the Government to make them understand that transport is as fundamental to people's lives as the air they breathe. To be able to go where one wants, to be able to go to places that one must go to enjoy a decent standard of living, are absolutely basic rights and should be available to every person.

The railway system can deliver not only environmentally friendly but much more efficient ways of moving people and goods. I do not believe that the Government are even interested in talking to people about planning that service at the level that is necessary for the future of all the people in this country.

6.18 pm

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): Because many of my collegues wish to speak, I shall be as brief as I can, consistent with making my point to my hon. Friend the Minister. My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) made several points, some of which I agreed with. He was right to point out that, since the summer of 1988, people in south London and north-west Kent have been bedevilled by the menace of a high-speed link and trying to deal with British Rail. I borrow the military maxim that was used by my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell) about order, counter-order and disorder. That is precisely how we have felt about dealing with British Rail over the past two to two and a half years.

As late as last November, British Rail and its agents told us that they would go away and examine the route, and return as soon as possible with a new route which would run from Halling across the GLC boundary to King's Cross.

On 14 June the Secretary of State made a statement in which he told the House that the Government did not accept Eurorail's financial proposals for funding the high-speed link. However, the Government did not announce their rejection of the concept of the link or the need for it—rather the reverse. They reaffirmed the need for the high-speed link. The options that were mentioned in the early days of June included the possibility that the concept might be shelved, abandoned or proceeded with, with all the imperfections of the route leading into and around Swanley.

The result of the announcement has been that, in the area of north-west Kent from Halling to Bromley, there is no route at all. I agree with my right hon. Friend the former Prime Minister who said that blight is no longer confined to only part of north-west Kent. It affects a huge tranche of homes, land, factories and institutions because of the uncertainty about the location of the route.

When the statement was made, although little was said about the provisions at Waterloo, we were told that the King's Cross solution and the examination of the proposals of Ove Arup and other groups were not pre-empted. However, when we consider the fact that the Waterloo operation is proceeding, with all the manifestations and implications of that, the King's Cross solution obviously appears brighter in British Rail's firmament.

My constituents need some reassurances. First, they need to know that the options will be examined properly, realistically and consistently with an early announcement. Secondly, we need an announcement as early as possible on the provision of the high-speed link, if for no other reason than to end the uncertainty, delay, blight and anxiety that my hon. Friends and I have felt and represented in the House for the past two and a half years.

We are all fully aware of the Government's determination to improve things now. I welcome their determination to ensure that the Department of Transport provides a more detailed, hands-on approach. The pity is that we have had to wait two and a half years for it.

Having said that, I wish my hon. Friend the Minister every success in his endeavours. I hope that he achieves the right route, which, for us, would go to Stratford, but I accept that that might be asking a little too much at this stage. However, I request that a decision be made as early as possible, consistent with determining the facts about the proposed route. The difficulties that we face are huge, and we have faced them for two and a half years. Some people cannot face the prospect of possibly another year of blight. The effect on their homes, jobs, attitudes, personal relationships and the loss of value of their property is too much for them to bear. I know that my hon. Friend will bear that in mind. I conclude my comments in view of the brief time available.

6.23 pm

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): I welcome this timely debate on railway policy, especially in view of our recent unsatisfactory debate on the EC's draft railway policy. I suspect that the Government could have done without a further examination of their attitude to the railways, in view of their record and the lack of a coherent approach to transport policy generally. It is a scandal that those areas which depend on a coherent transport policy, especially the industrial areas, suffer from chronic traffic jams which can only get worse because, as we know, the number of cars on our roads is projected to increase by 2 million per year over the next few years, leading to a grand total of about 27·5 million by the year 2025. We shall therefore be looking for a significant shift in freight traffic from road to rail. I wish that the Government could get rid of their antirail obsession.

Wales stands on the periphery of the European Community, and as we approach the completion of the internal market in 1992, I want Wales to be given every opportunity to compete in that market place. I do not want Wales to be relegated to the sidelines, and to become an economic backwater due to the lack of essential investment in a modern, efficient and safe transport system. I believe that rail has a vital part to play in this programme, not least because of its excellent safety record and long-term efficiency.

In fact, we should no longer be talking in terms of a United Kingdom railway network, but rather of an European network, with the channel tunnel in due course being the gateway to a world of new opportunities. However, that calls for a high-speed rail link in the central zones, providing a dedicated freight line, and investment in the connecting services from Wales, Scotland and the northern regions of England.

Wales is Southern Ireland's gateway to Europe, and Dublin's business community has already decided that the best route for its freight post-1992 will be along the central corridor, using the access from Dublin and Dun Laoghaire

through to Holyhead. The Holyhead-Crewe rail link is vital because more and more freight traffic will use the land bridge route when the channel tunnel opens. A rail land bridge via Holyhead would have significantly lower costs than a road land bridge, and would become competitively stronger for Irish traffic east of Paris, relative to any direct roll on/roll off option.

Holyhead is a pivotal factor in the equation because of its advantages of short sea crossings, the capacity for frequent round-trip sailings, and because it would reduce total journey times by between two and three hours. Given the right investment in port facilities and in the rail link, the journey from Dublin to Brussels could be completed in 11 hours.

Trade between the United Kingdom and other EC countries has grown by an average of 6 per cent. in the past decade, and freight traffic is projected to triple to 6 million tonnes per annum in the next few years, with over 70 per cent. beginning or ending its journey beyond London. Of that total, 1·4 million tonnes will be carried to and from the north-west, north Wales and Northern Ireland—the second highest proportion among the regions, second only to the south-east of England. That puts the importance of the link into context.

There is no doubt in my mind that the electrification of the north Wales line would bring enormous economic benefits to both Wales and Ireland. Consultants engaged by the county councils of Gwynedd, Clwyd and Cheshire have estimated the cost of electrification as about £50 million, of which £30 million could be made available by the EC. The Economic Community Transport Commissioner has indicated that this project would be given funds due to its strategic importance linking member states.

The fund that could benefit us, however, does not have sufficient cash and we cannot therefore make a decent application for funding. That cash shortage is due to the attitudes of our Government and the Government of the Netherlands, who are so negative. If we are really in the business of having a modern efficient railway system for the 21st century, which could replace the system designed in the 19th century, we must have public investment.

The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) was right when he said that we must invest public money in a decent railway system that will take us into the next century. He was also right when he said that public money is being invested in the railway systems of all other modern economies and that all our European counterparts are investing in the railways.

During an Adjournment debate on 3 May, the then Minister for Public Transport told me that the Government and British Rail were prepared to look again at the case for the electrification of the Holyhead to Crewe railway line, in the light of representations made by the Irish Government. Can the new Minister for Public Transport who is to respond to the debate tell the House how much work has been done on evaluating that case? Can he give both me and the people of north Wales some good news?

6.30 pm

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): It is appropriate for the House to debate the railway industry since we are witnessing, and are party to, a railway renaissance in Britain. The Opposition must be living in cloud cuckoo land if, as their motion implies, they do not recognise that British Rail provides a more efficient and better quality service than it provided under Labour. Customers, managers and employers most certainly do. There is renewed investment—the highest, in real terms, for 29 years, since the switch from steam to diesel—and renewed confidence in the railways.

I draw the attention of the House to three matters: first, finance and productivity; secondly, the potential, particularly for passenger services; thirdly, the long-term prospects. As for finance and productivity, the record shows that the Conservatives are the party of rail supporters. The facts show realism, not rhetoric. Since 1983, £3 billion has been spent on the railways; a further £3·7 billion is planned to be spent on the railways during the next three years. That means, in language that most hon. Members and their constituents can understand, that almost £24 million is being invested every week in the railways. That is great news for railway cities such as York, the headquarters of the eastern region and a major engineering centre—as is Crewe and Nantwich. That investment has reduced overcrowding, ensured stricter safety measures and led to the replacement of old rolling stock and signals.

Those who denigrate the Government ought to look at the facts. The Government have approved every industrial proposal put to them by British Rail. Sir Robert Reid said that British Rail could not cope with greater funds. Ten electrification schemes have been approved by the Government since 1983. I approve in particular of the east coast main line electrification, costing £460 million. It is the largest electrification scheme ever in this country.

Those who travel on InterCity services are pleased with their punctuality, the faster trains and the greater consistency. The provincial services have also benefited from the greater investment. About £340 million is to be invested in provincial services during the next few years, leading to the replacement of older vehicles by higher quality, air-conditioned stock. In the last three years, about 64 stations have been opened, or reopened, and no fewer than 235 stations have been modernised.

How does that compare with Labour's plans? We should like to know what alternatives Labour would offer. So far, we have not heard one word about its alternative investment plans. I hope that the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) will enlighten us. Artificial subsidies are no alternative; they lead to inefficiency and red tape.

As for the potential of passenger services, a journey does not consist simply of the movement of someone from A to B. The journey starts with the facilities provided at the car park adjacent to the station. At too many stations there is inadequate car parking. Many more car park sites could be decked. There should also be facilities—already tried successfully in Essex—to clean and service vehicles while rail users are away. That is a lost opportunity.

There is little to attract anyone to railway stations. To compare the city of York with the city of Utrecht, there are 250 offices, shops and restaurants around the rail complex in Utrecht. Banking facilities at railway stations in the United Kingdom are almost non-existent. There is only one railway station where one can cash a cheque. Accommodation services for visitors at railway stations are sadly lacking. Furthermore, the British Rail ticket—I have one in my hand, a ticket to York—does not encourage further rail use. No discount is provided for

[Mr. Conal Gregory]

frequent travel. It does not provide a link with other services, such as hire cars, restaurants and theatres, that would provide greater customer satisfaction.

I praise the work that British Rail is doing to help the disabled, and its excellent staff at York. Unfortunately, British Rail does not provide good information for its customers if trains are delayed. No answerphone service is provided. The general manager of eastern region suggests that people should telephone the main headquarters switchboard and ask for the assistant station manager. If available, he will deal with the matter. That is not the way to deal with delays. If we are to move on from the pre-first world war era on the railways, we must provide a better service than that.

Many hon. Members will remember the court case about the catering facilities on British Rail. Senior staff overheard customers praising the sandwiches; they said that they found their ingredients delicious. When the senior staff made inquiries, they found that the staff had been putting extra ingredients into sandwiches. Instead of praising their staff and giving them a stake in the greater profitability, British Rail took them to court and they were dismissed. That is the negative side of British Rail.

Denationalisation must be the way forward. The overbearing trade unions are in hock to the work force, who do not have a stake in British Rail. However, services at Sealink and British Rail Engineering Ltd. have improved since they were denationalised. Would the Opposition take Sealink and BREL back into state control and deny the stake that the staff enjoy in those compánies? Would they deny a share in the railways to employees at Crewe and Nantwich, York and London? If not, they must believe that the Conservative party's policy is right, and that they, too ought to give railway employees a stake in the prosperity and future of the industry.

6.36 pm

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): Any resemblance between the reality of the present railway system and that outlined by the hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory) is wholly coincidental. The hon. Gentleman will need only a single railway ticket to York when it comes to the next general election. He referred earlier to my membership of the National Union of Railwaymen. I am proud to be a member of that union, as was my father. I make no apology either to the hon. Gentleman or to the House for being a member of that union. It is better to be a member of the NUR and to know something about the railway industry than to read out a brief prepared by the Department of Transport.

Mr. Gregory: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) to allege that I read a brief prepared by the Department of Transport? I have never had such a brief. I ask the hon. Gentleman to withdraw a most dishonourable comment.

Mr. Snape: That was not a point of order. If the hon. Gentleman did not receive his brief from the Department of Transport, he ought to send it back whence it came. It was not accurate. The Opposition did not initiate a debate on the railways to be told about the contents of cheese and tomato rolls at York station or elsewhere. That was the pathetic and banal level that the hon. Gentleman, as usual, reached.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the customers. In the few minutes that he has left me, I intend to refer to customers and their dissatisfaction with the railway system. Many of them have expressed dissatisfaction with it. What they say bears no resemblance to the glossy picture that was painted, inadequately as usual, by the Secretary of State for Transport.

As for the proposals by British Rail management to reduce the Speedlink network—the freight side of British Rail—I draw attention to a letter from the Potter group that discusses the issue. It is addressed to the Secretary of State and is dated 5 June 1990. The Potter group points out that it has a private siding at Selby, that it has a considerable interest in rail freight traffic, which is growing, and that it amounts to approximately 40,000 tonnes a year. The group estimates that more than 2,000 lorryloads will be required to replace that traffic if Speedlink facilities are withdrawn at that site.

The letter also refers to traffic that it forwards from Ely in East Anglia—about 40,000 tonnes—which means another 2,000 lorry loads, yet some of the worst roads in the United Kingdom are in that part of the country. It asks what the right hon. Gentleman will do about that. It concludes that these matters—the rundown of rail freight, especially as that would affect those who had taken advantage of section 8 grants and invested a considerable amount of company and shareholders' money in providing those facilities—are questions for politicians.

The closing line of the letter states:

"This is a question for the politicians. Step forward and be counted, Mr. Parkinson."

Step forward and listen, is my advice to the right hon. Gentleman.

The other customers, both of rail freight and rail passenger services, have also expressed considerable dissatisfaction with the level of service provided and with their quality and their concern about their rundown. *[Interruption.]* Obviously, the Secretary of State was not talking to me, because I would not allow him to talk to me in the manner that he has just used. If he will control himself for a moment—I know that it is difficult for him—and listen to reality about British Rail and the difficulties that many of its customers are facing—thanks, in part, to Government policy for which he is at least temporarily responsible—the House will be grateful.

The hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell) is always worth listening to on these matters, if only because for a considerable period he was a Minister of State, Department of Transport. If I may say so without damaging what is left of his career, he was a rather distinguished and hard-working Minister. He referred to section 8 grants and the need for their extension. I remind him that it is two years since the Department promised to review the operation of those grants.

As he told the House, the present difficulty is that the grants are given to rail users if the freight being carried relieves environmentally sensitive roads—I think that that is the phrase—of some lorry freight. The difficulty is, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman will agree, that road improvements themselves remove inadequate and environmentally sensitive roads, which in turn is a disincentive to freight being carried by rail, and certainly prevents any additional freight from being carried by rail.

I hope that the Secretary of State will reconsider section 8 grants and the possibility of transferring freight from road to rail through the grant mechanism, no matter which roads the vehicles use. That would be of genuine environmental benefit, even when lorries use motorways and trunk roads—*[Interruption.]* I am grateful for what appears to be the Minister's assent. I hope that the position can be improved, because rail freight customers are unhappy with the standard of service provided, and especially with the latest decision on the withdrawal of Speedlink facilities.

It is estimated that such a withdrawal would lead to about a quarter of a million extra heavy goods vehicle movements being generated. I am not sure whether the right hon. Gentleman or his fellow Ministers actually want that, but that would be the result of the reduction that is forecast. I hope that when the Minister of State replies to the debate he will tell us what he intends to do about it.

There is something else that the Minister can do that will not actually cost the Government any money. There is widespread dissatisfaction among British Rail's major customers about the quality of management and about the difficulty of getting British Rail to sing a consistent tune on the future of rail freight. I think that the Minister will agree that it is no great incentive, to say the least, to anyone to transfer freight from road to rail if, at the same time, that transfer is being done against a backdrop of the rundown of the existing inadequate rail facilities. The rail freight users have actually formed a group—the Rail Freight Users' Group—which is very critical of British Rail management and what it regards as British Rail's lack of both flair and marketing. It speaks of the poor calibre of British Rail management. It says in a letter, a copy of which I have in front of me:

"meetings with BR to discuss requirements are rarely with the correct people and there is little sign of a commercial or professional attitude among BR management."

I hope that the Minister of State will carefully consider criticism like that to determine what can be done to improve that service, again largely without cost to Treasury funds.

Earlier, the Secretary of State made great play of the Government's attitude towards railways. Once again, we heard the hollow phrase that this country is in the vanguard of European rail policies.

Mr. Prescott: He is the only one that thinks it.

Mr. Snape: Yes, and it is no wonder the right hon. Gentleman closed his speech with the epic phrase that he was staying at home on the job. It is obvious that he has not been very far afield in western Europe, if that is what he believes about the European railway system.

I have another request for the right hon. Gentleman and his Ministers. They will be aware of the recommendation in the European Community document 4478/90 on railway policy, which said:

"The amending Directive on combined transport carries financial implications in relation to the reduction or reimbursement of vehicle excise tax for vehicles engaged in combined transport systems".

The EC believes in that, but it is not accepted by the Government. Indeed, the Minister of State, in a reply to the hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry), said on 12 June:

"the Commission has made certain recommendations about reduction or reimbursement of vehicle taxes. We do not accept those, and in any case, that is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer and not for Transport Ministers."—[*Official Report*, 12 June 1990; Vol. 174, c. 237.]

I hope that the Minister will accept that that is scarcely a clarion call to those private sector companies in the United Kingdom that are developing vehicles that will genuinely assist the transfer of freight from road to rail. I hope that he will reconsider that aspect of Government policy.

Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham) *rose*——

Mr. Snape: I am sorry, but I cannot give way, as it would take away the Minister's time.

The Government claim that they can be justly proud of the railway system. I refer them to the latest news release from the Central Transport Users' Consultative Committee, the chairman of which is Major-General Lennox Napier, CB, OBE, MC, DL. He does not strike me as a member of the average constituency Labour party——

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it permissible for an Opposition spokesman to degrade someone who has earned the Military Cross?

Mr. Moate: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am seeking your guidance on whether it is possible to extend the period of the debate to allow the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) to answer the questions that he said he would answer about the costs of Labour policies and where the money is coming from?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It would be better if we got on with the debate.

Mr. Snape: The parliamentary exploits of the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) are legendary. I was not aware that I was attacking Major-General Lennox Napier by saying that he was not a traditional Labour party member. I hope the hon. Gentleman will forgive me when I say how grateful I am that he is not a member of the Labour party.

In reply to the hon. Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate), we have already made it plain that the expenditure that we want for the railways has long been regarded as essential throughout Europe. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) shares our belief. Economies that have not had the benefit of £90 billion of North sea oil have managed to finance their railway systems more than adequately. If the Government are incapable of doing so, the time is long past when they should have moved over to allow another Government to take over who are prepared to spend money on our transport needs.

Earlier this year, in reply to a question from the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel), the former leader of the Liberal party, about an integrated transport policy, the Secretary of State said:

"The only countries in Europe with a fully integrated transport system that we have located are East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Russia. Their electors do not seem terribly impressed with their integrated transport systems or with the people who tried to develop them."—[*Official Report*, 12 February 1990; Vol. 167, c. 12.]

With a Secretary of State who gives such infantile replies, no wonder our transport infrastructure is on its knees.

6.51 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) suggested that the Government should take a long-term view when planning the transport infrastructure and he is right.

When planning rail, underground and light-railway schemes one must take a long-term view. If one takes a three-year public expenditure survey view in terms of announcements, that is not inconsistent with the essential long-term view. My right hon. Friend is well aware that, once the Jubilee line is open—it will take several years to complete—it will make sense to continue with further underground schemes as envisaged by the central London rail study.

In "Roads for Prosperity", published by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic, the Department deliberately took a long-term view about the construction of roads. Similarly, public expenditure of £1 billion on docklands demonstrates a long-term view. The Government share the desire of my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup to take such a view when considering transport policy.

My right hon. Friend also asked several questions about the channel tunnel and specifically about the rail link. Section 56 is certainly not ruled out when appraising a new rail link as that section takes into account the benefits to commuters on the lines in Kent, those affected at the airports, as well as commuters at the other London termini. For those affected by a new line insulation grants will be paid.

My right hon. Friend also mentioned noise on existing lines; my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has said that he will look at the available provisions. We are reviewing our schemes for purchase compensation on the new line. My hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn), in common with my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup, mentioned the review by British Rail and said that there should not be any further delay. British Rail will take between six and nine months to conduct its review which takes us to next Easter. I assure my right hon. and hon. Friends that the review will be timely.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell) is a distinguished former Transport Minister and he asked four questions with which I shall deal briefly. He asked whether British Rail can achieve its quality targets with a declining public service obligation grant. The answer is yes. I am aware of the stresses and strains of this year with the reduction in off-peak demand on Network SouthEast, but British Rail is able to meet its twin objectives. My hon. Friend also asked about the Exeter to Waterloo line and appraisal techniques. Tomorrow morning my right hon. Friend and I will meet the chairman of British Rail at 8.15 and I shall raise those points with him.

The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) asked about section 8. Hon. Members will be aware that section 8 is a grant paid by the Government on behalf of the taxpayer to encourage the private sector to put more freight on the rail and off the roads. We are reviewing the operation of that grant because the Freight Transport Association wants to widen the criteria for payment of the grant—it wants to include motorway congestion as a criterion. Within the next few weeks I shall be receiving advice and I shall certainly consult that association.

The hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) asked about the Crewe to Holyhead railway line. More information is needed from the county councils about the prospects for electrification, but British Rail has not shut its mind to the prospect, and nor have Ministers. In the meantime, while we are awaiting further information, the hon. Gentleman will be aware that new rolling stock is planned for that line.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) asked me to read the Labour party transport manifesto. I have read it and it is certainly well written. I take it seriously, but I do not believe that it is right. In the remaining time, I shall deal with the six sources of finance that the hon. Gentleman suggested for the grandiose plans for public investment. The policy document calls for a "substantial and sustained increase in investment in . . . infrastructure."
It also spoke of a gradual increase in subsidy funding by the taxpayer, for public transport. Doubtless the call for between £10 billion and £15 billion investment for the new high-speed rail link from Folkestone to Scotland would be included in that. It is important to consider what that investment would cost in the next three years.

The Government's estimate of British Rail's expenditure in the next three years, together with all the rail scheme investment, comes to about £6 billion. The funds required to meet the Labour party promise are another £6 billion. The hon. Gentleman also wants to increase public funding by doubling the public sector rail grant —that would add another £1 billion to the sum. That means that the hon. Gentleman estimates that he needs £7 billion in funds in the next three years. How will that be paid for?

The hon. Gentleman suggests six possibilities. First, he suggested that the road programme should be cut, but that road programme, as set out in "Roads for Prosperity" is essential for the construction of local bypasses. No new motorways are envisaged—the document outlines a bypass programme and the widening of existing motorways. The hon. Gentleman's suggestion will not work.

The second suggestion from the hon. Gentleman is to increase public expenditure, but he has not checked with his colleagues the shadow Chancellor, the shadow Chief Secretary or the leader of the Labour party to see whether there is any more money available in their programmes. The hon. Gentleman's third suggestion is to pinch the rest of the car tax proceeds—at present about 25 per cent. of that tax is devoted to the road building programme. He should check with the shadow Chancellor and the shadow Chief Secretary, as they will not permit that.

Fourthly, the hon. Gentleman argues that the European infrastructure fund will provide massive sources of finance. He believes that Britain could become a net beneficiary from a new fund. My right hon. Friend has already said that the fund is only £40 million. per annum. There is not the money and we should not be able to convince the French and Germans to allow us to be substantial net beneficiaries.

Fifthly, the hon. Gentleman talks about British Rail borrowing privately. A Labour Government made sure that private borrowing by nationalised industry was included as a public sector liability.

Sixthly, the hon. Gentleman talks about the private sector. There is plenty of room for private sector joint ventures. We welcome that and we have some excellent examples of it—the Dartford bridge, the second Severn bridge, the Heathrow-Paddington link, the docklands light railway, the Jubilee line and the Manchester metrolink. We believe in private sector finance. The hon. Gentleman will not find it a panacea. Our policies are prudent. The policies of Opposition Members are reckless. I invite the House to support the Government.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 203, Noes 262.

Division No. 264] **[6.59 pm**

AYES

Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carr, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ken Eastham and
Mr. Allen Adams.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Cran, James
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet

Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Price, Sir David
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Nicholas Baker and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House congratulates the Government for pursuing a balanced transport policy involving record investment by the public and private sector in every aspect of the nation's transport systems; recognises that this is the only way to give the customer more choice and a better quality of service; applauds the Government for the high priority it gives to all matters of safety; welcomes the contribution that the Channel Tunnel can make to improving links to the Continent of Europe and the £2 billion of investment in road and rail which will ensure the tunnel is fully serviced from the day it opens in 1993; commends the Government's support for the development of high speed trains which will be jointly owned by Britain, France and Belgium and which will operate in all three countries; commends British Rail for developing plans for high speed freight services from all parts of the United Kingdom to the tunnel; and calls on the Opposition to cease its policy of denigrating Britain.

Aid and the Environment

7.14 pm

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): I beg to move,

That this House condemns the Government for its lack of commitment to solving the environmental problems of developing countries; deplores the totally inadequate level of British aid, which has fallen to 0·31 per cent of gross national product, less than half the United Nation's target of 0·7 per cent. to which Britain remains officially committed; and believes that, as a result, this Government is unable to make an adequate contribution to tackling the immense environmental problems facing developing countries.

"The environment is, without question, central to all our aid programmes in the 1990s . . . And of course, there are global environmental problems. We are all now familiar with the threats to the planet of global warming, holes in the ozone layer and the loss of bio-diversity."

Those are not my words, but those of the Minister for Overseas Development, in what I shall call from now on her "green glossy". Given the Minister's enthusiasm for the subject, I am disappointed that the Opposition, not the Government, have initiated the debate. I accept, however, as the Minister rightly said last week, that she has been in the job only since July. Others in that position had the opportunity to initiate such a debate before now.

It is quite appalling that, since the publication of the Brundtland report, which looked at the critical environmental and development problems of the planet in 1987, there has not been one debate in the House, so far as I can discover, on sustainable development or the international environment. The eminent economist Barbara Ward wrote:

"The door of the future is opening onto a crisis more sudden, more global, more inescapable, more bewildering than any ever encountered by the human species. And one which will take decisive shape within the life span of children who are already born."

She wrote that in 1971. How much more urgent is that warning now.

In industrial countries, we have made much progress in cleaning up the air in our cities and some progress in cleaning up our seas and rivers. We have replanted large parts of our land with trees, cleared much industrial dereliction and controlled our population growth. In turn, we have been faced with new problems which require world-wide solutions.

As well as the basic problems associated with poverty and agricultural society, developing countries also have to cope with pollution of air and water caused by industrialisation. Now, their aid donors, creditors and trading partners are telling them that they must deal with the gobal environmental problems that our advanced industrialised societies have created.

We have heard much from the Overseas Development Administration about projects for the rain forest, bio-diversity and global warming. But millions of poor people overseas worry about more mundane everyday problems such as the lack of clean drinking water for 1·3 billion people and the lack of sanitation for 1·7 billion people, which is responsible for 25,000 deaths every day and 80 per cent. of world disease. That is the environmental crisis that they face today.

Deforestation in arid, not tropical, areas has been a major problem for years. Women in Africa spend hours every day hunting for fuel wood. Some 2 billion to 3 billion people face the exhaustion of fuel wood stocks, but only when deforestation became a problem for the atmosphere and not just for the poor did the world sit up and take note. When the environmental problems are those of the poor, not ours, the Government and the ODA seem much less concerned to be green.

I wish to talk about the looming global environmental crisis, but first I want to know what the ODA is doing about the local and national environmental problems faced by developing countries. The poor are the first to suffer when their environment is degraded. They depend on the land, water, forests and crops for their survival. For too many years, policy makers and development planners —those who have control over natural resources and money for investment in conservation—have ignored the environment. In many cases, the effects of that are irreversible and the long-term costs are astronomical.

In Ethiopia, forests which covered 25 per cent. of the country in 1940 have all but disappeared. Now, only 3 per cent. of the land is forested. As a result, the best soil for farming, up in the highlands, has been eroded. Rough calculations estimate that that loss of soil and plant nutrients has reduced Ethiopia's agricultural output by at least 1 million tonnes of food each year. That is equivalent to two thirds of all relief food shipped to Ethiopia in 1985.

As trees disappear, so do sources of firewood, and instead of using cattle dung to fertilise the soil, farmers use it as a fuel for cooking. The loss of soil fertiliser has further reduced the amount of crops grown by $600 million each year. Early prevention would have paid for itself many times over. To replant trees to stop soil erosion would have cost just $50 million per year if it had been done in time.

We have not given a penny of development aid to Ethiopia. Instead, in 1985 the world spent about $500 million on food for famine relief. As the Minister must know, caring about preserving the environment involves short-term costs but long-term savings. The question is not whether we can afford to do it immediately, but whether we can afford not to do it immediately.

Where is the money to come from? There is no sign of any additional Government money to invest in the environment. All the ODA's much trumpeted green projects are being paid for out of a stagnant and pitifully low aid budget. In promising to put more into green projects, is the Minister suggesting that we should transfer funds from immunisation programmes in Africa to forestry in Latin America? That is no way to respond to the enormous environmental challenge. By refusing to commit additional funds to international environment protection, the Government are refusing to invest in future generations.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): How can the hon. Lady say that the British aid programme is stagnant when the increase year on year was 17 per cent. in cash terms, which is obviously an increase in real terms as well?

Mrs. Clwyd: I think that I have encountered the hon. Gentleman on a previous similar occasion. I shall continue to illustrate my point and answer his question.

Last November at the United Nations the Prime Minister called for a vast international co-operative effort to save the global environment. The Prime Minister has presided over historic cuts in British aid and has seen Britain sink from the second largest to the second smallest Group of Seven aid donor. She is responsible for the current miserable level of aid—just 0·31 per cent. of GNP,

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which is less than half the United Nations target of 0·7 per cent. of GNP. How can she have the brass neck to talk of a vast international co-operative effort?

The aid budget is increasing in nominal terms, but in real terms the increase is tiny. According to the Government's own optimistic forecasts of underlying inflation, even excluding the inflationary effect of the poll tax as published in the Budget report, the increase between this financial year and next is just 1·1 per cent. in real terms. Between 1991 and 1992 and between 1992 and 1993 it will be just 0·6 per cent. A 1·7 per cent. increase between now and 1993 is scarcely progress towards meeting our international commitments.

Just a few weeks ago, the Government signed the ministerial declaration which resulted from the Bergen conference. That declaration called on donors, in addition to present development assistance, to support programmes to increase the flow of capital and environmentally sound technology to developing and east European countries. When do the Government plan to fulfil that pledge? Funds have been cut from the ODA's scientific section which has the experts to deal with environmental issues. Staffing levels at the National Resources Institute have been cut from 561 in 1979 to 311 in 1989 and its funding has been slashed from £11·4 million to £5·7 million in 1989.

Is the aid programme really green? We have heard much from the ODA about the greening of the aid programme and read about many fine examples in the green glossy brochure. It says that the ODA is extremely wary about financing projects which would cause irreversible environmental damage. It says that all projects are screened for social and environmental costs and that there is careful planning, design and attention to detail so as to minimise adverse environmental effects.

Let us look at the reality, at what others say about our aid. The National Audit Office examined British aid to India. Its report, which was published in January, flatly contradicts the claims in the green glossy brochure. Since 1980, 10 per cent. of Britain's entire bilateral aid has gone to India. Only one tenth of that was targeted at the poor, and less than that went to renewable natural resources. Of the so-called aid, 83 per cent. went into power, telecommunications, energy and mining. United Kingdom Government subsidies disguised as aid went to United Kingdom firms which then proceeded to devastate parts of India.

The report severely criticised the £120 million of aid that was given to build the Rihand power station and the £30 million given to fuel the Amlorhi opencast coal mine. The Rihand cluster of 15 power stations will be the largest concentration of power stations in the world. The £120 million was the largest aid grant that the ODA has ever made, yet it did not commission an environmental impact assessment. It did not know the specifications for the power station or its intended location.

The result has been an environmental disaster. Some 10,000 tonnes of ash slurry containing toxic trace elements and potentially cancer-causing compounds have seeped into the local reservoir where fish have already been killed by thermal pollution. It is feared that air pollution will rise to 10 to 40 times the Government standards. Acid rain is already falling in the industrial belts of India. The Amlorhi coal mine has led to violence with displaced villagers, and land and forest reclamation requirements have simply been ignored.

How could those things happen in the face of the ODA's environmental concerns? The National Audit Office found that the ODA was under immense pressure from the Department of Trade and Industry rapidly to complete its appraisal. It appears that the Department of Trade and Industry organised the bids first. The National Audit Office report states:

"In January 1981 the Department asked the administration to provide an aid pledge to support their proposals. The aid was used to buy the contract. The project arose apparently under the personal initiative of the Prime Minister, reportedly without competition."

Northern Engineering Industries were invited by the DTI to submit proposals which, the *Financial Times* reported, would almost certainly not have been accepted by India without the subsidy. Research shows that in 1981 NEI made the largest recorded donation of £40,000 to a Conservative party funding organisation, the Northern Industrialists Protection Association. In 1980 NEI gave £12,500 and in each of the years between 1982 and 1989 it gave £45,000. It is estimated that Rikhand was worth £300 million to NEI.

That is just one of the many examples of the abuse of British aid to subsidise British firms that are perceived to be friendly to the Conservative party. GEC provided turbines for Rikhand and it gave £50,000 to the Conservative party in 1980 and again in 1988. Another Conservative favourite, Babcocks, supplied the grinding mills. It gave a Tory front organisation, the City and Industrial Liaison Council, £7,500 between 1982 and 1985 and £10,000 in 1986. Other examples of the environmental damage caused by the inappropriate use of British aid are well documented in the NAO report.

Under the Government the aid-trade provision has been so discredited that the only solution is to scrap it. Instead of being the solution that it was intended to be, it has become part of the problem that the poor of the developing world have to pay for daily.

There is certainly great scope for energy efficiency in developing countries, but with the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley) holding the purse strings and a few British companies calling the tune, it is nonsensical to expect a genuine switch from energy generation projects to energy conservation. Saving energy by efficiency is simply not in the interests of GEC or NEI.

The most disgraceful omission for an agency concerned with development is to ignore the devastating effect of poverty. As the report of the Brundtland commission says:

"poverty is a major cause and effect of global environmental problems. It is therefore futile to attempt to deal with environmental problems without a broader perspective that encompasses the factors underlying world poverty and international inequality."

The Government are doing exactly what the Brundtland commission said was futile.

It should be self-evident that the poor cannot concern themselves with environmental destruction when their day-to-day survival is at stake. They do not have sufficient land to let it lie fallow. They have no choice but to continue using it until it is exhausted. If cutting down trees brings immediate and desperately needed cash, or if they need wood today for cooking the family food, thinking about preserving trees for their children and their children's children has to be low indeed in their list of priorities.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): I am following carefully what the hon. Lady says, but will she concentrate a little on the relationship between cutting down trees to provide fuel for cooking and the provision of an alternative such as cheap electric power?

Mrs. Clwyd: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I shall be coming to those points. Anyone who has been to Ethiopia and seen the problems that face people there in trying to find fuel for their fires will know how vital is the United Nations' development programme in trying to encourage people to use stoves which save fuel instead of using the present massive amounts.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): Will the hon. Lady give way on that point?

Mrs. Clwyd: No. This is a short debate and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to speak later.

As Minister of Overseas Development, the right hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Patten) recognised the importance of poverty when, in 1988, he said:

"Poverty is the most toxic effect on the environment."

Yet current ODA policy does not seem to recognise the environmental problems caused by poverty. On page 8 of the green glossy, the ODA lists the number of causes of environmental degradation. It does not mention poverty. Far from reaching the poor, the Government have used aid to back up IMF and World bank structural adjustment, which in many cases has made the lot of the poor worse. Too much of our aid promotes the interests of a few British companies, not the world's poor.

Given the chance, local people will care for their environment, but they need the rich to give them that chance. If they know that they can feed themselves without over-cropping, over-grazing, or over-chopping the trees, and if they know that they will benefit from environmental investments, they will, but they need that assurance. If they know that their children will survive into adulthood and will be able to support the family, they may well have fewer children, but until they can be sure, there is little chance of reducing population growth.

In many cases, it is the women who have responsibility for the trees, the crops and the water. Donors must ensure that women have sufficient power and economic security to protect those resources, but so often development planners have taken traditional land rights away from women in attempts to legalise and clarify the rights of men or of the state.

Local people may also need training in how best to manage their resources, but male experts rarely reach women. Can the Minister explain why not one of the ODA's agriculture specialists working overseas is a woman?

Mr. Steen: The key to the argument which the hon. Lady has not yet mentioned, but perhaps will, is family planning. The Government have done a great deal to try to reduce world population. Many of the international agencies have also done a great deal, and the Government have supported them in a big way. The hon. Lady has been speaking for 20 minutes but she has not mentioned family planning. Surely that is the key to the world problem.

Mrs. Clwyd: The hon. Gentleman was so busy trying to intervene that he did not hear me talk about population. Unfortunately, I do not have time to deal with it in detail, except to make the point again that one of the keys to family planning is tackling the root causes of poverty. We shall never reduce world populations until we reduce the root causes of poverty. I did explain that.

The hon. Gentleman talks about financing that, and that is one of the challenges for us. Are we prepared to finance programmes that organisations such as the United Nations and others are attempting to promote in developing countries?

The ODA refers to participation, but what is it doing to review the effectiveness of existing procedures for involving local people and exploring new ideas? Has it considered not only expanding joint funding for more environmental projects, but directly supporting the work of southern NGOs through national consortia of voluntary groups in developing countries?

The Government are not only failing to address the local and national causes of environmental damage—they are also ignoring the international causes. Facing increased debt service obligations and falling commodity prices, developing countries have had no choice but to increase the pressure on their natural resources to earn more foreign exchange. As Brundtland points out, natural resources are not being used for development or to raise living standards, but to meet the financial requirements of industrialised creditors. Furthermore, the impoverishment caused by debt repayments has made environmental damage worse. Reductions in Government welfare, cuts in subsidies, increasing unemployment and inflation have pushed the poor to exploit forests and waterways to make ends meet.

In effect,. for many developing countries, financial debts today are being translated into the environmental debts of tomorrow. But while financial debts can be written off by political decision makers, environmental debts are our legacy for future generations and, in many cases, are irreversible. As the Prince of Wales recently said,

"We have to find a way of doing something about the burden of international debt. I do not see how developing countries can be expected to achieve sustainable development and at the same time meet huge debt repayments."

Will the Minister therefore acknowledge that the current debt management strategy is inadequate, that substantial debt reduction is a necessary precondition for the restoration of growth, that until the poorest countries stop paying the rich $52 billion per year more than they receive, the best economic reforms will not spur growth?

The Government's response to the debt crisis has been pitiful. They have done little to encourage commercial banks to reduce debts, even though they have all insured themselves against the worst losses. The Brady plan and the Toronto agreement are clearly inadequate to deal with the problems of the middle and low income debtors, but, sadly, the Government have lacked the vision and commitment to pursue new ideas.

If the Government are serious about pursuing sustainable development plans, will the Minister inform the House what initiatives the Government will take significantly to reduce third world debt? Will she also explain how she expects developing countries to preserve their resources when the trading system established by the north encourages the exploitation of natural resources? With the price of primary commodities down to historic lows, developing countries either have to sell more of them to earn the same amount, or they have to sell different

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processed goods. Protectionism in the north prevents them exporting goods to us, so the only option is to increase their exports of primary commodities.

The Government have opposed measures to ensure that developing countries receive a fair price for their commodity exports and have done nothing to reduce barriers against processed goods. The Bergen ministerial declaration, to which the British Government are signatories, calls on the European Community and others to examine the links between environmental and trade policies. How do the Government intend to do that?

The Government's failure to tackle the causes of environmental destruction is reflected in their inability to deal with the problems confronting tropical forests. In 1989, 14,200 sq km of tropical forest were destroyed. The Government's main contribution has been to support and channel aid through the framework of the tropical forest action plan—a fatally flawed mechanism which has increased the rate of deforestation in some countries. The Government have been among the key supporters of that scheme and have only recently recognised the need for its reform.

I wish that the Minister would stop claiming that she called for a review of the TFAP in November 1989, when she clearly said:

"We strongly support the tropical forestry action plan. We are already helping it in 20 countries."

If the aim is to help foresters, the TFAP is doing its job, but if it is environmentally sustainable development, a plan that denies people land rights and does nothing to tackle poverty must be deemed a disastrous failure.

The Minister may say that the OECD development council has just passed a resolution calling for reform of the TFAP, but it does not once mention alleviating poverty. Given the devastating criticisms of the plan not only by environmental groups but by the Food and Agriculture Organisation's own independent review, will the Minister impose an immediate moratorium on support for the TFAP until a complete overhaul of its principles and practices has been undertaken?

As on all other issues, the Government refuse to deal with the effects of international trade. Currently, only 0·2 per cent. of hardwood imports are, it is said, sustainable. When will the Government act to control that trade? Far from regulating the timber trade, the Government handed it more power by supporting the International Tropical Timber Organisation. How can a body representing timber producers and users with a mandate to expand and diversify the tropical timber trade also conserve forests?

Deforestation not only threatens millions of forest dwellers by releasing stores of carbon dioxide and destroying untold millions of world species—it threatens us all. The Government's failure to confront global and environmental problems—tropical forests, global warming, and the destruction of the ozone layer—is an utter disgrace. Yet the need for international co-operation has never been greater.

Negotiations on the ozone layer are under way in London under the wing of the United Nations environment programme and are designed to strengthen the three-year-old Montreal protocol, which controls chemicals which attack the ozone layer. Even if every country supported that protocol, the damage to the ozone layer will increase by as much as another 14 per cent. by 2050. The same chemicals are partially responsible also for global warming. Countries such as India and China have yet to support the protocol. China plans to double the use of CFCs over the next five years, mainly in providing its people with more fridges, unless—here comes the rub—rich companies provide aid to help China pay for substitute chemicals which can cost five times as much. That concept also has India's support.

Developing countries cannot and will not afford the expense of replacing CFCs but it is hoped that this week's conference will reach agreement on a special fund to help third world countries.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Clwyd: No. I am trying to conclude my remarks in this very important debate. I gave way on a number of occasions earlier. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be able to make his own speech.

What commitment will the Government make to help developing countries meet the cost of phasing out CFCs? Will the Minister give an assurance that any such provision will be additional to existing aid budgets? The example of global co-operation that I mentioned is, one hopes, the prelude to a much tougher fight later over how to combat global warming. What will be the Government's attitude to sharing the cost of controlling carbon emissions, which will be significantly higher than the $6 billion estimated as the cost of switching from CFCs? Will there be a firm commitment in the forthcoming White Paper to new and substantial funds for developing countries, to help them tackle global and environmental problems?

Of all the world's citizens, the poorest are set to lose most from global warming. The arid areas of the world, particularly Africa, will suffer most from temperature rises, while the low-lying islands and deltas of Bangladesh, Vietnam and Egypt would be devastated by a rise in sea level. Those countries have least resources to help them adapt to massive changes. The majority of the world's poor still depend on agriculture, and they will be hardest hit. The timing and quantity of rainfall is vitally important in their lives but is likely to become less dependable. Rice, which is the staple diet of 60 per cent. of the world's population, is particularly vulnerable to high temperatures, droughts and floods. Changes in weeds and pests will also present problems.

Farmers in developing countries do not have the resources to experiment or to adapt to global warming, yet there is no sign that international agricultural research is focusing on the staple crops that those countries grow. If production falls, the poor will be in no position to import the food that they need. That is particularly true of Africa, where food production per head fell by 15 per cent. between 1970 and 1985. Nor can those farmers move elsewhere or switch to different livelihoods.

What will the ODA do to help developing countries take precautionary measures? The top priority is to commission and publish a report on the effects of global warming on developing countries and on strategies for adapting to it. The ODA must ensure that international agricultural research focuses on adapting the staple crops of the third world to hotter and dryer climates.

The United Kingdom is dragging its feet in tackling the cause of global warming, which is carbon emissions. We

cannot lecture developing countries about changing their policies if we do not demonstrate a commitment to tackling our own policies. How can the leaders of developing countries persuade their people to forsake their hopes for electricity or cars because we say so when at the same time the United Kingdom is spending £13·3 billion on a new road building programme? Why is the ODA not speaking up about the enormous threat that global warming poses to developing countries, emphasising both to the British public and to decision makers in Whitehall the overwhelming importance of immediate preventive action?

If we do not make sacrifices today to prevent global warming, the global costs next century will be enormous. Keeping alive 68 million people displaced by rising seas in Bangladesh, Egypt, China and Vietnam will, even on the basis of their present miserly incomes, cost more than £14 billion every year. The United Kingdom's share of that, based on its share of gross national product, would be £840 million—half the value of the British aid programme.

Given that the number who will lose their agricultural livelihood as a consequence of a warmer climate rather than a rising sea will be even greater, the cost of coping with global warming could be staggering. The choice is clear: we can pay today, or pay more tomorrow.

Why does the ODA not stand up for the third world when sanctimonious westerners—the Prime Minister not excluded—try to pin the blame for global warming on wanton destruction, deforestation, and uncontrollable population growth in developing countries? It is true that of the 90 million people born this year, 85 million will be in the third world, but the remaining 5 million born into rich consumer societies will do as much ecological damage as the 85 million new poor.

The blame for today's damage lies squarely with the west. Nevertheless, developing countries play a crucial role because, as they strive to reach similar levels of affluence, they also risk reaching similar levels of pollution. The planet simply could not sustain that, so we have to step in to help them to develop differently. That will require funds and technology.

If developing countries are to grow without the environmental devastation that our own industrialisation has caused, we must enable them to jump over the technological hurdles, such as cleaning air and rivers, which took us decades to overcome. That means supplying the relevant technology, because they do not have it—for example, the technology to produce substitutes and to conserve and recycle existing CFCs. Modifying equipment will be almost entirely the monopoly of a few companies. If we leave it to the free market, multinationals will be able to exploit a small market overseas, but a major shift away from CFCs is needed.

What are the Government doing to examine the options for transferring technology to developing countries? Do they realise that refining our own cleaning technology is pointless unless developing countries change theirs? If China succeeds in providing fridges to every household by the end of the century, the CFC output will wipe out all the benefits of reductions under the Montreal protocol.

Clearly, the Government do not have the will to play a leading international role in protecting the world's environment. Last November, the Prime Minister's speech to the General Assembly of the United Nations was full of rhetoric about the United Kingdom's role in tackling global warming. The previous day, the Government had opposed proposals supported by a number of other Governments at the Netherlands conference to limit and reduce carbon dioxide emissions. The United Kingdom refused to participate in the Hague conference—the world's first environmental summit—organised by France, Norway and the Netherlands in March last year. At Bergen, the Government failed to flesh out their words with clear policies, and failed to demonstrate to developing countries a serious commitment to dealing with our own environmental problems.

The United Kingdom should have been at the forefront, pressing for reforms. Instead, it is seeking to water down European goals to meet the United States' objectives. So long as the Prime Minister continues to give the fig leaf of respectability to the delaying tactics of the United States—the world's largest polluter—significant international progress to control carbon emissions will be stalled. The Government say that the United Kingdom played a constructive role, which was recognised by the conference as a whole, but where is the evidence of that recognition? How could we have played a leading role when we sent a junior Minister to work with senior Ministers and former Prime Ministers?

When Britain and other industrialised countries were developing their economies in the 19th and early 20th centuries, circumstances were easier than they are for third world countries today. No one told us, or the other industrialised countries, that we should not chop down forests or pollute the air. There was no talk of the ozone layer or the greenhouse effect. No one worried that industrialising Britain might damage people elsewhere.

As James Robertson, in his book "Future wealth—a new economics for the 21st century", points out:

> "We should also remember that most of the industrialised countries drew capital for their own development from exploiting other countries, including the slave trade. This is a historical debt which remains to be repaid by the industrialised to the less developed countries."

As the cold war ends, the interdependence of all nations and peoples becomes even more apparent. We see the huge environmental problems facing eastern Europe and the absolute necessity for global action to meet the growing threats of world poverty and environmental degradation.

In "The Plague", Albert Camus suggests that in the face of what seems to be overwhelming, one must simply be guided by a sense that one does what one can. It is clear that the Government can do much more. With the end of the cold war there are surely resources which can be diverted from military spending—the peace dividend of £17 billion that the Minister of State for Defence Procurement, the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Clark) is said to have proposed so enthusiastically in a secret memorandum. Estimates show that it would cost £3 billion per year to stop the deserts spreading. The worldwide cost of converting to ozone-friendly substitutes would be £6 billion. What better investment could there be than saving not just ourselves but the world? The Government have the means, but do they have the will?

7.55 pm

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"notes the high quality of the Government's substantial and growing aid programme; commends the Government for its efforts to integrate environment concerns into all aspects of its assistance to developing countries to achieve sustainable

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development; and applauds its actions and proposals to help developing countries tackle both local and global environmental concerns."

Listening to the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) I begin to understand why some Australians refer to the British as whingeing Poms. If she were to be believed, we do little, too late and in the wrong way. Yet, the truth is the exact opposite. Government aid policy is to evaluate the need, identify how best to help and then to deliver what is appropriate.

The Opposition motion is a glowing example of what the Labour party is so good at: posturing. That is the last thing that the developing world wants or needs, if it and we are to tackle the degradation of our environment effectively. I do not doubt that that has to be done, but it has to be done with thought, care and with the co-operation of the recipient countries.

To talk of the Government's lack of commitment to solving the problems shows information blindness—or mix-up—which came through in the hon. Lady's speech and which was certainly unsurpassed by any of her prodecessors. The hon. Lady had only to read the recent booklet, "Environment and the British Aid Programme", to recognise the practical activity that is going on, which started so well under my predecessor. I noticed that she wished to be derisive about the booklet by calling it a "glossy green booklet".

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): I have read it.

Mrs. Chalker: I am very glad that the hon. Gentleman read further than the hon. Lady. Nevertheless, we believe that it is important to tell people what is going on. Although it may not be as extensive as the hon. Lady would like, it is certainly a great deal more than many other countries have been doing, it is more than this country was doing in years gone by, and it will increase.

That booklet is not the first on aid and the environment —it is the second. Through our careful and planned work we are beginning to tackle some of the enormous problems that we face. Whether it is in our thorough, careful approach to development aid, to ensure that full account is taken of environmental issues, or in the specific programmes of work in forestry and biodiversity, there is no lack of commitment on the part of the Government. Whether it is in our detailed economic appraisal of energy efficiency projects, or in the carefully targeted health and population planning projects, there is no lack of commitment. Wherever one looks at ODA's work among scientists, engineers, economists, doctors, agronomists, marine biologists, and every other group, there is commitment and concern with which I am proud to be associated.

The hon. Lady was whingeing that there were no ODA women in agriculture. That simply is not true. We have a woman specialist in Dakar, there are many women at the Natural Resources Institute in Chatham, we are working with Jill Shepherd of the Overseas Development Institute in our forestry projects in India and Kenya, and both our senior social development advisers—who are closely connected with agricultural development, in which women play such a major part in the third world—are women.

Mrs. Clwyd: Will the right hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Chalker: No, the hon. Lady spoke for more than 40 minutes and I wish to make progress.

The Government are totally committed to finding solutions to environmental problems, whether in the developed or in the developing world. Let us be in no doubt that the part of the Labour party's motion that refers to our policies is wrong.

At every opportunity, Labour Members call for more development aid. I do not believe for one moment that they would deliver it in practice. They would not deliver it because they could not afford it: they still have not learnt how to create the real prosperity at home with which to pay for it.

I understand that the hon. Member for Cynon Valley wants the Government to devote more resources to the aid programme. I understand her disappointment that we spent 0·31 per cent. of GNP on aid last year. Incidentally, the figure was 0·32 per cent. in 1988 and 0·28 per cent. in 1987; the figure is bound to vary because of the way in which aid money is spent. The point is, however, that since 1986, GNP has grown by 11 per cent. in real terms, which means that we are actually spending more. Of the countries that have the 0·7 per cent. target, only France among the 18 western donors has a larger aid programme than the United Kingdom. We remain committed to that 0·7 per cent. target, although I note that such a commitment is missing from the Labour party's most recent policy document. I wonder why.

Mrs. Clwyd: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. That information is not correct and it is right that we should——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I regret that that is not a point of order for me; it is a question for debate. The Minister may give way if she wishes to debate the matter but it cannot be the subject of a point of order.

Mrs. Chalker: May I say——

Mrs. Clwyd: Further to the point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Lady's point of order must not relate to the subject of her original point of order, which was a matter for debate.

Mrs. Clwyd: The Minister is possibly misleading the House——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Mrs. Chalker.

Mrs. Chalker: I went through the Labour party's latest policy document carefully and I could not find a reference to the figure, but if I am in error I shall gladly withdraw my remark. The proof of the pudding must be in the eating.

What matters to aid recipients is that our aid programme is substantial and growing and that it provides really high-quality aid. Time and again, the United Kingdom's record of quality aid delivery is rightly recognised in the OECD, the World bank and the European Commission. That is a tribute to the effective programme designed and carried out by my Department.

In her long speech, the hon. Lady failed seriously to examine the quality of aid for which the United Kingdom is so well recognised. I am surprised at that, because it means that she is not giving credit to those who deserve it

—those who work on the aid programme both at home and overseas, to whom I pay the most generous tribute that I can.

Mr. Foulkes: I know that the Minister would not want to mislead the House. She will know that our policy remains the same as that outlined in our first document, "For the Good of All". The recently published document is an additional document. On page 9 of "For the Good of All", we state:

"We will more that double the aid budget to reach the UN target of 0·7 per cent. of GNP within five years."

I hope that the right hon. Lady will accept that and apologise to my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd).

Mrs. Chalker: I accept that the commitment appeared in the document to which the hon. Gentleman referred, but that is not the latest document in which those responsible for the Labour party's economic policy have been involved. I said only that I had noticed that the figure was missing from the Labour party's latest document.

Every Development Minister wants to help more developing countries to overcome their poverty, to reform their economies and to create their own prosperity. It is clear, however, that the hon. Member for Cynon Valley will have to learn a great deal more about the application of aid, the recipient country's absorptive abilities and the co-ordination of programmes if she is to make sense of her claim that the British taxpayer should pay a further £2 billion a year towards the overseas aid programme to which the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) has just referred.

One does not solve the development problems of recipient countries by throwing money at their Governments. One helps to meet the needs of those nations by the careful targeting of appropriate aid, by helping them to make the best use of resources and by technical co-operation to implement the best modern systems for their benefit.

We have a very substantial aid programme. Last year we spent £1,500 million. We have budgeted for £1,750 million in 1992-93. Our plans for aid have provided for a 22 per cent. increase in cash terms over the three years to 1992-93—a real terms increase of 6 per cent. The planned budget for this year has already been increased from £1,587 million to £1,617 million.

Unlike Opposition Members, we know that one cannot solve the highly complex problems of development by throwing money at them. Aid quality and effectiveness are equally vital. That was the message of my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary in his speech to the all-party group on overseas development on 6 June. Unless we ensure that our aid is used effectively, we are wasting precious resources for the developing countries and squandering British taxpayers' money in the process. Such action is neither sensible nor defensible. That is why we concentrate on using our aid where it is most needed and why we have rigorous systems in place to ensure project effectiveness and value for money.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): The right hon. Lady will recollect that, at the Royal Geographical Society conference, she was asked by one of the delegates about the decision on the Fevord-Karnataka forestry project in India. I admit that the issue is delicately balanced, but has any policy decision yet been made on it?

Mrs. Chalker: As I think I said on that occasion, the matter is still under review and I think that the hon. Gentleman knows that I put it under review because of my concern for that very project.

The hon. Member for Cynon Valley made another charge, which was that we cannot make an adequate contribution to tackling the immense environmental problems of the developing countries. We could argue for a thousand years about what an adequate contribution might be, but we should not agree. Nevertheless, I am sure that the House will agree that the Government are helping th developing countries to face their immense environmental problems honestly, systematically and thoroughly.

Before I explain the details of our local and global commitments, I want to outline our philosophy of using aid to assist the environment of the developing—and thus the developed—world.

There is no doubt that environmental questions are the most important facing the world today. The process of industrialisation that began in Europe more than 200 years ago has left no part of the globe untouched. The rapid depletion of the world's natural resources has been the dominant means of economic growth this century. In the past 30 years we have learnt, as the Prime Minister put it, that

"Ours is a tenancy of this planet with a full repairing lease".

We were strengthened in that view by the sight on television of those first pictures of our world taken from space. We saw that the earth had a thin protective atmosphere and was very vulnerable; indeed, we now know that the ozone layer has holes in it.

People are the stewards of the earth and it is our responsibility to manage and run it for the benefit of all mankind—without ruining it. Our cardinal principle must be that human well-being depends upon ecological processes whose options decrease as they become less diverse.

Already, we have a most difficult task to manage and the daily increase in human population makes matters more difficult. In the richer countries, we are fortunate enough to have reasonable incomes, temperate climates and diverse economies. That makes it easier to be green. But in the poorer countries, poverty, burgeoning populations and environmental degradation are so interlinked that the goal of sustainable development is the goal that we are determined to achieve. Our guiding principles are the freedom of the individual in a framework of good government and the need to maintain ecological diversity. We aim to ensure that a sense of stewardship and positive environmental action are present in all our work in the British aid programme.

My Department recently produced a booklet entitled "Environment and the British Aid Programme", which covers more than I could or should cover tonight. Above all, it is a question of attitudes. Everyone working in the Overseas Development Administration must operate with high awareness of environmental matters. Our aid investments are subject to rigorous environment scrutiny and all project managers attend our environmental training course and use our environmental appraisal manual, which has been highly praised in many quarters. Every project is subject to environmental scrutiny. Our economists continue to work to refine cost-benefit analysis, building on the work of David Pearce—financed by the ODA—and others. That ensures that the taxpayer

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is given value for money, and we need to take account of the longer-term horizon demanded by environmental perspectives.

The green booklet is also concerned about human resources. I am extremely fortunate to lead a Department in which staff skills and commitments are of the highest order. We have 370 expert scientists at the Natural Resources Institute at Chatham and many more people working with them. Their work is devoted to a better scientific understanding of ecological processes in the poorer countries. Staff in the ODA have extensive and valuable links with environmental groups and many institutions in this country. The World Wide Fund for Nature, the International Institute for Environment and Development and the Royal Geographical Society are just three of the groups with which we are in almost daily contact.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the right hon. Lady's Department use its influence in regard to the present position in the natural history museum, where taxonomic and palaeontological research is of great relevance?

Mrs. Chalker: Indeed, and the hon. Gentleman is aware that I have taken up that point with my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts. The hon. Gentleman was kind enough to say that my right hon. Friend the Minister gave him a full reply to a late-night Adjournment debate last Wednesday, which he initiated. I assure the hon. Gentleman that all the points in that debate will continue to be followed up, because the good work done in that museum is valued by us all and we rely upon it.

With the bodies to which I referred and others, we continually update our knowledge and techniques. We take our knowledge wider than the ODA.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Will the right hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Chalker: I shall not give way any more, because, if I do, others will not have an opportunity to speak.

We are among the leaders in spreading the green message to other aid-giving institutions, especially the European Community and the World bank. The Commission is already using 100 copies——

Mr. Clarke: Will the Minister give way?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The Minister has made it quite clear that she will not give way any more.

Mrs. Chalker: The Commission is already using——

Mr. Clarke: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Would it be possible for you to draw to the attention of Ministers who refuse to give way the fact that hon. Members sit silently through their speeches, and to remind those Ministers that their speeches mean very little if hon. Members are not present to listen to them?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I hardly think that that is a point of order for the Chair. However, the hon. Gentleman has made his point.

Mrs. Chalker: I recall making that same point about 16 years ago, sitting in exactly the same seat as the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke).

I was saying that we are recognised for our environmental appraisal techniques. The Commission is already using more than 100 copies of our manual. The German Government and other Governments are using it as well. We cannot be as bad as the hon. Member for Cynon Valley made out.

I want now to consider the extra help that is needed to tackle global environmental problems in developing countries. I told the House in a written answer on 11 June that we plan to allocate additional resources to helping developing countries deal with sources of green house gas emissions.

Developing countries will need help if they are to implement measures agreed under the Montreal protocol. We are ready to provide funds as part of an internationally agreed financial mechanism. Such a mechanism is being discussed at the meeting of the Montreal protocol parties in London at the moment. We are hosting that meeting on behalf of the United Nations Environment Programme. Britain is the third largest contributor to UNEP and we work closely with its excellent executive director, Dr. Tolba. Our contribution will be part of a separate new item in the Government's expenditure plans and it will be separate from our aid budget for developing countries, which itself is planned to grow.

We cannot consider environmental problems with success unless we are prepared to tackle the rapid rise in population growth. Since 1950, world population has doubled. It is now 5·3 billion and it will increase by 1 billion during the 1990s. That is 250,000 more people a day, every day. During the next century, the world population will probably double and could even triple. Some 90 per cent. of the increase is in the developing world.

Our aim is to help Governments to formulate population policies and to implement programmes that include the provision of voluntary family planning information and services. Improving the health and education of women and reducing infant and child mortality are also crucial if smaller families are to be encouraged.

Rapid population growth exacerbates the environmental degradation. The linkages between population growth and the environment are complex. However, tackling population growth is an important aspect of our environmental policy. In 1989, the ODA spent more than £17 million on specific population-related activities. That compares with £6·5 million in 1981.

A major part of our assistance is channelled through the multilateral population programmes. We have increased our total contributions to the International Planned Parenthood Federation, the United Nations population fund and the WHO's human reproduction programme from £14·6 million in 1989 to £15·7 million this year.

This year ODA has supported bilateral population projects in nine areas of the world. In India, for example, we are funding a £20 million project for the strengthening of primary health care and family welfare services in five districts in Orissa. In Kenya, we are providing more than £4 million to six non-governmental organisations providing population education and broadening the provision of family planning services. We all now identify several countries in Africa and Asia in which our existing activities could be expanded and soon will identify new countries in which assistance may start. Wherever we help,

it must be in voluntary family planning services. However, we are encouraged by the responses to our approaches to countries that have never before undertaken such programmes.

The hon. Member for Cynon Valley spent a long time talking about poverty. She linked poverty, quite understandably, to many of the awful problems facing the third world. She is aware that one of the main objectives of our aid programme is to relieve poverty, which my predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Bath (Mr. Patten), said is the most toxic element in environmental pollution. We do that directly by aiming our aid at those most in need. In Ghana we help the poorest by participating in the programme of action to mitigate the social cost of adjustment. In India we spent almost £200 million between 1980 and 1988 in the key sectors of health, welfare, education, housing and renewable natural resources.

In 1988 our food aid and disaster relief were targeted at those in desperate need and totalled £40 million. That is all helping to relieve poverty. However, we also help to relieve poverty in the long term by promoting growth in developing countries.

The promotion of growth in developing countries seems to help most when we understand and work with the Governments of those countries to identify the best means of helping. In some countries the best way might be to create clean power for the people so that they can begin to be productive. In other countries and other regions we might have to concentrate on relieving the enormous health problems. Elsewhere we might be able to do most to relieve poverty by being thoroughly active in agriculture. I recommend to the hon. Member for Cynon Valley the research document entitled "A Strategy for Research on Renewable Natural Resources". I shall send the hon. Lady a copy although it has been in the Library for some time. That document explains what we are doing and it gives the lie to what the hon. Lady's imputations.

I believe that in all those ways we seek to help to relieve poverty. However, relieving poverty involves more than pushing money or having specific programmes. Countries must undertake economic reform and the countries that do that receive our fullest support, as has been absolutely clear in Africa in recent years.

We provide technical assistance and physical infrastructure. We direct our aid throughout our programmes to the poorest by concentrating on countries with low incomes. That is why in 1988 around 70 per cent. of our aid went to the poorest 50 countries and a further 8·5 per cent. to other low-income countries.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Although one does not doubt the efficiency of the work that is done by many officials in the Overseas Development Administration on individual projects, does the Minister agree that the greatest contribution that could be made to help the poor countries of sub-Saharan Africa would be a real increase in commodity prices, rather than the 20 per cent. drop over the past 15 years, and ceasing to support the IMF on its imposition of liberal economic models, which are helping to subsidise and prop up the banking systems of north America and western Europe?

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Gentleman cannot expect to get away with that. One of the things that has been quite clear to me since I came to this job, is the careful attention to workable economic policies that the IMF and the World bank give in regard to nations in Africa and elsewhere that need economic reform. We have been the largest contributor to the interest subsidy account, which helps those countries. We help to reschedule official debts through the Paris Club, and we give generous bilateral aid. We cancel overseas aid debts—£1 billion that is owed by 23 countries has being cancelled by this country. Of course, my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) laid the foundations for the Toronto terms that have helped many—the Brady plan has helped many others—and we shall go on helping those countries.

It is simply not right to pour more of British taxpayers' money into countries that will not learn the lesson that socialism does not work. Countries in eastern Europe have learnt and have come to us for help with their new institutional set-up. They have been showing the way. Countries that have bothered to find out how things work better are benefiting greatly, as can be seen in Ghana and in many other countries.

Deforestation is perhaps the gravest environmental threat facing the developing world. The latest reports suggest that 17 million hectares or more of tropical forest are currently being lost each year. That is one and a half times the size of England, and twice the rate of the late 1970s. We need forests to help maintain soil fertility, prevent erosion and protect watershed systems. Globally, our forests store vast quantities of carbon and house 90 per cent. of the planet's plant and animal species.

Tropical forests are concentrated in developing countries, and those countries will decide their fate. It is not for us to question the sovereign rights of developing countries to use their natural resources, but we can and we will help them to manage forests sustainably, for the benefit of the countries that house them and for the benefit of the wider community.

Britain has a record of which we can be proud. In 1988 my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said that we would do more under the aid programme to promote the wise and sustainable use of forest resources. Then we were financing 80 forestry projects at a cost of £45 million. Now we have almost 150 projects costing more than £60 million. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced last November that we would aim to commit a further £100 million over the next three years. We already have 60 projects in preparation. Those and more will be financed from the £100 million.

The hon. Lady likes to have a great deal of fun with the tropical forestry action plan. We all know that forestry is an international problem and challenge. That means that the solutions require a collaborative international effort. Whatever the hon. Lady may think, one country working alone would be simply no good. The main international mechanism for co-ordinating assistance to developing countries is the tropical forestry action plan. The TFAP has been heavily criticised, often with good reason. Whatever the hon. Lady may say, I called for its reform at the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation general conference last November, and it was good that, shortly after, an independent review was set up.

That review has just reported. The report contains several important conclusions and recommendations that we are studying carefully. The TFAP should not support the extension of logging without rigorous environmental

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safeguards, and that means making forests managed and sustainable for the future. We welcome that conclusion—it has always been our view that that should be done.

We have funded the attendance of Papua New Guinea and other countries at the TFAP. We have made sure that countries that wanted to respond had information. The PNG Government have now announced a moratorium on logging. In the Cameroon, under the TFAP, we funded an expert on medicinal plants. Without British involvement, there would be much more to complain about. The proposals for new guidelines from the TFAP and the suggestion that the NGOs should be consulted in drawing them up are very good. The review is a good basis for necessary reform, and that is why we are now involved in a detailed discussion of how to take forward its recommendations in preparation for the Food and Agriculture organisation committee on forestry in Rome in September. A copy of the review is in the Library.

The second critical forestry problem is the need to safeguard the planet's biological diversity. We do not know to within a factor of 10 how many plants and animal species our planet holds. What we do know is that they are disappearing at an alarming rate. Perhaps a third of the total could be lost in the next three or four decades.

In May I established a special action programme to expand ODA's work on conserving biological diversity. First, we need better information on the priorities for conservation. Britain's contribution of £0·25 million to the major study by the world conservation monitoring centre in Cambridge is to help prepare a global biodiversity status report. Secondly, we need to identify well-designed projects for funding. The Oxford Forestry Institute is preparing for us a strategy on ODA's role in conserving the biodiversity of forests. That will include a series of project outlines. We are commissioning similar studies on the marine environment, which is a much neglected but very important store of biological diversity, and on the so-called wildlands, such as the savannah of Africa, which often house wild relatives of food crops.

In all those matters we are out to make progress on the basis of science. Nowhere could that be more true than in the global warming issues that now concern us so drastically. We know that developing countries could suffer worst from the effects of global warming. In Africa, for example, climate change is likely to have a significant negative effect on agricultural production. Millions may be forced to move to survive in areas in which land is already scarce. Africa has probably contributed least to the problem of climate change. It therefore understandably looks to the international community to take the lead—but Africa, too, will need to play its part.

We are helping developing countries get to grips with the issue of climate change. That is why we are contributing to help developing countries join in the work of the intergovernmental panel on climate change.

We are also developing an energy efficiency initiative. In May this year I announced an offer of £50 million towards energy efficiency projects in India. It is right that we get the very best use of energy production there. Although I share some doubts about Rihand, I have already taken steps to ensure that energy in the third world is produced efficiently and as cleanly as possible and without degradation. We cannot change the past, but we can help to increase the efficiency of power stations and prevent devastation causing more disruption in those countries. That is why, in Pakistan, we are fitting waste heat recovery boilers for gas turbine stations, and doing similar things in Bangladesh. In Pakistan, we have already managed to achieve a recovery of heat of 137 per cent. of the original target. Therefore, we are putting our scientific knowledge to the best use for people who need to use power.

We are including in our work many other matters that I shall set out in a major speech in a few months. We have involved ourselves in the World bank energy sector. It now has a small commission to consider priorities. Our ODA permanent secretary is a member of that commission. We also have an assistance programme to deal with environmental concerns. It does not stop at energy efficiency; it also includes conservation. It will loom large in the commission's work. British expertise, which is well respected worldwide, is contributing to the full in all international environmental forums.

The hon. Member for Cynon Valley also referred to water. I agree that water and sanitation are both critical. Ten years ago only 40 per cent. of the world's population had access to a safe water supply, and only 25 per cent. had access to sanitation. That is why, under the aegis of the international drinking water supply and sanitation decade, we made a concerted effort. A safe water supply has been provided to an estimated 700 million new users during the decade. During the same period, sanitation facilities have been provided to 250 million people.

With the continuous global population increase, there is a pressing need to accelerate the impetus worldwide during the 1990s. That is why we are funding numerous water and sanitation projects in the developing countries. That is why, in 1988 alone, we had 86 on-going projects, at an overall cost to the aid programme of £184 million.

We have made steps to meet the environmental challenges, but we fully accept that much remains to be done. We shall say more about our plans in the environment White Paper later in the year. Britain's aid programme is as green as any that I know of in Europe, but I intend to keep it that way. I intend to build on the firm base that my right hon. Friend the Member for Bath built before me. There is no shortage of commitment in this Government to helping to solve the environmental problems of developing countries.

This Government will always use taxpayers' money for development aid soundly and effectively. It takes a Government with credibility to galvanise the efforts of the international community. I know from the reactions that I get overseas that Britain's contribution—and our Prime Minister's contribution—is recognised as crucial and effective, be it our efforts through the United Nations, through the London conferences on the ozone layer, or our pioneering tropical forestry initiative.

Therefore, I utterly reject the Opposition's carping and sort-sighted motion. I am certain that my right hon. and hon. Friends will support my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's amendment in the lobby tonight.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Before we proceed, I hope that hon. Members will bear in mind what I said earlier and respond to my appeal for short speeches. We have little more than an hour before the winding-up speeches.

8.32 pm

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): I am deeply grateful for being called, Madam Deputy Speaker. I wish to respond to only one aspect of the environmental issue, but I believe that it towers above the rest. I refer to population growth. The sheer importance of this issue cannot be overestimated. If we do not control population growth, all the other environmental problems will simply mount up. There will be environmental degradation.

Although most hon. Members know the statistics, I believe that they need repeating. It took us 100,000 years to reach a world population of 1 billion people; it took another 100 years to reach a population of 2 billion people; it took another 30 years to reach a population of 3 billion people; and now we are adding 1 billion to the world population every 10 years. That means that the present population of 5 billion will be 6 billion by the end of the century.

We must reach a replacement rate level of population as quickly as possible. If we do not do so urgently, the increase in population will be staggering. If we reach replacement level by 2015, the world's population will be 8 billion. There is no chance of our reaching that replacement level by 2015. If we take a mere 40 extra years and reach replacement level population by 2055, the world's population will be 13 billion people. The difference between those two populations is the existing population of the world.

We must tackle this problem aggressively. I defy anybody who has visited those parts of the world that have high rates of population growth to be unmoved by that experience. Hon. Members of all parties have visited Nepal and have seen that country being literally eaten by its population, as its people scramble for higher and higher and ever more inaccessible terraces on which to live. We have seen the forestry and the hillsides disappearing, yet only 15 per cent. of that land can be lived on. We have seen the most incredible problems unfolding before our eyes.

We must realise that today in India 70,000 babies have been born. The population of India has doubled since independence. Although the problem is enormous, it can be overcome. I was disturbed to hear the Minister refer to ensuring that such countries have an absorptive quality that enables them to accept more assistance. I remind her that there are 600,000 villages in India and that only 3,000 of them have a family planning service. I am sure that one or two thousand more villages have an absorptive quality that could enable them to take more assistance.

It is possible to be very critical of the Indian Government's lack of courage in not providing the lead on family planning, but it is also possible to be critical of ourselves, and especially of the Americans. One of the most disturbing things in recent years is that, as a result of the pressures exerted by the so-called pro-life lobby in the United States, since 1985 the United States Government have made no contribution to any family planning funds.

It is ironic that people who call themselves "pro-life" should, by their withdrawal of funds and their unwillingness to give aid to family planning services, have caused so much abortion. There is no doubt that it is the absence of good family planning that has led to most of the abortions that take place. It is ironic that people who call themselves "pro-life" should have helped make life so nasty, brutish and short for so many of the children who are born. We should make it clear that we can no longer tolerate that unwillingness to tackle the issue of family planning.

We must grasp the great importance of family planning and ensure that more of our aid is directed to that end. It was with some pleasure, therefore, that I heard the Minister of State say that our aid had been gradually steered in that direction. We must accept that such aid will always be steered towards voluntary family planning, because any other approach is simply counter-productive. However, we must accept that that aid must be long-term, because such family planning activities involve the most sensitive and delicate development work. Nevertheless, it is obvious that such work can be carried out. Those of us who have been there have seen how such work has yielded fruit in the back streets of Delhi. We have also seen the clean water supplies there. We are also aware of the work that has successfully controlled parasites in other parts of India. That work is both long-term and fulfilling.

I conclude by emphasising another area. We must be aggressive in ensuring that our aid helps the development of women in the developing world. That is the key to success. Literate women have control over their lives. I defy any hon. Member to name any country where literacy for women has led to their choosing to have large families. They do not choose to have large families when careers other than child bearing are available to them.

The Minister will be supported by many hon. Members if she fights for more generous aid to be given to population control. Without population control, there will be no future for our children and those born elsewhere. The ozone layer and deforestation fade into insignificance, compared with the importance of controlling population growth.

8.40 pm

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): I welcome the opportunity to discuss this most important subject, development aid and the environment, but how unfortunate it is that it has to be discussed on a party political bashing basis. The British aid programme of over £1·6 billion is no small beer. It is 17 per cent. up on last year and is heading for £1·75 billion in 1992. The debate should be about targeting and the value to be achieved from these vast resources. Not a word, however, is said about that matter in the Labour motion.

Even according to their own funding criteria, the Opposition disappoint. In the last two years of the last Labour Government, they chopped successive £50 million chunks off the aid budget—deep, in real terms, in the values of those days. Frank Judd, the Opposition's Front Bench spokesman on aid at that time, summed it up perfectly when he said that the cuts would have grave implications and that the Labour Government did not wish to minimise them. Did the Labour Government put up a fight? Joel Barnett, who was Chief Secretary to the Treasury in the Labour Government, noted that there was little argument within the Labour Cabinet when IMF strictures required those cuts. He admitted later in his book:

"on overseas aid there was little argument this time, and £50 million was scored for each year."

I shall confine my comments to the environmental implications of the destruction of the rain forests. I welcome the growing interest worldwide and in Britain, but also in the countries of the Amazon basin, in their

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responsibilities for their great heritage. Brazil, which contains by far the largest extent of the Amazonian rain forest, has made major progress of late.

Under the inspired leadership of the newly elected president, Fernando Collor de Mello, the Brazilian Government have taken some important steps. First, they have scrapped the fiscal incentives that led directly to the clearance of forests for ecologically disastrous grazing, which in turn led to soil erosion. Secondly, the pursuit of illegal gold prospecting—which does nothing for the economy of Brazil, as most of the gold is smuggled out of the country—brings misery to thousands of garimpeiros, the peasant miners, and has led to the virtual extinction of the Indian tribes in the area, notably the Yanomami. Thirdly, the Brazilians have scrapped the infamous B364 road to Peru for timber export, which the Japanese would have used to strip the forests of hardwood.

Fourthly—perhaps the most inspired of all the steps taken in Brazil—Professor Jose Lutzenberger has been appointed the President's Secretary for the Environment. Professor Lutzenberger has long been a campaigner against the environmental destruction tolerated by the previous military regimes in Brazil. He was perhaps the most radical eco-critic in the country. He has a clear understanding of the ecological dangers facing the globe and an appreciation of the possibilities in Brazil. He has the ear of the president. He could not have been appointed at a better time. There is a new, dynamic and environmentally sensitive president in Brazil, with the world awake to the ecological risks and ready to help. If I may be so bold, Britain is at the forefront of the international support that is now forthcoming.

A year ago my right hon. Friend the Member for Bath (Mr. Patten), when Minister for Overseas Development, concluded his now famous memorandum of understanding with Brazil. Up to then, foreign powers had lectured Brazil on the environment, thus inflaming nationalist feelings. What my right hon. Friend achieved was to offer partnership and a lead to Brazil's pride in its rain forests. His technical co-operation programme was to cover five areas: first, the urban environment, in particular sewage and water treatment; secondly, the sustainable management of the Amazon rain forest, where he hoped that we would be involved in establishing a new biological reserve in the Xingu river area; thirdly, collaborative research on the relationship between the forests and climate, involving the Institute of Hydrology; fourthly, research into the great potential of the genetic resources of the Amazon—and he hoped to begin soon a research project into aromatic plants, undertaken by the Goeldi museum in Belem; and, fifthly, training in both the United Kingdom and Brazil in matters related to those areas.

I am glad that approval has now been given for some of the projects, notably that of the Institute of Hydrology and its climate research projects in the states of Amazonas, Para and either in Rondonia or Acre in Brazil and for a study of the impact of deforestation on the climate. I hope that progress will be made on a number of other projects that have already been identified—notably that of the Tapajos forest management project in Para state to establish sustained forest management, production and a harvesting system; the forest research project with INPA in Brazil that would lead to research into the distribution and dynamics of the biomass and minerals in tropical forests; the Caxiuana biological reserve in Para state, which would bring about the establishment of a biological reserve there and the promotion of sustainable management of the forest; and a study of the ecology, natural regeneration and flora of the flooded forests near Belem on the Amazon. I could refer to other projects, such as the aromatic plant development project near Belem that carries out research and trials of plants species with potential for commercial development. In the time available, I cannot refer to the many other projects.

We should not forget that there are large tracts of Amazonia in Colombia, Venezuela and Peru. Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to see the Colombian Amazon region. The Government of President Barco of Colombia have shown the imagination to carry out a systematic programme of legal recognition of land rights for all the indigenous people of the Colombian Amazon. More than 12 million hectares have been safeguarded. It is considered the collective property of the Indians and it is inalienable. They are now working on a further 6 million hectares, in addition to the 5 million already included in the recently created national parks in the Amazon region. The next stage for Colombia will clearly be for projects into the sustainable use of the rain forest. I hope that we can extend our various projects to assist Colombia

Before I came into the Chamber I looked into the forestry projects of the Overseas Development Administration. They are under way in no fewer than nine Latin American countries. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development has much to be proud of, given our constructive aid in this sphere. All power to her elbow. Let us keep up the good work.

8.48 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): I intend to comment on some of the points made by the Minister. Ministers say that the United Kingdom helps 60 per cent. of the poorest countries in the world. The sad fact is that most of them are former British colonies. The fact that they are former British colonies and need so much aid is an indictment of the Government's policy. The Minister was right to emphasise that we should pay attention to the quality, not just to the quantity, of aid. I accept that certain Overseas Development Administration projects are good and set an example to the rest of the world.

It is nevertheless true that much of our aid programme is still viewed as a trade opportunity to be plundered by large companies. I am not the only exponent of that view. It is worth reading a sentence from the Conservative manifesto for the last election:

> "Our 'Aid and Trade Provision' funds have helped win good development contracts for British firms worth over £2 billion since 1979."

That is not what aid should be about, but I regret that that is what is has become in many cases.

The third point is that the Minister said that she had made £50 million available for energy efficiency projects, mainly in India, and then elaborated on how much she was committed to the idea of achieving greater energy efficiency in India. It is an extraordinary proposition that we should give priority to energy efficiency in countries that inherently use little energy, rather than concentrating within the developed world and reducing our excessive energy consumption. I accept that that is not the Minister's responsibility, but it is the Government's, and

the figures that she quoted contrast pretty sharply with the miserable investment in energy efficiency that has been sanctioned by the Department of Energy for our energy efficiency at home.

I should like to say, by way of a commercial—I have no interest to declare other than a local connection of pride—that before I came to this debate I was at a preview showing of a documentary for Channel 4 produced by Grampian television on the energy alternative. It is a programme of three one-hour documentaries that is a blueprint for changing the way that the world works. I noted with interest that the role of women, which has been mentioned by a number of speakers, has been specifically acknowledged within the third world, and the changes that have been taking place are focused upon without necessarily commenting that that is the definitive answer.

It was inevitable that the Minister would home in on specific worthy projects that the Government are sponsoring, and I am sure that other Conservative Members will also do so. However, the Minister did not satisfactorily explain to the House how and why Britain has dropped from second to sixth among the top seven industrial nations in the provision of overseas aid. The Government inherited a GNP contribution of 0·52 per cent., which they have reduced to 0·31 per cent. The Thatcher Government claim that they have achieved an economic miracle. Why have we not shared that economic miracle with the poorer peoples of the world? It really is not good enough for the Minister not to respond to that fact.

The other factor that must be addressed is the way in which aid projects are managed, not just by the British Government—or, perhaps worse still, by the American Government—but by the World bank and international agencies. There is no doubt that the criteria being applied specifically by the World bank do not often meet the real needs and the real structure of the countries that are supposed to be developing.

One problem is that the World bank seems to want assurances of stability within the Governments through which it is seeking to provide aid. The trouble is that stability tends to mean rather nasty, often right-wing, dictatorships that misuse the money to fatten their friends and to give contracts to big businesses. That does not benefit the poor people and does not reach the small businesses that might actually gain from the channelling of that aid. I wish that the British Government had done more to try to change those criteria.

The consequence of that is that banks tend to appoint consultants who determine who gets the contracts and how they are bid. It is far too much trouble to allow small companies, which have to be vetted and investigated, to get a cut of the business. Too often, that cut goes elsewhere and leaves the people of the country feeling alienated. Often, they are actually disrupted or even moved from their land to accommodate projects proposed by big business interests that are hostile to the interests of the people living in that country—yet it is all done in the name of overseas aid for poor communities.

It is interesting that, within Europe, Sweden and Holland have taken a high profile in trying to alter the character of the regimes to which they will give aid, singling out those to which other countries often refuse to give aid. They apply criteria that seek out and encourage progressive Government policies within countries to which they are giving aid.

I was recently asked to review a book commissioned by Friends of the Earth called "Exploited Earth," by Teresa Hayter. She says something worthy of report, especially in relation to tropical rain forests:

> "If the Governments of the major western powers and their agencies genuinely wanted to save forests in the third world, the best thing they could do would be to stop discriminating in favour of repressive and inegalitarian Governments and support, or at least refrain from attacking, third world Governments with progressive policies."

That is something we should actively encourage. We should be seeking to change the character. We should not conform to capitalist models, but to ones that are genuinely socially responsive and can reach down to the people who most need the aid.

We are all in grave danger of inadvertently patronising third-world countries when we talk about the problems of aid. I am conscious of it myself. I do not feel that it is necessarily my job to tell third-world countries what they should do, although it is legitimate to tell them what they should not do in circumstances where there is clear exploitation.

For example, the Brazilians have stated quite clearly that they do not understand why the Brazilian rain forest should be treated as a lung for the planet, because it is needed as a resource for their teeming population. The problem is how one ensures that that population can secure development in a way that nevertheless meets the wider needs of the planet and the long-term interests of the Brazilian community, which is too pressured by short-term needs and concerns.

With all respect to the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington)—and I recognise his commitment—the problem of population control falls into that difficulty. We can look at the third world and say that the population is growing too fast, the pressures are too great, and that if we do not do something about it, the planet will not survive. That is all true, but it is also a fact that, for most third-world countries, large families are a substitute for the lack of a welfare state. They are a means of security, an economic advantage and a welfare support.

Until that is changed the fundamental problem will not be dealt with and there is a clear correlation that constructive economic development and improved economic well-being actually reduce the pressure of large families. I acknowledge the fact that the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie referred to that.

The other problem, which we will have to address across the whole of the developed world and right across the political boundaries is how we will deal with the problem of the greenhouse effect. It causes me some concern that the British Government, together with the American Government and others, have failed to achieve, or get anywhere near achieving, a figure of 0·7 per cent. of gross national product overseas aid budget. How on earth will they persuade people in the developed world to make the necessary sacrifices to reduce carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions so that the third world can achieve even a fraction of the growth to which it aspires? A much bigger chunk than 0·7 per cent. of GNP must be earmarked.

It has been suggested that an international world programme could be delivered—perhaps that is idealistic. It could determine the total greenhouse gas emissions that the world is currently producing and aim to freeze those emissions, and subsequently reduce them. It would then allow bids for the allocation of that share of greenhouse

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gases—in extremis on a population basis. The consequences of that would be a major cut in the greenhouse emissions of the developed society to allow the third world to achieve the growth to which it aspires.

I note that the Minister is grimacing at the severity of what is required. We know that that could not be done overnight—it may take a generation. However, the third world will not stand being lectured about how it cannot aspire to the glories and pleasures of the western developed world just because we have already got there first and are not prepared to cut it in. Ultimately the third world will not put up with that. We must be prepared to make some fairly major sacrifices collectively, across party lines and national boundaries, in the west if we are to allow the underdeveloped countries to alleviate some of their poverty and to fulfil some of their aspirations.

The hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) is right to say that this issue should not be made too party political as that would render it specious. The scale of the problem we face is such that if we spend too much time scoring party-political points off each other we shall not address the wider issues of how we reach solutions to the urgent problems.

The nature of politicians and of this place is such that we cannot resist scoring party political points. It is the duty of Oppositions to oppose and of Governments to extol the virtues of what they have achieved. We must acknowledge, however, that if we are to make a contribution to solving the problem and if we are serious about it, we must seek out cross-party consensus. We must adopt long-term policies that will be pursued by Governments of whatever political persuasion and by many Governments at a time. We must do that soon; otherwise, the problems will become academic as it will be far too late.

I am a natural optimist—in my party, the one thing one learns is to be one—and I believe that there is a great deal that we can achieve if we put our minds to it. Obviously we can make technical contributions, but we must be prepared to acknowledge that attitudes must change and that societies within the developed countries must acknowledge the problems of the developing world and its right to a share of the benefits of the globe. We must recognise that, if we do not adopt a concerted environmental policy, we shall be destroyed by the third world's attempts to gain what it regards as its rightful share of the world's benefits.

The problem is sometimes described on such a global scale that we cannot relate to it; there are too many issues with which to deal at once. I was therefore encouraged to find that that dry American verser, Ogden Nash, had an appropriate little verse that puts things in perspective while saying the right thing:

"I think that I shall never see
A billboard lovely as a tree,
Perhaps, unless the billboards fall,
I'll never see a tree at all".

That sums up the fact that we cannot make a positive contribution to reducing environmental pressures if we determine our approach entirely by commercial factors. We must accept that the west must make some substantial sacrifices if the people of the third world are to have a real chance of a share in the resources of the planet.

9.2 pm

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): In view of the time available, I shall keep my remarks brief.

First, I should declare an interest as I am vice-president of Operation Raleigh on a non-remunerative basis. In that capacity, I thank my right hon. Friend for all the support that she has given to Operation Raleigh and to Voluntary Service Overseas. I know that in the past she has given great assistance to environmentally friendly projects and schemes run by Operation Raleigh all over the world, and that is much appreciated.

Last night in the debate on the police the Opposition made a considerable financial commitment, and earlier this evening in the transport debate they made a similar one. In this debate, the Opposition reaffirmed their commitment to achieve a target contribution to overseas aid of 0·7 per cent. of GNP within five years. When the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) gave us a tour d'horizon of all the environmental problems of the world, I thought that she also made a commitment to subsidise the reduction in or removal of CFCs in the People's Republic of China.

I could be wrong, but I believe that the Labour party will have its work cut out if it should ever be elected to Government. That point should be made because those who listen to or read about this debate should appreciate that people must be judged on their performance. The October 1974 Labour party manifesto made the commitment that 0·7 per cent. of GNP would be given in overseas aid, but history proves that that figure was never achieved.

I congratulate the Government on the cancellation of debt, particularly in Africa, and while I urge them to pursue that line, I have some concerns about Government aid. The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) spoke of propping up corrupt regimes and the need to monitor the way in which money is spent. I am concerned about some of the £13 million in aid that has gone to Ethiopia. I should like to know how much of it has gone directly to the people and how much has been filched to perpetuate a continuing civil war.

The same can be said of the £8·5 million recently given in emergency aid to Mozambique. I am worried about how much of that, plus 10,000 tonnes of food aid, has gone to the army and how much has gone to people in desperate need. Perpetuating corrupt regimes should not be the purpose of our overseas aid, and we now have an opportunity to pass on some of our know-how in that respect.

In my constituency, the South Devon technical college has offered aid to eastern Europe. I congratulate the Government on their plans to aid the eastern European countries which are, frankly, environmental disasters. Aid programmes have already been announced for Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. I have written to my right hon. Friend pointing out that South Devon technical college has played a great role in the past in supplying language skills to south-east Asia. The college is anxious to participate in any aid programme to eastern Europe. The amount of money being sought by eastern Europe is astronomical. I heard Eduard Shevardnadze talking on the radio on Monday about £8·5 billion being needed by the Soviet Union. If such aid is given, it should have major strings attached.

I appreciate that it is all to easy to be patronising about aid. Imposing western developed nation standards on intermediate, dirty, industrialised third-world countries has inherent dangers, particularly when there are many problems that we have not tackled.

I draw attention particularly to nuclear submarines in this country which are mothballed and about which, apparently, nothing can be done. It seems that no decision has been made about whether to tow them out into the Atlantic—that was the original intention—or to decommission them in some other way. That is a major problem of our own making and, so far as I am aware, there is no solution to it.

The Secretary of State for the Environment was in his place earlier in the debate. I hope that he or a Minister from that Department will have an opportunity to explain to the House the level of CFC reduction that we propose to reach by the year 2000 and why that level will be only about 50 per cent. of what it should be.

Reference has been made in the debate to numerous projects. I have time to refer to just three. The first is land degradation. I understand that in sub-Saharan Africa the husbandry of goats has played a major part in removing the soil. I hope that in future great thought will be given to dealing with that problem.

The second point—sea levels—was mentioned by the hon. Member for Cynon Valley. I urge her to put pressure on the Government to avoid grandiose schemes of the kind that in the past were regarded as prestige projects. When we consider projects such as the Aswan dam 20 or 30 years later, we realise that such grandiose schemes have been catastrophically counter-productive.

While many people will welcome the thermal power efficiency programmes which have been introduced and are being sponsored by the British Government, many constituents are horrified to hear of the vast sums being spent by the Pakistani Government on sabre-rattling exercises, mobilising troops and tanks along the Indian frontier. That is truly horrific.

I acknowledge that the Government have been in the forefront of many important issues in recent years and months—one of which affected my constituency. A tanker-load of toxic waste from west Africa was heading towards the United Kingdom and my constituency, causing great concern. I recognise that the European Community has introduced a system of certificates for toxic waste to ensure that it does not go to third-world countries.

There has been little time to cover all the issues in this important debate, but I urge the House to support the amendment.

9.11 pm

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): No one can doubt the scale of the crisis facing the third world and all of us. It is a crisis affecting the environment, health, housing, agriculture, food, famine and debt. There is no room in this Chamber or any hon. Member's heart for complacency or self-congratulation on what we have done to date to tackle this massive task.

Like many hon. Members, I have constituents who are active in world development and aid. When they hear us arguing about how much money we spend, they answer that that money is but a pittance in comparison to the massive transfer of wealth and resources from the south to the industrialised north. If we were to repay but a tiny proportion of that money, the miniscule current aid budget would dwindle into insignificance.

The Minister made one point that I was shocked to hear, although I was not too surprised, when she said that we would not continue to pour British taxpayers' money into countries that had not learnt the lesson that socialism does not work. Aid is supposed to be based on the principle of sustainable development in the poorest countries of the world. That is its prime objective. The vast majority of the poorest people in the world are women.

I had not intended to speak about population control, but I must say that it is an inappropriate solution to world poverty. It is seen by many as a way to reduce the populations of the poor. However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) said, the people in the north, the industrialised countries, are consuming considerably more. We fail to recognise the link between poverty and people's need for large families to have some chance of survival.

Many people would like to see millions of dollars being invested in population control even though dreadful and horrific damage has been caused to the lives of women in third-world countries by such programmes. That money would be better invested in establishing basic health care structures in villages, towns and cities throughout the world. Birth control is based on the woman's right to control her fertility and to make decisions about her life. Nobody should assert that we should force population control on people as a way of dealing with the problems that we face. I sincerely hope that such a course will not be proposed in the debate.

The document entitled "Environment and the British Aid Programme" is strong on rhetoric and weak on action. I appreciate what the Minister says, but we do not seem to have grasped the basic problem, which is that bad environments are the result of poverty and cause poverty. Aid programmes should be directed at identifying ways in which we can provide resources so that people can determine their own future without fear of exploitation and intimidation, whether by the economic and foreign policies of this country or any other or by the might of a multinational company. The document does not say enough about reducing the levels of carbon dioxide, the problems of CFCs and the general problem of global warming which will devastate the agriculture and the development of other nations.

The vast majority of poor people are women, and Britain's aid programme is harming such women in the third world. It does not recognise their unpaid work in the home, in the fields and in the community. They grow, buy and prepare food. They carry out cleaning and fetch water, firewood and household goods. They care for the young, the ill and the elderly. Such work is essential for everyone's survival, yet it is not classified as productive. Women's contributions as workers, farmers, traders, thinkers and carers is central to sustainable development. Their contribution is taken for granted, and they seem to be invisible to economists and most politicians, and unfortunately, they are not considered in many development plans.

Britain's aid is decreasing in quantity and quality. Each year, less than 20 per cent. of the total aid budget is spent on development projects for the world's poorest people. As we have heard, Britain's aid is increasingly being used to promote British exports and to further the

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Government's foreign and economic policies. Some 80 per cent. of the total aid budget is not deemed by the ODA itself to be relevant to women, yet women make up 60 to 80 per cent. of the agricultural work force in Africa. About 50 per cent. of those who care for animals are women, and all women are involved in food production and precessing.

Most aid programmes aimed at improving local agriculture are directed to assisting men, even though women are central to the ownership of smallholdings and the work in them. Women get a tiny proportion of agriculture scholarships and are excluded from credit facilities through straightforward discrimination and lack of collateral and income. It is a vicious circle, because sustainable aid is propagating the very problem that it claims to be addressing and attacking.

Women have the right wherever they are in the world to education, health, employment, food and shelter, as does every poor and not-so-poor person in the world. They have the right to participate in debates and to shape the future of their communities. Any aid policy which does not achieve that profoundly conflicts with the aims of sustainable aid. Women's position in society and in the world is crucially linked to the environment.

Much has been said about environmental projects that have been undertaken and about the IMF and the World bank and the ODA's relationship with those organisations. In *The Guardian* last Friday, nine projects—just nine—were selected to demonstrate how aid is damaging the environment. I presume that they are not the only ones.

I give just one example in conclusion. It is about the African forest and the national forestry scheme in the Cameroons which is part of the TFAP. The article says that the programme is

"alarming environmentalists. The plan for Cameroon, completed in 1988, envisages that the country 'could become the most important African exporter of forestry-based products from the start of the 21st century'."

Those programmes are not about involving people in shaping their future; they are about making them dependent on yet another cash crop that will tie them further into the debt crisis. That is profoundly wrong and evil. None of us has any right to be complacent, and I hope that we will do all that we can to ensure that our aid programme is liberating, not devastating.

9.21 pm

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): The hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) spoke from the heart. Those Conservative Members who are present when England is playing in the world cup—there is no score after 60 minutes—also reveal a great deal of heart in that we want to take part in this critical debate.

The hon. Lady talked about women. I cannot follow her criticisms precisely, because virtually ever conference to which I have been, every scheme that I have seen enumerated and every area of development assistance from the developed world now involves women and women's participation. The real problem is caused by the standards of the developing world and the way in which it sees and treats women rather than the way in which we try to reach out from the developed world with schemes to assist them.

Action Aid programmes in the Gambia have deliberately targeted women. They have deliberately created gardens for the ladies, setting up their own committee to produce better food for the community and a market economy in which to sell their extra produce down the line. The whole focus now is on women and women's involvement, because their critical importance has been recognised. I am sure that the ODA and many of the schemes that it has put forward have that as a central element, along with the environment.

So many of these debates tend, as has been said, to start off on the wrong foot on the basis of the motions in which one side says that everything is wrong and the other that everything is right. I often suspect that the truth lies somewhere between the two. That is true of today's debate.

The suggestion in the Opposition's motion that ODA funds could ever be raised sufficiently to tackle the immense environmental problems of the third world is a mirage. There is no way in which ODA funds will in themselves meet the tremendous environmental challenges that we face now and will face in the next century.

Equally, the suggestion that the ODA should use those funds in an environmentally conscious and better way is something that we do applaud, and that is a fact. That approach was begun by my right hon. Friend the Minister's predecessor and has been continued. That is an essential element in the way in which we develop environmentally conscious schemes in the transfer of international resources.

As we move towards 1992 and the Heads of Government United Nations conference on the environment, we must establish benchmarks for the next century. We should think through the roles of all forms of resource transfer—whether they involve technology, the major United Nations institutions, the World bank, IMF, the European development fund, the cumulative effect of ODA funds across the developed world, or the response within the developing countries themselves—and not pick on the one particular aspect of the ODA's own aid budget. The integration of efforts to overcome the major problems that have been spelt out is a task to which we should all apply our minds.

With that proviso, I agree that the ODA's budget should be increased. It is effective, and one sees its good effects in different parts of the world. It is logical to argue that, given the same conditions, twice the budget would be twice as effective in terms of the people that aid would reach and the programmes that could be assisted. Our programmes are very successful in assisting the poorest people and the poorest countries of the world in an environmentally conscious way.

We must press for that element in the transfer of resources to be increased. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister would welcome it if the Treasury could be convinced of that. My right hon. and hon. Friends and I have fought, often with our votes, to increase our development programme, and would like to see it increased still further. However, the scale of funding required in terms of technology transfer and the global environment is considerable. Many of us support the idea of a global fund that would assist developing countries to measure up to changes, and the emergence of that point of view at Bergen caused the Americans to back off the joint communiqué.

The hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) was critical of power stations, but I fail to comprehend why we should pick on them as symbols of western degradation. If

the hon. Lady had ever been caught in Khartoum when the power station had broken down and the supply was cut, she would know what it is like for the 6 million people who live in that city. Everything comes to a halt. The heat is intense and the effects are dramatic. Factories stop producing and cotton is no longer spun. We built the original power station in Khartoum, and only restored it so that it would suffer no more brown-outs, to help the economy there. If any economy needs help, that one does —and it has started to recover.

As to criticisms of the aid and trade provision, its share of the budget is tiny, being only £60 million out of £1·6 billion. The Foreign Affairs Select Committee examined the budget and acknowledged that, under international rules, it had to come under ODA control. We accept that it is one way of assisting British industry and developing countries to obtain the goods that they need. If the hon. Lady thinks that the ATP budget should be scrapped, perhaps she will explain how the environment will be improved if a French, Italian or Japanese company installs precisely the same facility instead. I do not see that there is any direct relationship to the environment.

My hon. Friend the Minister and others firmly believe that the ATP should not serve as a slush fund for British industry. Other countries, particularly the French and Italians, use their aid budgets, even though they may appear to be a bigger proportion of GNP, much more successfully in promoting their own industries. I suspect that we are rather more puritan in that respect, and we should remain so.

There are two imperatives for sustainable development. One, which is sometimes misunderstood and is not given sufficient priority is the development of human resources in the developing countries, through education programmes and health. I agree with the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington), who spoke about population, and said that, unless the population were educated, it was difficult for the people to appreciate the sheer scale of the difficulties caused by excessive population growth in an environmentally unfriendly situation. We want to develop human resources and we also want environmental integrity.

One of the critical points that my right hon. Friend the Minister made was that we have to have the willing participation of host countries. It is very patronising to hear people talking about "our" rain forests, as if they belonged to us. They do, in the sense that our economy is global, but if the Brazilians talked about "their" coal mines when they were referring to mines in this country, we should be angry. They are not our rain forests, but a part of the world ecology which belong to the country which is sovereign.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) mentioned, unless we have the co-operation of host countries, the prospects for change are difficult.

Opposition Members have accused us of supporting dictatorships or restrictive regimes, but absolutely the opposite is the case. The World bank and the Foreign Secretary have made it clear that democratic accountability and good government are two of the essentials to ensure that aid transfers function. For example, Burma had had a dictatorial Government for the past 40 years, and not only has it achieved gradual growth of poverty, in a country which is rich in natural resources, but there has been one attempt to overthrow the Government. Burma proves that, without legitimate democracy, poverty increases and environmental damage also increases, and it is almost impossible to stop it.

For example, next-door Thailand has a democracy, and popular pressure has caused them to be more environmentally conscious and to stop plundering forests. What has happened? The SLORC military Government in Burma have granted licences to Thai loggers, who have moved into the Burmese forests and are now extracting trees at three times the rate that they were cut down before, including seed trees, which is environmentally degrading and is almost impossible to contemplate. No amount of aid could possibly help that situation because the developed world has withdrawn its aid programme from Burma, as a mark of its complete indignation and rejection of the human rights record and the standards that the Burmese Government have established. Unless we can establish basic human values and accountable democracy, we cannot begin to operate sustainable aid or protect the environment.

I am getting all sorts of signals, but I understood that I had a few minutes more before the Front Bench spokesmen speak. I shall not mention commodities and population, but I must raise two other issues—first, debt. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary made a welcome statement, that we must reconsider debt and especially the debts owed to the Bretton Woods institutions by African countries. We must consider a 10-year moratorium of debt repayments to recreate a breathing space during which we can solve their problems.

The second issue is military expenditure. The United Nations Development Programme report on human values has carefully given a league table of military expenditure in the developing world. It is clear that many developing countries spend a higher proportion of gross national product on military expenditure than on education, on health or on matching and working with resource transfers from the developed countries. That call comes not only from me—I am not being patronising—but from the UNDP and the various other institutions and from the people of those countries that seek an end to excessive military expenditure to prop up regimes that would be otherwise unsustainable.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Does not the hon. Gentleman realise that the United Kingdom is the world's second largest arms supplier?

Mr. Lester: Of course, but that does not make the fact that some countries spend excessive amounts on arms any more welcome. I am calling for a reduction in military expenditure, and it should be reduced because the risk, and hence the necessity for such expenditure, is diminishing every day.

My last point concerns public debate and public awareness. We need to raise the level of public debate in our constituencies and across the country because if we do not, it will be very difficult to bring about changes—to transfer resources and to increase the ODA's budget. In a Harris poll taken for the Centre for World Development Education and the Commonwealth Trust, 86 per cent. of those questioned said that they wanted more news about developing countries. We must meet that need.

The hon. Member for Cynon Valley mentioned southern non-governmental organisations. As a result of the intiative taken by my right hon. Friend the Minister,

[Mr. Lester]

we have managed to establish for the first time a formal north-south quadrilogue so that we can now participate fully on a pan-European basis—across the countries of the Council of Europe and across eastern Europe—in a debate between non-governmental organisations, Governments, local government and Parliaments.

We now look forward to 1992 and to a restatement of the views expressed in the recent BBC television programme, which was a brave attempt to promote public education and to discuss the problems of the environment and sustainable development—the real challenges of the future. We are now part of a system that will facilitate the work of southern NGOs in partnership with our own NGOs. It will facilitate the work of local government in terms of twinning. It will facilitate the work of Parliament and it will facilitate Government schemes to promote the essential development education without which we cannot proceed with the policy changes that we all seek.

9.37 pm

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): I shall greatly curtail my remarks so that my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) has a chance to speak for a few moments.

This is an extremely important debate, in which we have brought together the two most important challenges that face Britain and the rest of the world in the final decade of this century—the need to tackle the problems of the developing nations and the need to tackle environmental problems. In both cases, worldwide action is needed. It is right that the subjects should have been linked in the motion because they bear a close relationship to each other.

A few weeks ago, I was in Mozambique for a few hours. I saw thousands of people who had left their land and I saw agricultural land lying derelict as a result of the civil war and strife that have tragically afflicted that country for so many years. I saw many people suffering from starvation. I clearly remember the young child who came up to me with what I thought was a doll in her arms; it was actually an almost lifeless baby brother or sister. Pictures of those who suffer such conditions, which are repeated elsewhere in the world, have a tremendous effect when they are shown on television, but when one sees such things in real life, they mean far more—perhaps more than anything else. If we can really justify the amount of overseas aid that we give at present and if we believe that we should not give more, we ought to be ashamed of ourselves. Our record brings shame on Britain and on the Government.

We must do considerably more. We have recognised what needs to be done to tackle the environmental problems that have arisen in this country. Our greed and our industrial capacity have done much to damage our environment over the past 200 years.

We can see the damage that has been done to the environment in eastern Europe. We can also see the damage that has occurred in the Third world because of the need for those countries to service their debts and feed their populations. The developed world has controlled things for many years. Therefore, we must face the fact that if we are to tackle those problems, we shall have to take extremely difficult decisions.

The developed nations such as Britain, the United States and Canada must pay to tackle the problems in the United Kingdom, in eastern Europe and in the Third world. We must recognise that damage to the environment, wherever it occurs, recognises no boundaries. We must deal with that problem on a worldwide basis. It is no good stopping the production and sale of CFCs in this country if we allow them to be produced and used elsewhere, because CFCs damage the ozone layer that we all share.

We must accept that if we are to tackle the problems that will arise because of the Third world's growing need for energy, we must allow those countries to develop a positive policy towards the environment. I attended a conference in Ottawa recently about global warming. We considered charging $10 for every tonne of carbon emitted into the atmosphere or the equivalent of approximately $2 per barrel of petrol. That would allow for the collection of £55 billion a year, which is a substantial amount.

I could have made many other points if time had permitted. However, I shall say only that we must recognise that we have spent billions of pounds preparing ourselves for an attack from an imaginary enemy in the east, so we should be prepared now to spend a similar amount to tackle the problems facing the Third world and the environment. That is the real challenge and we shall fail our children and our grandchildren if we do not wake up to that responsibility.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not want it to be taken as a precedent, but I shall call the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) now.

9.42 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I promise to be extremely brief, Mr. Speaker, because I understand that both Front-Bench spokesmen want to reply to the debate. This has been an extremely important debate and the Opposition Front Bench are to be congratulated on choosing this subject and on giving it the importance that it deserves. My hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) is to be congratulated on her excellent speech which I fully support. I similarly support the Opposition motion.

There will be a demonstration tomorrow on the Albert embankment outside the Montreal protocol meeting about CFCs. Most of the demonstrators, including people from Friends of the Earth and other groups, will be calling for a complete ban on CFC production. I fully support that. That is a crucial decision because we must decide whom we support and consider the environment.

If we are to ban CFC production completely, as I believe that we should, we must also accept that considerable support must be given to other countries which wish to continue to produce refrigerators and similar products. The technology to produce those goods without CFCs must be transferred to China, India and other countries which need it. If that does not happen, we cannot lecture those countries about producing CFCs while we hold that technology to ourselves and use it as an economic lever against poorer countries and poorer people throughout the world.

The economic imbalance between countries is at the root of the world's problems. Some Conservative

Members spoke eloquently and at great length with an inbuilt assumption that resources automatically flow from the richest people in the richest countries to the poorest people in the poorest countries. That simply does not happen, and it has not happened for several hundred years. The resources of the poorest countries have been plundered and taken to the industrial countries, and it is still happening now. The debt crisis means that $50 billion flows north. Economic models have been implanted in the debtor countries by the International Monetary Fund. Schools, hospitals and social services centres are closed, and environmental damage is imposed on those countries by the debt crisis.

I crave the indulgence of the House briefly to quote from one of my favourite newspapers, the *Utusan Konsumer*, produced by the Consumers Association of Penang—an excellent organisation which sponsors the third-world network. That newspaper has a full page headed "Dicing with debt". It explains exactly what has been happening in the past 10 years. The real price of sugar has dropped by 20 per cent., linseed oil by 9 per cent., and groundnuts by 9 per cent. The amount of exports required by poorer countries simply to maintain interest payments on the debt has shot up year after year, at the same time as the United States Government are maintaining a massive federal Government spending deficit and promoting massive arms expenditure.

If we are to sort out the problems of poverty and of the environment, we require a real restructuring of the world's economy. That will not be achieved by imposing a model of market forces on the poorest people in the poorest countries but by paying those people for the products that they produce, not hoarding technological advances for ourselves but sharing and spreading them around the world, and not persuading and pushing countries to revert to monoculture production, which is dangerous and damaging to the environment.

Much more could be said, and the debate is crucial. I hope that the Government will recognise that cuts in their aid budget show no real concern for the rest of the world and merely demonstrate their meanness towards the rest of the world while promoting an economic policy which continues to promote the flow of wealth from the poorest to the richest.

9.46 pm

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Hon. Members who have participated in this excellent debate should be congratulated. I refer in particular to English hon. Members who, as the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) rightly said, eschewed other competing attractions. As a Scot, I can only wish the English team well—we are not there any more. My hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) deserves congratulations not only because he eschewed other attractions but because he was present throughout the debate—on his birthday. All hon. Members appreciate his commitment to this topic.

The hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold), having regretted the party political nature of the debate, made the most partisan speech so far. What he said was rubbish. He may not realise it—he may not wish to admit it—but in the last few years of the Labour Government, aid was rising as a percentage of the gross national product, and by 1979 it was more than 0·51 per cent. It is now only 0·31 per cent.

The Minister has been misusing statistics. In attacking my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd), she denied—or pretended to deny—that our commitment to 0·7 per cent. within five years existed, even after I pointed out the error. She then tried to get the best of both worlds by attacking the consequences of our commitment to 0·7 per cent., by saying that it was expensive and profligate. Yet Germany already gives 0·41 per cent., France 0·78 per cent., the Netherlands 0·94 per cent., and Denmark 1 per cent., in all cases with a much healthier gross national product than the United Kingdom. The Government's official development assistance has reduced by a quarter in real terms since 1979. Those are the real facts, not the ones that we got from the Minister and from the hon. Member for Gravesham. Their statistics are not facts.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley referred to the green glossy handbook on the environment and the British aid programme.

It is, indeed, the pinnacle of doubletalk and contradiction from the Government. Under a smiling and attractive colour photograph of the Minister of State, her foreword reads—*[Interruption.]* The right hon. Lady will have her opportunity to reply. The foreword reads:

"In the last three years we have given a major boost to environmental issues".

Later, in what might be considered an unusual bout of honesty, the foreword continues:

"Words and deeds are sometimes a long way apart".

Words and deeds are certainly a long way apart under this Government. That is true in relation to pollution, global warming, ozone depletion, the tropical rain forests and Antarctica. The reality of the Government's deeds is a long way from the rhetoric of their words.

Mr. Rooker: The proof of the pudding is, indeed, in the eating. The report of the National Audit Office on bilateral aid to India has already been mentioned. The Public Accounts Committee took evidence on that issue in February. The report has not yet been published, although the evidence has. Hon. Members who serve on that Committee were extremely surprised to learn that the ODA has only two specialist advisers on environmental matters, who have worldwide responsibilities.

Mr. Foulkes: My hon. Friend has made an excellent point, which does not need any amplification.

The astonishing theme of the publication to which I have just referred—my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) also referred to it in his excellent speech—is the alleged compatibility of economic development on the one hand, and environmental protection on the other. There is a supposedly effective combination of market mechanisms and regulations. The Government seem to be saying to the developing world, "Fear not, market forces will protect you." That is the astonishing theme of that document. But that is not the experience of the victims of the Bhopal disasters or the Exxon Valdez and Balvia Paraiso oil spillages. Fishermen in many a polluted sea or river have other tales to tell about who discharged the toxic waste and how they need regulations to protect them from free market forces which put the pursuit of profit above all else.

Sir Ian Gilmour (Chesham and Amersham) *rose*——

Mr. Foulkes: I shall not give way. This has been an interesting debate for hon. Members who have been present throughout, which the right hon. Gentleman has not.

The principal example with which I shall demonstrate the doubletalk of Toryspeak is their policy towards Antarctica which is the world's only relatively unspoilt continent and has a unique ecosystem. Almost a year ago —on 4 July 1989—I led our opposition to the Government's Antarctic Minerals Bill on the basis that, far from protecting the Antarctic, the Bill represented a prospectors' charter. We supported a proposal from the Australian Government that Antarctica should be designated a world park and kept free from exploration and development. Even then, that proposal was receiving support from France, although the Minister tried to pretend that the opposite was the case. In fact, France is now a co-sponsor of the plan, which also has the support of Belgium, Italy, West Germany and New Zealand, and now even Poland, America and the Soviet Union are having second thoughts about the minerals convention.

If the Government are really serious about conservation and wish to put the interests of the environment before commercial interests, they will join the growing chorus rejecting the Antarctic minerals convention, and they will join the growing support to establish a world park in Antarctica. I will give the Minister a chance to intervene if she can tell us that at the meeting in Santiago in November the British Government will at the very least support a long-term moratorium on mineral prospecting in Antarctica. Better still, I hope that the Government will take a leading part in supporting the world park plan. The next Labour Government will certainly do so. Moreover, we shall make 0·7 per cent. of GNP our aid target within the lifetime of our Administration after the next election. That is why the people of the third world, as much as the people of the United Kingdom, are waiting, hoping and praying for the return of a Labour Government.

9.54 pm

Mrs. Chalker: As always, this has been an interesting debate. In the few minutes available to me I shall try to respond to some of the points that have been raised. I refer in particular to the National Audit Office report on the Indian aid programme, which was mentioned by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Bar (Mr. Rooker).

The hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) made highly selective references to the NAO report, in particular to the Rihand power station project. I have a copy of the report to hand now, although it was not available to me earlier in the debate. I do not intend to comment in detail on it; the Public Accounts Committee has yet to report. In order, however, to put matters in context, I intend to refer to paragraphs 19 and 20. The National Audit Office found that

"the Administration"—

that is, the Overseas Development Administration—

"have developed sound procedures which their staff operate in a professional and competent manner. Aid projects have certainly produced highly beneficial results in terms of the Administration's objectives.

Reference is made to the projects in the following paragraph. The NAO says that projects

"continue to have worthwhile outcomes which have a positive impact on development."

Despite the fact that it has had problems, Rihand is a highly successful project. We were aware of the ash disposal and other problems. That is why I undertook, as soon as I arrived at the Department, to work with the Indian Government on solving them. The most important point abut Rihand is that it will use efficient and clean technology. Anything of that sort that is done must help a nation that is trying hard to help itself to produce, to trade and to earn currency. The hon. Lady ignored the many jobs that are provided both in India, as a result of Rihand, and in this country, in companies that are involved with the project. I reject also as beneath contempt the serious allegations which have no foundation whatever, which the hon. Lady made on other matters.

As for the environment, we have not heard very much about the non-governmental organisations, but I pay tribute to them for their work on environmental issues. With them, we support 56 environmental projects costing £6 million. They are doing extremely well. Reference has been made to global warming. The Overseas Development Administration has commissioned the only study into the options to reduce carbon dioxide emissions in the third world. The ODA has also undertaken a study of the options for phasing out chlorofluorocarbons. Much of the work initiated by my Department lies behind the work now being done on the Montreal protocol.

In January I made it absolutely clear that western technology needed to be shared with the third world. I said that I was prepared to investigate the use of the aid and trade provision for sharing that technology. That is exactly the way in which the west should help the third world to adopt modern, good and sound technology if we are to reduce the environmental problems that face us.

I endorse all that was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) in his speech on the aid and trade provision. He was absolutely right; I shall not repeat what he said. I congratulate also the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) on what he said about the critical importance of population planning. He was right to refer to the importance of women, not just in health, education, housing and welfare. We are pursuing an active programme to enhance the status of women through the development programmes. An excellent Bangladeshi non-governmental organisation has been successful in helping women to achieve investment through credit unions. I recommend to the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) the Bangladeshi rural action committee project in Bangladesh.

We have an excellent programme. We want to do more to help the third world improve the environment through our aid programme. We have a good foundation on which to build. I am determined to ensure that that is successfully carried out, in full co-operation with our partners in the European Community and worldwide through UNDP and all the other good organisations.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 195, Noes 260.

Division No. 285] [10 pm

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*	Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Allen, Graham	Barron, Kevin
Alton, David	Beckett, Margaret
Anderson, Donald	Bell, Stuart
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Ashton, Joe	Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Bermingham, Gerald
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Bidwell, Sydney

Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'll)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Cran, James
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian

Latham, Michael
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Tom Sackville and
Nicholas Baker.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. SPEAKER *declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House notes the high quality of the Government's substantial and growing aid programme; commends the Government for its efforts to integrate environmental concerns into all aspects of its assistance to developing countries to achieve sustainable development; and applauds its actions and proposals to help developing countries tackle both local and global environmental concerns.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Pakistan Bill *[Lords]* may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Orders of the Day

Pakistan Bill *[Lords]*

Not amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

10.14 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): The Bill welcomes Pakistan back into the Commonwealth. The first conference following the readmission of Pakistan to the Commonwealth, which was attended by representatives from Pakistan, was opened by Mr. Speaker, being the Commonwealth conference on delegated legislation. The conference is held about every five years and is concerned with the scrutiny of delegated legislation passing through the various commonwealth legislatures. As chairman of the conference, and as the United Kingdom was its host, I was pleased to welcome a delegate from Pakistan who played a useful part in providing the conference with information about the scrutiny of delegated legislation in that country.

The conference examined the scrutiny of delegated legislation. Many other Commonwealth countries have had far more comprehensive powers of scrutiny than we have in our legislature. The Commonwealth has some good examples of how the delegated legislation committee can invoke powers to stop abuses by Ministers, as sometimes occurs in our legislature.

It was a good conference and Pakistan took its first step back into the Commonwealth by attending it. It was a coincidence that the conference took place then, but Pakistan's move was welcomed by delegates from other Commonwealth countries, more than 30 of which were represented. On that basis—I am sure that the whole House approves—I welcome the Bill's Third Reading.

10.16 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): I am glad that the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) joins the others who have welcomed the Bill, as does the whole House. I assure him that nothing in the Bill affects the procedures of scrutiny of legislation in either the British or Pakistani Parliament. I hope that the House will give the Bill a good Third Reading.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

Killingbeck Hospital (Heart Surgery)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

10.17 pm

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): I am grateful for this opportunity to raise the subject of Killingbeck hospital and heart transplants. I raise the issue, which is a Yorkshire and Humberside regional matter and not a constituency one, because it relates to the provision of heart transplant services in the Yorkshire region. I am involved because a friend whose young daughter recently had a heart transplant asked me why Killingbeck hospital in Leeds was not designated as a regional heart transplant centre.

Killingbeck hospital was the first paediatric cardiology unit in the country. Since it was designated as a centre for child heart surgery it has built up quite a reputation and one would have thought that it would therefore have become a designated centre for heart transplants. A tremendous amount of skill and expertise has been built up at the hospital in the past few years, and it can offer as good a service as anywhere else in the country.

The facilities that have been built up at Killingbeck hospital are first class, as is the surgeon, Mr. Duncan Walker. It also has facilities that one would not usually expect. For instance, it has a bungalow in which parents can stay overnight or for extended periods when their children are undergoing heart surgery. Most of the cost of those facilities comes from charitable donations. Yet the Government have refused to recognise Killingbeck as a heart transplant centre and have even criticised the unit for carrying out transplants. As I hope to show today, that means that the Government are, in effect, criticising Killingbeck hospital for saving lives.

At present, the designated centres for child heart and lung transplants are Great Ormond street hospital in London, Harefield hospital and Freeman hospital in Newcastle, although at present Freeman hospital has no programme of heart transplants for children and Harefield hospital is not itself a designated centre. Technically, therefore, Great Ormond street is the only hospital which can offer that service.

There is a tremendous shortfall in the provision of this acute medical service for people in Yorkshire, Humberside and the north midlands. Great trauma surrounds heart transplant surgery. Apart from the obvious trauma of one's child or relative having to undergo such surgery, there are the added strains and stresses placed on parents who have to visit units for assessment over three to six weeks before an operation takes place. The patient has to spend about eight weeks in intensive care after the operation. Following that, the patient has to visit the hospital twice and sometimes three times a week. That all adds to the pressure placed upon parents. In addition, there is the problem of arranging time off work and travelling, with the associated costs, so as to be near children undergoing this type of surgery.

A letter was sent to the consultant surgeon at Killingbeck hospital by a couple whose child had a heart and lung transplant. The letter has been passed to me. In it the parents said that they supported the surgeon at Killingbeck. They said that their daughter, Debbie, had a heart and lung transplant at Harefield hospital on 18 October 1985. Unfortunately, the child died in 1986. They

[Mr. Eric Illsley]

had to go to Harefield hospital because no other transplant centre was available. In the letter, the parents said that it was extremely good of the surgeon at Killingbeck to stick his neck out and do such operations locally. The couple spent nearly four months at their daughter's bedside. She received extremely good care and attention, but they were 200 miles from home and from their family and relatives and the young child was away from her brother. That illustrates the type of problems experienced by parents in such cases.

The expectations of parents and children in Yorkshire and Humberside should be the same as those of parents and children in any other area of the United Kingdom. They should have access to a local heart transplant centre, and Killingbeck should be the designated centre for that type of surgery.

The Northern general hospital in Sheffield has been designated as a heart transplant centre for our region. I believe that that hospital has carried out one heart transplant so far and has stated that surgeons at the hospital would not have attempted heart surgery on a three-year-old child. Sheffield hospital has little expertise or experience in this field of surgery. Killingbeck, however, is an experienced centre for child heart surgery. The Freeman hospital in Newcastle has carried out heart transplants but currently has no programme for heart transplants on children. It is interesting to note that Freeman hospital has carried out heart transplants even though it was not a regionally recognised centre. The Government in their wisdom decided that it would be designated as a heart transplant centre and it is continuing with its programme.

The Leeds general infirmary has been mooted as a possible successor to Killingbeck, and it has been agreed that facilities at Killingbeck should be transferred to Leeds. It seems that the Leeds general infirmary is being set up as a centre to opt out of the national health service. Facilities have been transferred to that hospital even though they are already in situ at Killingbeck, whose expertise could be broken up by a transfer to Leeds. Already there are reports of surgeons leaving Killingbeck because of the doubt and uncertainty surrounding that hospital. I have also been told that nurses at Killingbeck are wary of transferring to a hospital where late shifts could mean being in the city centre late at night. It is a glaring omission that Killingbeck has not been designated as a transplant centre. The political ideology reflected in the transfer to Leeds general infirmary will lessen the service and will cost lives in Yorkshire and Humberside.

The Government maintain that, by taking hearts and other donated organs, Killingbeck is reducing the supply to the national network. Before its current programme, the Leeds hospital donated hearts to the national network, but when it began its heart transplant programme it used organs which had been donated locally. The Government maintain that Killingbeck is threatening the national donor scheme by not offering those organs nationally, but if Killingbeck did not have its own heart transplant programme, those organs would not have been donated. It is only as a result of increased awareness that the number of organs donated has increased. If Killingbeck did not use the heart and lungs donated to it, they would be wasted. Hearts have been offered to Harefield and to Great Ormond street and have been refused, either because there was no surgeon to carry out the operation or, surprisingly, because no recipient was available.

On the reverse side of the coin, organs have been donated to Killingbeck through the national network despite the fact that it is not a regional centre. One young chap, Stephen Hollis, is alive today with a new heart and lungs because Killingbeck was ready and willing to undertake a transplant operation when the heart and lungs became available through the national network after being turned down by the two other national centres.

The French experience shows that when one moves from a centralised national system to a regional system, the number of donated organs increases dramatically. Harefield is not a designated heart transplant centre—it has simply carried out such operations in the past—but the Government have not complained that it is undermining the national scheme or doing anything wrong. Why is Killingbeck treated differently?

Killingbeck hospital is clearly increasing the number of organs available for transplant as a result of its programme. It is essential that that programme should be encouraged to continue and that the hospital should be designated as a transplant centre. I ask the Governnment to recognise Killingbeck as a transplant centre mainly for child heart transplants. That hospital, with its wealth of expertise, cries out to be made a designated centre.

10.28 pm

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) on raising this important issue about the long-term future of Killingbeck hospital. He has clearly shown the extent to which the hospital and its staff are a national asset and resource.

I want to ask the Minister one or two questions and to ask him to consider one or two of the issues raised by myself and my hon. Friend. I am sure that the Minister will accept that the work of Duncan Walker and his colleagues at Killingbeck hospital is of high repute. It has put Leeds on the map and it is good for Britain and the NHS.

There is widespread concern in Leeds that a team with such a reputation of excellence is in danger of being broken up. I hope that the Minister, with his responsibility for the NHS, will be able to assure us tonight that he will make every effort to ensure that that team stays together so that its excellence and expertise are available to all NHS patients. It would be a great pity if those skills were lost to the national health service or, as seems likely, to this country. What steps will the Minister take to ensure the future of the team that has developed so well under Duncan Walker at Killingbeck hospital?

My next question arises from the confusion felt by many of my constituents and by most residents in Leeds. A decision has been made, which I am not criticising, to develop certain facilities at Leeds general infirmary. At the same time, facilities at Killingbeck, which have an excellent reputation and record, are to be closed. In doing that, the regional health authority has also sanctioned a decision to put extra money into Killingbeck in the short term. It seems strange that a good team and a good hospital should be threatened with closure, while at the same time more money is to be put into that hospital in the

short and medium term. Surely the logic that flows from that decision is to keep the hospital open and, above all else, to keep Duncan Walker's team working there.

The Minister should look again at the future of Killingbeck hospital. I can tell him from my local knowledge and experience that it has a great deal of public support and sympathy, and the people of Leeds would like the Minister to reconsider the hospital's future, keep the hospital open, and keep Duncan Walker's team working there.

There is much pressure to bring a regional heart centre to Leeds, and I am sure that the Minister relates to that. But in the shorter term, we also want assurances about Killingbeck's future. I hope that the Minister will agree tonight to consider that issue and that he will return with a positive answer.

10.32 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): I congratulate the hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) on creating the opportunity to debate the issue that he has brought before the House this evening, and the hon. Member for Barnsley, Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) on his contribution. I am conscious that they have raised a matter of considerable concern to people in Leeds and more widely throughout Yorkshire, who understandably want the undoubted cardiothoracic skills in the Leeds area developed.

I am more than happy to acknowledge that Duncan Walker is a distinguished surgeon and that his team has done a great deal of valuable work at Killingbeck hospital. However, the hon. Member for Barnsley, Central made it clear that he was prompted to raise the issue after a conversation with a friend that concentrated on the particular question of developing transplant surgery at Killingbeck. The hon. Gentleman described it as not a constituency but a regional matter. I shall try to explain to him and to the House why the Department does not regard transplant surgery even as a regional matter but one properly ordered on a national basis, and why that is in the interests of heart transplant patients generally in Yorkshire, like everywhere else.

Before doing so, I may say that a considerable expertise in cardiothoracic surgery has been developed in the Leeds area, and the Government are anxious to see it increase still further. There is more than one reason why. We recognise that heart disease occurs more extensively in Yorkshire than elsewhere in the country. That clearly establishes the need for a proper regional centre of expertise in general cardiothoracic care—I am not talking at the moment about transplant surgery, to which the regional health authority has demonstrated a real commitment.

In 1988, the authority set up a review of the arrangements for cardiothoracic surgery in the county, and it decided that two major sites should be developed. I understand that there is little disagreement about the site which should be developed in the eastern side of the region, and that Castle Hill hospital was decided upon. There was somewhat more discussion about precisely where the centre for the western side of the country should be based.

The regional health authority asked the Leeds hospitals to provide alternative proposals for the development of an area facility for the western side of the region by March 1990. In response to the proposals made to it, the authority recently decided that the best course of action open to it was to develop a major new facility at Leeds general infirmary.

In answer to the hon. Gentleman's point about why the region is apparently committed to the closure of Killingbeck hospital—although that decision has not yet been taken—two points have to be made. First, any impartial analysis would recognise that Killingbeck hospital does not have the highest standards of physical accommodation. There is a desire that the new facilities should offer the highest standard of accommodation possible. That is why the scheme that the regional health authority is promoting now involves the expenditure of £16·8 million to provide the new facility as part of the phase 1 development of Leeds general infirmary, which has a total budget of some £56 million. That is a major commitment of health service money to the development of cardiothoracic care in the Leeds area.

As regards the future of Mr. Walker's team, it seems inconceivable to me that anyone planning the future of cardiothoracic care in West Yorkshire would be seeking to do so without a role for the expertise that Mr. Walker has developed.

Although, understandably, the hon. Member asked why there was not a role for Killingbeck, the answer is that the regional health authority and the people directly involved in the field in Leeds have considered the available options, and have concluded that the best interests of patients in the area are served by developing cardiothoracic care at Leeds general infirmary, and have provided a substantial investment budget to back up that commitment.

Mr. Illsley: Could the Minister give an indication of the Government's attitude to Leeds general infirmary's designation as a transplant centre? Assuming that there was a complete transfer of Duncan Walker's unit from Killingbeck, what would be the status of the LGI?

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Gentleman has neatly anticipated the matter that I was about to deal with. I wanted to set the context of general cardiothoracic care in the county, to underline the recognition that such care is really needed in Yorkshire, and that the region and the health service plan to meet that need.

Mr. Fatchett: Before the Minister moves on to that point, could he make the position clear about the development of the Leeds general infirmary? Will he tell us what action he will take to ensure that Mr. Walker and his team have a future role of some significance in its development?

Mr. Dorrell: I am not sure that it is open to me to do that. Clearly, it will be for the managers of the infirmary and for Mr. Walker to agree the terms under which Mr. Walker might work in that context. I am not sure that it would be sensible for me, in the House of Commons, to seek to determine a contract between a man and a manager whom I have never met. As I have said, it seems to me inconceivable that someone should seek to develop cardiothoracic care without using the resources that have been developed at Killingbeck hospital.

Let me deal now with the question of heart transplant surgery and the way in which we seek to develop the management of that facility within the service. I think that

[Mr. Dorrell]

it is important to recognise that the national health service seeks to develop heart transplant surgery as a national facility, rather than—as the hon. Member for Barnsley, Central suggested in his opening remarks—purely a local one. It is not realistic to suggest that heart transplant surgery should be available, within a local heart transplant service, to every heart transplant patient around the country.

Heart transplant surgery is still a relatively new branch of surgery and, as the hon. Member for Barnsley, Central stressed, involves considerable trauma for the patients concerned. The heart transplant programme started with a grand total of three operations in 1979, and by 1988 had expanded to 375. Until this year, it has been carried on in four designated centres. The hon. Gentleman listed a number of names, and not everything that he said about the designated centres was precisely correct. So that there should be no misunderstanding, let me make it clear that the four centres which, until this year, have been designated centres for heart transplant surgeries are the Freeman hospital in Newcastle, Papworth hospital, Harefield hospital and the Wythenshawe hospital in Manchester. Great Ormond street does some operations in association with Papworth; they are counted as one designated centre.

On the advice of the appropriate committee, the Secretary of State has recently designated two new centres for heart transplant surgery—St. George's in London and the Northern general hospital in Sheffield. It has also been made clear that heart transplantation in young children is still regarded as very much an experimental course of treatment and that heart transplant surgery on young children should be concentrated, within the designated sites, on the Great Ormond street hospital in London and the Freeman hospital in Newcastle. Even within the limited programme of designated sites, our policy is to seek to concentrate heart transplant surgery for children at two of the six.

Mr. Illsley: But as Killingbeck has now carried out five heart and lung transplants on children as young as three, the Government ought surely to consider Killingbeck as a designated centre along with the Freeman hospital in Newcastle. Moreover, I understand that at present the Freeman hospital has no programme of child heart transplants.

Mr. Dorrell: The Secretary of State has chosen to designate those sites because child transplant surgery is regarded as an experimental course of treatment. Given the high-tech nature of the treatment, and as it is still regarded as experimental and therefore relatively high-risk surgery, all the evidence suggests that it is good management for us to concentrate the resources on a few centres and to seek to develop in those centres teams of particular expertise, rather than encouraging the development of teams offering such treatment on a more general basis around the country.

We do not have, and do not seek, the power to interfere with clinical judgments. But we have, and we seek to use, the power to encourage the concentration in regional centres because we believe that that is the best way of facilitating an effective heart transplant programme. The object of the arrangements is to foster the planned development of services, including the concentration of services at a limited number of sites, because we believe that it is in the best interests of patients to do so. The policy is based on evidence that success rates in complex therapeutic procedures or in managing rare conditions depends on the number of operations or therapies performed. In simple terms, centres with a large throughput get the best results.

Other countries have experienced a proliferation of activity; the hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) referred to France. In France and elsewhere, there has been a proliferation of activity, with many small units doing too little work to achieve the best results from that course of treatment. It is not unfair to say that those countries look with envy at our heart and liver transplant programme and regard it as a role model for them to emulate.

The arguments for concentrating services apply with particular force to heart transplants, because the units depend on the supply of a scarce resource. The success of the British organ sharing arrangements depends on priority being given to designated units.

The hon. Member for Barnsley, Central referred to organ availability. We have set up elaborate arrangements to try to ensure that organs are passed on as quickly as possible when they become available. Only by concentrating around the arrangements that have been created will the NHS have the best opportunity of delivering the most effective heart transplant programme that can be engineered. That is my objective and I am sure that it is the objective of the hon. Member for Barnsley, Central. The arrangements that we have put in place are the best way to deliver that objective.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at fourteen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 27 June 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

ENVIRONMENT

National Parks

1. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about funding for measures to combat footpath erosion in national parks.

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. David Trippier): Seventy-five per cent. of national parks approved expenditure is met by the Government through national parks supplementary grant. Aggregate NPSG is based on bids for resources made by each national park for identified national and local priorities, including counter-erosion work and rights of way. Aggregate NPSG for 1990-91 is £9·97 million, an increase of almost 10 per cent. over 1989-90 figures, and over 20 per cent. in real terms since the Government took office in 1979.

Mr. Bennett: I thank the Minister for that reply, but I am sure that he is well aware of the growing problems of footpath erosion in the Yorkshire dales on mountains such as Whernside, Pen-y-ghent and Ingleborough, in north Wales on Tryfar, and in the Lake District. Will he ensure that there are sufficient funds to protect footpaths from erosion and that we open up far larger areas of the countryside so that the wear and tear can be spread over a greater area, not concentrated on one or two honey spots which people visit at present?

Mr. Trippier: I am sympathetic to the hon. Gentleman's point. There has been adequate funding in this year's public expenditure survey round. Given sufficient funding in the forthcoming PES round, we hope to be able to accommodate maintenance in the districts to which he referred.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Will my hon. Friend take cognisance of the fact that in some national parks, footpaths are also used by horse riders and some walkers complain that footpaths get cut up? Will he ensure that there is always money to maintain the paths that horses also use and remind walkers that if it is muddy, they need to wear gumboots?

Mr. Trippier: I am happy to echo the commercial that my hon. Friend has made to the House and confirm—I have a personal interest in the matter—that I consider bridleways to be as important as footpaths.

Ms. Walley: Does not the Minister realise that there is insufficient money to protect footpaths from erosion? Is he aware that footpath erosion results from too many people walking along the same paths? Is not it important to keep access open throughout the national parks? Will he confirm that he does not in any way support landowners in the North Yorkshire national park authority who wish to take away the public's freedom of access and, in so doing, threaten public access throughout the country?

Mr. Trippier: I am happy to confirm to the hon. Lady and the House that the Government, particularly the Department of the Environment, through the Countryside Commission, are very much in favour of improved access to the countryside, but on authorised routes and recognised footpaths that are legally marked on maps. I know that the hon. Lady would support that.

Local Government Finance

2. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many suggestions he has received for alternatives to the community charge for the raising of local government finance.

The Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities (Mr. Michael Portillo): We have received a number of such suggestions. However, it is clear that the community charge is the fairest of the options because it is based on the principle that everyone should pay something for the cost of local authority services. No other system makes local government as accountable to the electors.

Mr. Devlin: Is not it remarkable that my hon. Friend has not yet received the Labour party's promised policy paper? Is not it the duty of any party that seriously expects to enter government at some stage to put forward its proposals? The Labour party has plenty to say in criticism of our proposals, but nothing of its own to put forward.

Mr. Portillo: As my hon. Friend says, it is truly remarkable that the Labour party has not come up with an alternative. In its recent policy document it promised to publish that day a background paper setting out its proposals for local government finance. There was no background paper. I suspect that there is no background. The Labour party has no idea what it wishes to do about local government finance and that is why the deafening silence goes on.

Mr. Frank Cook: Will the Minister take it from me that come the next general election the Labour party will have clearly stated its proposals on the matter—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cook: Will the Minister also take it from me that at that time the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) will very much regret his flippancy this afternoon?

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman is a great optimist. I wish that I could share his optimism. The Labour party has been considering local government finance for 11 years and has been unable to come up with any answers. I see no reason why the hon. Gentleman should believe that another two years will give the Labour party the breakthrough that it needs. By the next general election,

the basic fairness of the community charge will be well understood—certainly its great superiority to the rating system which is favoured by some Opposition Members.

Mr. Tracey: I am pleased that my hon. Friend is robust in defence of the fairness of the community charge, and I hope that he will continue to be so. But in his deliberations will he look closely at the standard community charge and the iniquitous suggestion by some local authorities that it must always be at the two times multiplier?

Mr. Portillo: Of course I will consider my hon. Friend's point. This is an area where the Government wished local government to be local. It is an area where we gave discretion to local authorities to apply multipliers on the standard community charge up to a maximum of two. I regret that not all local authorities took seriously enough the consideration of what multiplier should apply to different classes of people and I am now looking carefully at that.

Mr. O'Brien: Because of the great concern throughout Britain at the likely levels of the poll tax next year, when does the Minister intend to announce his alternative to his poll tax? In addition, may we be told when he intends to lay before the House for debate the Government orders spelling out the budgets of councils which he has poll tax-capped? Will he confirm that the delay in making those orders is due to the fact that the Secretary of State has now admitted using information that he received from Tory councillors on Calderdale, Derbyshire and Haringey councils in fixing their authorities' budgets? When does the Minister intend to bring forward his alternative to his poll tax?

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman misunderstands the position. We are not bringing forward an alternative to the community charge: we are looking at any anomalies in the system. I hope that we shall be able to make an announcement on at least some of those before the summer recess. There has been a judgment today from the Appeal Court and I believe that the way is clear for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to lay before the House the remaining draft orders and, if the House approves them, to make orders stating the final caps for the authorities.

Mr. Cran: Will my hon. Friend take it from me that my constituents find the community charge perfectly acceptable, but that they do not find acceptable the fact that Labour-controlled Humberside county council used the introduction of the charge to increase its expenditure by about 11·75 per cent. and they will have no early opportunity to oppose that at the ballot box? Moreover, most of the other districts in Humberside benefit from the safety net, but mine do not. Will he consider that in his review of the charge?

Mr. Portillo: I have told my hon. Friend and the House that we will carefully consider any new evidence on the standard spending assessments.

I had the pleasure of making a speech in Humberside on Friday evening, when I was able to make the point that the very high spending and the very large increase in spending by Labour-controlled Humberside council has resulted in much higher community charges than would otherwise have been justified; and that, of course, has been the main cause of the high charges borne by my hon. Friend's constituents.

Norfolk Broads

3. **Mr. John D. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what rights the local community has in the management of the Norfolk Broads; and if he will make a statement on protection of the environment in the Norfolk Broads.

Mr. Trippier: Under the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act 1988, the development, conservation and management of the Norfolk Broads is the responsibility of the Broads Authority which consists of 35 members, over half of whom represent local authorities. Thus they play their part in all aspects of the management of the Broads. The protection of the Broads environment is a prime objective of the Broads Authority, endorsed by the Government, and its commitment to that has been amply demonstrated since it came into being in April last year.

Mr. Taylor: Is the Minister satisfied with the work of the new Broads Authority in its first year of operation? When can we expect a report on that work? As the Minister has stressed that more than 50 per cent. of the members of the new authority are elected representatives of the local community, is not it a desirable formula to have local people involved in the management of such an important area, and will he commend that formula to similar areas elsewhere in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Trippier: I shall certainly consider the hon. Gentleman's first point and whether we can make available a report for all hon. Members to see.

As for the hon. Gentleman's second point—I am certain that this is the point he is making—I noticed that on 21 June he asked a similar question about the replication of that model in Northern Ireland, to which my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Northern Ireland replied that he was prepared to become involved in further discussions about Strangford lough in particular. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman welcomed that assurance and will take advantage of it if he sees fit.

Mr. Bellingham: Is my hon. Friend aware that since the new integrated conservation management approach introduced by the Act came into place this unique national asset has been safeguarded for future generations? Will he join me in paying tribute to the Norfolk people and to the one or two Suffolk people who have played a part in the new structure? Does he agree that if the people living around Strangford lough want to learn about conservation they need look no further than Norfolk?

Mr. Trippier: If this carries on we shall have a twinning arrangement between Strangford lough and my hon. Friend's constituency—which may not be too bad an idea. I am happy to pay tribute to the Broads Authority. My hon. Friend may recall that I had the opportunity to do that in the Standing Committee examining the Environmental Protection Bill.

Mr. Dalyell: What have Ministers learnt from the ongoing saga of Halvergate marshes, which featured so

much in the Committee stage of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981? Have they learnt anything about the management of wetlands?

Mr. Trippier: I think that we have learnt a great deal and that that has transposed itself into legislation which we hope will come forward from the European Community.

Green Belt

4. **Mr. Fishburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many acres of green belt have been lost to urban development in the last seven years; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for Housing and Planning (Mr. Michael Spicer): The total area of approved green belt has more than doubled over the past 11 years; any loss to urban development will have been minute by comparison.

Mr. Fishburn: Although I am grateful for the Government's rigour in conserving the green belt, can my hon. Friend assure me that the Department will be equally rigorous in preventing development in conservation areas in the inner cities? For instance, two thirds of Kensington qualifies as a conservation area. Will my hon. Friend provide for inner London the same oases of calm as the green belt provides for suburban areas?

Mr. Spicer: The Government wholly support the concept of conservation areas. Their designation is a matter for local authorities, and whether designations should be more widespread is a subject of a current consultation paper on demolitions, responses to which were due this Monday.

Mr. Ron Brown: Will the Minister have a word with his Scottish colleagues and make it clear that Mr. Wallace Mercer, that great entrepreneur, should not be given permission to seize part of Edinburgh's green belt for his super-duper stadium? We should remember that Mr. Mercer is interested only in the fast buck and not in the Hearts or Hibs supporters who have got a squalid deal all the way through this sorry tale which is repeatedly mentioned in the Scottish press.

Mr. Spicer: As the hon. Gentleman says, that is not a matter for me. I shall certainly make sure that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland hears what the hon. Gentleman says.

Competitive Tendering

5. **Mr. Norris:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress of the implementation of compulsory competitive tendering in local government.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory): Competitive tendering for construction and maintenance work has been compulsory since 1980. It was extended to a range of services, such as cleaning, refuse collection and vehicle maintenance by the Local Government Act 1988. It is being phased in and the first two rounds of competition are complete. The results have been encouraging, and it is clear that competition has done a great deal to improve efficiency and secure better value for money.

Mr. Norris: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer. Does he agree that there is no room in the philosophy of either socialism or the free market for waste and that the greatest benefit of competitive tendering is the elimination of waste? On behalf of all those who enjoy the services that are provided by local authorities throughout the country, may I urge him to continue the vigorous programme of competitive tendering that has been undertaken by the Government to ensure maximum value for money for taxpayers and all service users?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My hon. Friend is entirely right. Compulsory competitive tendering is a potent weapon in the hands of local authorities to secure high-quality services at the most competitive price.

Mr. Hardy: Is there any prospect of the Government adopting for their own responsibilities the safe practices that they now require local government to pursue? If he cares to read the *Official Report* of the debate on electricity privatisation he will see that if the rules that his Department is seeking to impose on local government were to apply to central Government some occupants of the Treasury would face surcharge or imprisonment.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We are always looking for new areas in which to introduce the benefits of open competition. I regret that the Labour party is apparently seeking to undermine that by withdrawing the requirement that competition should be compulsory. We are on the side of the charge payer and against the empire builders in some local authorities.

Mr. Michael Brown: Can my hon. Friend report on the position in Humberside? Can he confirm that he has had to issue a section 13 notice because that county council, in flagrant disregard of the charge payers in the county, is failing to operate the competitive tendering requirements of our policy?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Yes, Sir. Humberside has been issued with a section 13 notice because of apparent anti-competitive behaviour during the tendering round. The council is now required formally to account for its actions. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has further sanction powers that he will not hesitate to implement if the evidence warrants it.

Football Stadiums

6. **Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when his Department's draft consultation document on issues of planning policy guidance on the considerations relevant to new and redeveloped stadiums for Football League clubs will be issued.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Colin Moynihan): My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State hopes soon to issue a draft planning policy guidance note on sport and recreation matters, and it will also deal with all-seater Football League stadiums.

Mr. Pendry: I do not know whether I should be thankful for that laid-back reply. Now that the Under-Secretary of State has been stripped by the Home Office of most of his football responsibilities, at least we cannot blame him for not setting up the Football Licensing Authority. As he has extra time on his hands, will he at least get to grips with his remaining

responsibilities and give clear guidance to the football clubs on the safety standards laid down by Lord Justice Taylor? It is clear that the clubs are much more anxious than the Government to implement Taylor's proposals.

Mr. Moynihan: That clear guidance has been given and as soon as the Football Licensing Authority has been established, the guidance will be reinforced.

Mr. John Greenway: Although everyone associated with football regrets the delay in implementing the proposals and setting up the licensing authority, does my hon. Friend agree that it is better that we get such matters right and that the right people are appointed to the authority? Does he accept that, in any event, the interim recommendations of Lord Justice Taylor's report have already been implemented by most clubs?

Mr. Moynihan: I agree completely with my hon. Friend's second point. Several clubs have taken positive action to pursue the recommendations in Lord Justice Taylor's interim report. I shall pass the comments that my hon. Friend made in the first part of his question to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Does the Minister agree that if all 92 clubs in the Football League are to have the stadiums that their spectators deserve, some imagination will have to be shown by those who propose developments and more particularly by the local authorities to which such proposals are addressed?

Mr. Moynihan: Yes, I agree completely. It is precisely for that reason that relevant paragraphs will be included in the planning policy guidance note that will be issued shortly.

Mr. Hind: My hon. Friend will be aware that Liverpool, one of the clubs which participated in the match at Hillsborough where the tragedy that gave rise to the Taylor report took place has endorsed the concept of all-seater stadiums. Does my hon. Friend agree that the remarks of Lord Justice Taylor and the policy of the Government have been endorsed by the behaviour of the crowds at the World Cup, who were mainly in all-seater stadiums? There have been almost no incidents in the grounds.

Mr. Moynihan: I agree completely with my hon. Friend.

Mr. Ashton: Is not it 15 months since 95 people were killed at Hillsborough, one year since the legislation went through the House and three months since cash was promised in the Budget? Yet the whole system of improving grounds has been held up by the bureaucracy at the Minister's Department and at the Home Office. The two Departments simply cannot agree on the chairman of the committee and the setting up of the Football Licensing Authority. Since then we have had the riots at Bournemouth. The four years laid down for putting seats in stadiums has been eaten away and soon there will be only three years left. The whole scheme is in danger of being postponed and further accidents may take place because the Home Office and the Department of the Environment cannot get their act together.

Mr. Moynihan: The hon. Gentleman is talking nonsense. If he had listened to the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) and my reply he would have learnt that many clubs have been responsible and moved ahead with the recommendations in their own right.

World Cup

8. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he will be making to UEFA concerning the behaviour of England fans at the World Cup.

Mr. Moynihan: I have agreed with the president of UEFA that it would be unwise of the Government to take a view on the return of English clubs to European competitions until we are able to assess the behaviour of English supporters in the 1989-90 domestic season and throughout the World Cup. I will provide my assessment to UEFA as soon as possible.

Mr. Carlile: Will the Minister join me in congratulating the vast majority of English fans at the World Cup who, together with their Scottish and Irish friends, have behaved extremely well? Does he agree that although the Italian police perhaps stepped beyond the bounds on several occasions, they have shown the value of dealing with trouble well away from the ground? Will the Minister make representations to UEFA that it is far better to identify troublemakers and deal with them severely, in whichever country they are caught, than to penalise the whole of English football by keeping it out of international competition?

Mr. Moynihan: I, too, recognise that the overwhelming majority of English supporters have gone to Italy to enjoy a festival of football and have behaved admirably.

The hon. and learned Gentleman's second point was on Italian police activity. I join him in commending the Italian police for taking tough, effective and swift measures to contain the incidents of violence.

With regard to the hon. Gentleman's third point about action by the courts, I agree that other countries in Europe and, indeed, elsewhere in the world would do well to introduce measures which allow their countries to take action against people convicted of football-related offences in the country where the football match took place. We have led the way through part II of the Football Spectators Act 1989 and I hope that other countries will follow.

Mr. Burt: Is not it the case that a number of the measures that my hon. Friend fought for with the Italian authorities in relation to Sardinia, particularly the bans on alcohol near the ground, and the ferry bans, have been particularly effective as was his work with the football intelligence unit in identifying hooligans before they reached Sardinia? Is not it a disgrace that my hon. Friend's efforts on behalf of this country are constantly being undermined by yesterday's Minister, the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell), who has failed to have the good grace to welcome all the efforts that my hon. Friend has made, the majority of which, in the first stage of the competition, were entirely successful?

Mr. Moynihan: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments. The Government have always taken the view that it is important to be pro-active and to work closely with the Italian authorities to put in place as many layers of deterrence against hooliganism as possible. We have

been working hard for more than 14 months and have joined the Italian authorities in more than 120 measures to deter the hooligan element. I deeply regret that a tiny minority is still intent on hooliganism and continues to cause trouble. However, we shall continue throughout the rest of the World Cup to work closely with the Italian authorities, as we have done to date, to make sure that any measures required to stamp out hooliganism have the full backing and support of this Government.

Mr. Fraser: Millions of peace-loving fans want to see England back in European football. I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on what he has done, but will he confirm that he intends to play vigorously on their side to get English football back into Europe?

Mr. Moynihan: I have made it absolutely clear to the House that the overwhelming majority of football supporters have behaved well during the World Cup and I shall make it clear to UEFA that where there have been incidents of violence involving English supporters, a comprehensive report—based on police evidence and my officials' reports, not on newspaper headlines—will form part of the full report which goes to UEFA at the end of the World Cup.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Is my hon. Friend really able to assure UEFA that British football management is sufficiently determined to meet hooliganism with touch discipline? If the Football League can relegate Swindon town from division 1 to division 3 because of the behaviour of a couple of crooks, why did it not demote Leeds united from division 1 to division 4 because of the criminal behaviour of 200 hooligans who laid waste a number of seaside towns?

Mr. Moynihan: My hon. Friend has made his point very clearly. I have no doubt that the Football League will pay due attention to it.

Mr. Denis Howell: May I advise the Minister that this afternoon I have requested a meeting with the president of UEFA—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"]—to make sure that he fully understands that the Minister's policies lie in ruins, as we predicted, and to assure him that the Minister's increasingly frenzied utterances, particularly about innocent people who have been deported without trial, have no support on the Opposition Benches or among responsible people? What steps has the Minister taken to tell the Italian authorities that to round up and deport people, some of whom were tourists, miles away from the scene of the incident, is a disgrace and that every citizen is entitled to defend himself and his reputation under Italian, English and European law? *[Interruption.]* May I say to the Minister—*[Interruption.]*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman should ask a question, not make a statement.

Mr. Howell: May I ask the Minister to follow the policy on which we have supported him—that guilty people should be prosecuted and dealt with, but that innocent people should be presumed not guilty rather than being rounded up as they have been? *[Interruption.]* It was clear that Conservative Members—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is Question Time, and I must ask the right hon. Gentleman to be brief.

Mr. Howell: I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that when I started this question, it was quite a short question.

May I finally say——

Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must ask the right hon. Gentleman to make his final comments brief.

Mr. Howell: That is my intention, Mr. Speaker.

Finally, I ask the Minister to reflect on the monstrous mass libel of guilty and innocent alike represented by the comments that he is reported in this morning's press to have made—that they are criminally motivated. The guilty should be prosecuted but people who have claimed that they are innocent and have not been given the opportunity to prove it should not be convicted by such mass libel.

Mr. Moynihan: When the right hon. Gentleman studies the record, he will see that he has echoed the pleas of the louts who comprise football's effluent tendency. The Government stand shoulder to shoulder with all decent people in this country who condemn the criminally motivated minority of so-called England fans. I remain firm in my support for the tough, swift and effective policing that has undoubtedly contained incidents which could have escalated to levels that we have seen all too often in the past.

I am surprised that the right hon. Gentleman has only this morning decided that he wishes to seek a meeting with UEFA. He was in Italy for 10 days at the same time as the president of UEFA; he could perhaps have seen him then.

Mr. Howell *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: No.

Private Rented Accommodation

10. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many new tenancies he expects will be created by private landlords during 1990-91.

Mr. Michael Spicer: There are clear signs of increased activity in the residential letting market following the Housing Act 1988. I want to speed up this revival of the private rented sector.

Mr. Winnick: Why does the Minister not admit that recent legislation has totally failed to provide rented accommodation for people who desperately need it because they cannot afford to buy? There is no evidence whatever that such accommodation is being provided in the private market. Given the current crisis in the Housing Corporation, and as interest rates continue high, why do not Ministers allow local authorities to start building houses again and providing the accommodation that is so desperately needed? Why should those desperately in need of accommodation be penalised because of the selfishness and dogma of Tory Ministers?

Mr. Spicer: There are two problems facing the private rented sector—to that extent, I agree with the hon. Gentleman. The first is that, for years, we have undermined the role and function and the self-confidence of the private landlord. The second is that there is a blight hanging over the private rented sector due to the pronouncements of the Labour party, particularly those to the effect that it would sequester private property and again involve itself in rent control and total tenure. If the

hon. Gentleman has a problem, perhaps he should have a word with his own Front-Bench spokesmen and get them to remove that blight.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Does my hon. Friend agree that the anti-private-sector policies of Norwich city council and other Labour councils which preside over large council estates with increasing numbers of empty houses will serve only to increase the number of homeless people in my constituency and others?

Mr. Spicer: I could not agree more with my hon. Friend. Housing authorities throughout the country, particularly Labour housing authorities, are sitting on 100,000 vacant council houses. Because of the points that I made in answer to the first question, there has been little incentive for potential private landlords to bring the 600,000 vacant properties on to the market. At the very least, as a priority, we must get our existing housing stock properly used.

Mr. Trimble: While one wishes to see a considerable increase in the supply of rental property, does the Minister consider that more needs to be done than just removing rent controls? Has he considered the experience in Northern Ireland, where there has been no rent control whatever on new-build properties since 1956, without producing any increase in supply? Does he agree that other measures are necessary to increase the supply of property?

Mr. Spicer: Yes, Sir. I am giving serious consideration to what other measures need to be introduced in the way that the hon. Gentleman suggests. For instance, it should be made easier for people, especially elderly people, to let property. I am having discussions about whether we could use housing associations on a contract basis to manage some properties for elderly landlords. There is also the question whether the law is moving swiftly enough. There are plans as from next April to make it much easier for landlords to have their contracts applied. That is extremely important. We are considering other measures to do exactly as the hon. Gentleman suggests and to make the private rented sector much more effective than it has been in the past.

Competitive Tendering

11. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what savings he estimates could be made throughout local government by the introduction of competitive tendering and other efficiency measures.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Earlier this month the Audit Commission identified possible savings in local government of £1,328 million, of which about 50 per cent. has been achieved. Competitive tendering has been a powerful element in reducing those costs, but clearly there are very large savings still to be made.

Dr. Twinn: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that answer. Does he agree that failure to implement competitive tendering is a fraud on the community charge payer, that local authorities that are not implementing competitive tendering properly are probably pandering to the interests of local trade unions, which are totally opposed to the interests of local residents and will mean a higher community charge?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I agree with my hon. Friend. Compulsory competitive tendering is an indispensable mechanism for ensuring high-quality services at lower cost. It is a matter of regret, although hardly surprising, that the Labour party is therefore against it.

Mr. Nellist: If the Minister is serious about savings for local authorities through greater efficiency, will he have a word with the Secretary of State for Energy about the pricing policy of British Gas? Is he aware that yesterday the finance committee of Coventry city council decided to turn up the heat in 14 schools and old people's homes and open the windows to use an extra 56,000 therms of gas before November so as to qualify for a £30,000 lower bill from British Gas? What is the point in the Prime Minister, across the water this morning, giving £5 million to combat global warming when we in Coventry have to burn more gas to save money?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Energy pricing is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy, but it is clear that privatisation of the electricity industry will be a powerful factor in controlling energy costs in the future.

Mr. Holt: Does my hon. Friend agree—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Holt: Would my hon. Friend agree that the Government's policy on competitive tendering is very good? Will he consider the implementation, particularly by Middlesbrough council, which seeks to find a way around almost everything when it comes to competitive tendering? It recently awarded a contract for security services to a company which it set up with one of its councillors on the board, which did not have employees, against a proper tender submitted by a recognised and long-standing security firm? At the end of the day the tender was a small amount in favour of the newly-formed company, as can happen with a system in which only the chairman of the committee opens the tenders. Is not it time, therefore, for the Government to ensure that at least one person from the opposition can be on the tender committee when the documents are opened?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The 1988 Act gives my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State sanction powers against local authorities that have apparently acted anti-competitively. If my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) has evidence, he should submit it and I will ensure that it is drawn to the attention of officials and of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Tony Banks: Does the Minister accept that there was more than a little hypocrisy surrounding the answers given by Ministers about financial efficiency and local government? Financial efficiency in local government is acres and years ahead of the Government, given the over-run and overspend in the Ministry of Defence. If such overspending were translated into local government, councillors would be surcharged, as they have been in Lambeth, and would end up in gaol. It is time that the Government accepted the restrictions that they place on local government.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I am disappointed that the hon. Gentleman seeks to overlook the undoubted examples of waste and extravagance among local authorities.

Compulsory competitive tendering is necessary, and I should be more interested in the hon. Gentleman's attitude to that.

City Action Teams

12. **Mr. Arbuthnot:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress of the work of the city action teams.

Mr. Portillo: City team actions exist to make the most from the Government's substantial programmes for inner-city areas. They encourage co-operation between central and local government and between business and the voluntary sector so as to bring regeneration to inner cities and to benefit their residents.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Does my hon. Friend agree that city action teams play a vital role in the Government's £4 billion programme to revitalise the inner cities while Labour's candy floss document, "Looking to the Future", contains not a section and barely a word about inner cities? Does not that tell us something about Labour's commitment to the inner cities, compared with the Government's record?

Mr. Portillo: As my hon. Friend says, it is an extraordinary omission. The period of the last Labour Government was not a good one for inner cities. We are perfectly used to inaction by the Labour party, but to lack even rhetoric and promises about the inner cities is remarkable indeed and certainly contrasts with the £4 billion per year programme of Government aid for inner-city areas. I am pleased to say that that programme is flourishing, helped by the city action teams.

Mr. George Howarth: Does the Minister realise that, given the crisis in inner cities and the housing crisis throughout the country, the programme is insignificant and little is happening? Is he aware that the Housing Act 1988, to which the Under-Secretary of State referred, is in tatters without one housing action trust being set up, no voluntary transfers and absolute chaos in the Housing Corporation? Instead of all the talk, will the Government do something about housing and the inner-city crisis?

Mr. Portillo: I must overcome my disappointment that the hon. Gentleman did not tell us his party's policy on inner cities, given that the absence of such a policy has been pointed out. The hon. Gentleman's comments about results under this Government were untrue. He will know that the urban development corporations have attracted £7 billion of private investment, much of which is being spent on housing. City grants, and the predecessors, are supporting 430 projects and leading to the construction of 11,800 homes, among other things. When I say "among other things", I mean 47,000 jobs and a further £1 billion of private sector investment. If the hon. Gentleman does not know what is going on in the inner cities he must be going round blindfolded.

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: Does my hon. Friend agree that whatever progress is made by city action teams in improving the quality of life for inner-city residents, one of the greatest environmental problems still to be tackled is the war against litter, graffiti and vandalism? Does he agree that we must do all that we can to encourage community initiatives? Will he pay particular tribute to the initiative being taken by the Wolverhampton *Express and Star*, with its "litter busters" initiative, to try to clean up the black country and to involve young people in that activity?

Mr. Portillo: I welcome campaigns of that sort. My hon. Friend is absolutely right that it is important to keep sites free from litter and dumping in order to raise the spirit of the area. The Government's actions are directed towards raising the level of economic prosperity so that regeneration will be self-sustaining. There is no point in investing in housing projects or whatever alone—one must raise the general level of prosperity to create a better environment in inner-city areas.

Local Authority Spending Assessments

13. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities have made representations to his Department regarding their standard spending assessment.

Mr. Chope: A large number of local authorities have made representations about their standard spending assessments.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister accept that if the standard spending assessment figures given to local authorities are too low, there will be serious implications for poll tax payers because that will force up the poll tax to a high level? Lancashire county council and many other county councils in the north-west, like councils throughout the country, have made representations about their SSAs. Does the Minister accept that when the Secretary of State meets local authority associations later this year he should not only discuss the matter but respond positively by ensuring that an increase in the figures next year so that poll tax levels can be reduced considerably?

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State always responds positively to propositions. There is too much evidence that high-spending local authorities try to use SSAs as a scapegoat for their inefficiency and extravagance. Certainly, that is true of Burnley and Lancashire. In Burnley, the SSA is 17·5 per cent. higher than its grant-related expenditure equivalent last year, yet spending increased by 25 per cent. That shows that the high community charge in Burnley is fairly and squarely the responsibility of the socialist council and the socialist Lancashire county council.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Will my hon. Friend congratulate the citizens and local government officers in Calderdale on collecting the community charge at about the same rate they collected rates in the past? When he looks at SSAs will he take into account areas of special geographic difficulty, such as Calder Valley which has numerous roads which are often affected by bad winters and about which I have approached the Department year after year?

Mr. Chope: I shall convey my hon. Friend's congratulations to those responsible and I assure him that, as always, we shall listen to his representations carefully.

Mr. Soley: Does the Minister appreciate that if he does not tell us how many local authorities made representations, a great many of which were Conservative, we shall conclude that he cannot count, which is quite likely to be

right? Can he also tell us the answers to the important questions of how many local authorities, both Conservative and Labour, have asked for their SSA to be reassessed because it is too low, and whether or not part of the changes that the Government make to the poll tax will include increasing SSAs to meet the requirements of Conservative and Labour local authorities.

Mr. Chope: The Government are more interested in the quality of representations than in their number. This year there has been a 10 per cent. increase in SSAs compared with the GRE assessments for last year. That is above the rate of inflation. The hon. Gentleman must face the fact that the much higher than expected community charges are due not to inadequate SSAs but to the high-spending policies of so many councils.

Recycling

14. **Mr. Batiste:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what initiatives he is taking to promote recycling by waste collection authorities.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Environmental Protection Bill will require waste collection authorities to draw up and publish plans to recycle material in their area. The Bill also gives them a direct financial incentive to recycle waste rather than send waste for disposal.

Mr. Batiste: As an important measure to encourage more recycling, will my hon. Friend consider passing credits from waste disposal authorities to waste collection authorities and also to voluntary bodies if they can come forward with viable schemes for waste recycling?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Yes, Sir. Under the provisions of the Environmental Protection Bill, waste collection authorities will receive financial credits for material that they recycle rather than send for disposal. Voluntary bodies and agencies may also receive such financial assistance. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State can require them to be paid the money if circumstances warrant it. That should be a powerful incentive to local recycling efforts.

Mr. Faulds: Will the hon. Gentleman tell the House and the country what became of the initiative launched by the Prime Minister under the leadership of Richard Branson?

Hon. Members: Who?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: If the hon. Gentleman is referring to the voluntary initiatives on litter, those are still going ahead and are very successful.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: My hon. Friend will be aware that Walworth road is in the borough of Southwark. Will he consider giving special assistance to that council to deal with the horrendous piles of waste paper along that road, much of which is entitled "Labour's Alternative to the Community Charge" and appears to have been recycled on a number of occasions already?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I believe that there is a lot of waste and rubbish around Walworth road which has already been recycled fairly extensively and it may be better now to send it for disposal.

Drinking Water

15. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects all British drinking water sources to comply with European requirements for maximum pesticide residue levels.

Mr. Trippier: It is not possible to give a date for full compliance with the standard in the EC drinking water directive for pesticides, because this particular standard is not, in our view, technically achievable by any member state. The trace amounts of pesticide found in a small proportion of United Kingdom drinking water supplies are not regarded by the Government's medical advisers as posing a danger to health. The Government require water companies to carry out regular monitoring for pesticide residues and, where appropriate, to develop the technology for their removal and investigate, with the National Rivers Authority, the case for restricting the use of pesticides in the areas from which they draw water.

Mr. Fearn: Is the Minister aware that reports today state that two thirds of London's drinking water is now contaminated with unacceptable levels of pesticides? What do the Government intend to do about that? Thames Water has until some time in the next century to bring its water up to EC standards. Is that timetable to be altered?

Mr. Trippier: I have already asked for a report on the pesticides identified in Thames Water supplies. However, at this stage I must say that the Government's medical advisers are satisfied that the trace amounts of pesticides revealed by extensive monitoring in the United Kingdom generally do not endanger public health. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will join me in not wishing to scaremonger in any way. For a number of supplies, suitable technology for full-scale treatment to remove pesticides and other trace organic substances will probably not be available for any country anywhere for the next five years.

Mr. Gow: Is not it an impertinence for folk in Brussels, however eminent, to lay down conditions for the quality of drinking water in the United Kingdom? Ought not it to be a matter for the House and for the Government to determine the quality of our drinking water?

Mr. Trippier: My hon. Friend places me in a difficult position. As he knows, we are a keen, active and positive member of the European Community and we participate actively at European Council meetings of Ministers. I am pleased to reassure my hon. Friend that the standards that we set on a national basis, which are incorporated in legislation, are higher than and superior to what the European Community directs us to do.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: If, as the Minister says, the Government are such a keen and active member of the European Community and are so proud of Britain's record, why is he so active in Brussels in blocking proposals to make it easier to introduce future improvements in standards in the EC directive on drinking water quality? Is not that another sign of the Minister's negative attitude to Brussels and total complacency about drinking water quality?

Mr. Trippier: I am sure that the House will forgive me if I refuse to take lectures from the hon. Lady about anything to do with drinking water when I recall what the

Labour Government did when they were last in office, dramatically cutting the money available to the water authorities. I am glad to be able to tell the House that we are leading the way on water initiatives, which have been raised at the meetings of the European Council of Environment Ministers. The hon. Lady, along with her right hon. and hon. Friends on the Opposition Front Bench, seems determined to take every possible opportunity to do the country down and sell it short. That seems to be Labour's new tactic, but I can hardly believe that it would commend itself to the electorate.

Sewage Discharges

16. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take immediate steps to ensure that sewage discharged into estuaries around the United Kingdom is treated from the earliest possible date, to ensure immediate re-design of any planned developments including long sea outfalls to incorporate full treatment, and to provide Government finance to meet these commitments.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Government have already taken steps to require that sewage discharged to estuaries and coastal waters is treated from the earliest possible date. All new developments will incorporate treatment, and arrangements are in hand to establish treatment works at existing outfalls. Because of successful privatisation, the £3 billion required is available without recourse to the Treasury.

Mr. Michael: The Minister has failed to give the simple reassurance for which my question asked—that sewage outfalls such as that at Lavernock will be treated. They are still at the planning stage, so there is time for the Government to make that change and to show that they mean what they say. There is a suspicion in Europe that the Government do not mean what they say. Those of us who served on the Committee on Water Bill last year also suspect that they do not. Can the Minister tell us that outfalls such as Lavernock will be treated, that the change will be made now, when there is still time, and that the Government mean what they say?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Long sea outfalls which have not yet been started will include treatment. Projects already in hand or not yet started will include treatment at a future date.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Meat and Livestock Commission Levy (Variation) Scheme (Confirmation) Order 1990 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Welfare of Livestock Regulations 1990 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

Points of Order

3.31 pm

Sir John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the great parade in London today, representing so many facets of our national life, to celebrate the 90th birthday of Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, would you be good enough on our behalf to send Her Majesty the best wishes of the House of Commons?

Mr. Speaker: I understand that there may be an opportunity to do that officially a little later in the year. However, I share the hon. Gentleman's view and look forward to going to the parade myself this evening.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The same point? *[Laughter.]* Order.

Mr. Nellist: On a different point of order, Mr. Speaker. Although I realise that you are not responsible for the answers that Ministers give to questions, you will recall that, in a supplementary question to question 10, I raised the appropriate matter of local authority efficiency and asked the Minister whether he would contact the Department of Energy about a matter relating to British Gas. However, the Minister replied on the subject of electricity, which had nothing whatsoever to do with the question. Is there any possibility of you having a word with either the Leader of the House or the Patronage Secretary to ascertain whether we can get the quality of the Ministers at the Department of the Environment up a peg or two?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows that that is not a matter for me. I am not responsible for answers. It might have been a slip of the tongue.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. My hon. Friends and I at this end of the Chamber distinctly heard the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) shout to my hon. Friend the Minister for Sport that my hon. Friend is the biggest football hooligan in the country. That demonstrates the right hon. Gentleman's complete lack of knowledge because I have it on the most excellent recommendation that one or two others are even larger than my hon. Friend. The right hon. Gentleman should be asked to withdraw that comment which shows his complete lack of knowledge and an inability to discharge his duty.

Mr. Speaker: I am afraid that things are occasionally said from a sedentary position, but they do not form part of our parliamentary proceedings. I did not hear that particular remark, and I am sure that the Minister concerned is not thought of in anything like those terms.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We must move on, for we have a very busy day ahead of us.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I ask you to defend the House against such insults, particularly as "the tartan army", as it has been called, returned from the world cup without one of its members being arrested for anything. That matter is not one that I would wish to display against our dear friends south of the border.

Mr. Speaker: That seems to be a continuation of Question Time.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I know that I have not been able to call the hon. Member, but is his a point of order or a point of frustration? Perhaps it is both.

Mr. Dickens: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. There was an exchange in the House last week in which you were involved, and which I am afraid led to some bad publicity. May I personally apologise to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the House, for the embarrassment that I caused.

Mr. Speaker: That makes me feel very much better.

One-Parent Families

3.38 pm

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend the law in order to give local authorities greater discretion in providing accommodation for certain categories of one-parent families.

According to the Department of Employment's quarterly returns, 44 per cent. of people accepted by councils as homeless are in that category because their families, or in some cases their friends, have evicted them. That is a much more common cause of homelessness than divorce and the break-up of common law arrangements. My particular concern is with one category of homeless persons—girls and young women who are pregnant or who have recently produced babies.

Such girls account for 13 per cent. of homelessness cases—an increase of half the number 10 years ago. Recent statistics from the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, "Child Abuse in England and Wales 1983-87", reveal that children in one-parent families are twice as likely to be sexually abused and six times as likely to fail to thrive as their counterparts in a normal two-parent arrangement. That is not meant as a criticism of the many lone parents—widows, divorcees, abandoned women, and in some cases abandoned men—who struggle bravely to bring up their children under difficult circumstances. Rather it is a sad reflection of the fact that a child in the early stages of its life often needs more support than a lone parent can provide.

I want to address two specific issues. The first is the eviction of pregnant young women by their parents—something that we now seem to accept as a matter of course. The other is the way that local authorities should cope with those who undoubtedly need rehousing. The Association of District Councils is concerned at the large number of young people becoming homeless, and recently recommended:

"Where inquiries reveal that the person was within twelve months prior to applying to them as homeless or threatened with homelessness living with his parents or parent, guardian or guardians, he should be required to show to the satisfaction of the authority that the homelessness or threatened homelessness is genuine."

Under that male language is concealed the vital category of pregnant young women.

The statistic of 13 per cent. covers pregnant women only. It does not include the substantial number who have recently produced babies and have then been thrown out by their parents. I encountered an example of that a few weeks ago that I should like to share with the House.

A young woman in local-authority-supported accommodation came to my surgery with a number of problems with which I did my best to assist. She was 21, and during the course of the conversation it transpired that her parents were living just a couple of miles from her in an extremely comfortable house on their own. Her father had a regular job, but her parents had completely washed their hands of her. She had been away from home for more than 12 months, and I would not seek to change the law in her case, but the position would have been exactly the same legally if she had been living at home until the pregnancy.

As it stands, the law allows the parent to throw out any daughter aged over 16. That action has a double effect. First, other families who badly need accommodation are pushed down the housing waiting list. Secondly, the child born to the lone parent is at a great risk, often from predatory boyfriends. As the statistics I have already cited show, the child of a lone parent is twice as likely to be sexually abused and six times as likely to fail to thrive as a child in a two-parent family. But those statistics understate the depth of the problem because they are based on one-parent families as a single category. That category includes several groups in which there is little extra risk to the child—for example, those lone parents who are widows, divorced women and abandoned wives. The risk to their children is very much lower than that faced by the child of a young single girl.

We must ask ourselves whether we believe that all parental obligations to daughters living at home end the moment they become adult. Let us remember that for the purposes of the present law a girl becomes an adult at 16, not even at 18. I believe that those obligations should not end. Sadly, as so often happens, custom and practice have followed just a few years behind the law. Because the House passed the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, which is aimed at a small category of genuine, difficult cases, it has now become a matter of course for many parents—one could almost say most—to wash their hands of their daughter and throw her out once she becomes pregnant.

At a time when the Government are rightly chasing fathers and stressing their financial obligations, it is also right that we should consider two other categories of obligation and duty. I propose two specific measures. First, it should become a civil law offence for parents to evict a pregnant daughter under 25 years of age who is living at home or has lived continuously at home in the previous 12 months when those parents have adequate accommodation. Councils would then be allowed to bring civil actions against such parents.

Secondly, there will always be young pregnant women looking for accommodation—perhaps there is no parental home or the girl has been living away from it for a long time. Young girls may also leave home because of overcrowding or a risk of violence. In such cases I believe that councils should have a right and a duty to consider placing younger girls in warden-assisted accommodation where proper supervision is provided to ensure that the child born is not at risk.

From my constituency case load I know of a woman who gave birth to her first child when she was extremely young. To begin with she lived alone. Social services told me that she produced a total of six children. They believe that each one came from a different father. During that time her transient boyfriends have abused the first five children—the fifth child was only two and a half years of age at the time. In such a case it would have been much better if, initially, that woman had been placed in some type of supervised warden-assisted accommodation.

My Bill seeks to shift the debate on this vital issue of such vulnerable children away from a discussion of rights towards a discussion of duties and obligations. The Bill deals with two sets of duties: first, the duties which parents should continue to have to their offspring which should not end when the child reaches the age of 16; and, secondly, the duties of local councils. Of course they should have a duty to unmarried mothers with a vital need for accommodation, but their first duty must be to the rights of the child. I urge the House to support my Bill.

3.44 pm

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Does the hon. Lady seek to oppose the Bill?

Mrs. Mahon: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Bill is more concerned with the discretion to refuse single parents housing. Its attitudes are rooted in the worst bigoted Victorian values. I suspect that it is aimed at a small number of people, but it will have wide and sweeping effects. It seeks partially to excuse the Government's disgraceful record on housing.

There is a crisis in housing and a great deal of homelessness, and single parents are particularly vulnerable, but the housing crisis is the Government's fault. The Bill goes much deeper than that, as it seeks to remove the civil rights of any single pregnant mother under 25. It seeks to punish them as it states that such a woman, who the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) perceives to be a problem, has no right to a home of her own and should be herded into warden-assisted accommodation as if single mothers were somehow deviants. That is an outrageous suggestion which is probably entirely in keeping with the hon. Gentleman's and the Prime Minister's view of single parents. The Bill is in line with the Government's attempt to find a new scapegoat in single parents.

The chairman of the Tory party, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, set the scene for handling single parents in that way when he told the London conference on crime culture that

"single parent families and illegitimacy were to blame for rising crime and unemployment in inner cities."

Not only are those claims hurtful and insulting to single parents, but they are entirely untrue. A Home Office research study conducted in 1985 rebutted any link between single parents and crime.

The hon. Gentleman also sought to convince us that the children of single parents are more vulnerable to sexual abuse, although he tried to exclude certain categories. His remarks would be greatly resented by any single parent. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman does not have sufficient evidence to support them. If he is serious about helping young pregnant women, perhaps he should explain why the other night he voted against them having the right to early abortions and why, no doubt, he will be voting for a Bill that will lead to the closure of even more family planning clinics.

Single-parent families are not problem families but families with special problems, such as low incomes, poor housing and less access to employment. They are more affected by the Government's abysmal record on child care.

I challenge the Government's claim that there was ever some golden age of the family. If it existed in the 1960s, as the Prime Minister likes to tell us, why did the children of the 1960s reject it? A real family is what people define as real—what works for them. It is not something that the Prime Minister dreams up as she climbs another mountain of bigotry. Why is divorce bad for us when it was perfectly good for her and many members of the Cabinet?

The Government are seeking some new scapegoats and new victims. It is no coincidence that, on the same day as the Prime Minister told us that the increase in single parents was a threat to our whole way of life, the Secretary of State for Social Security briefed journalists on his plans for pursuing absent fathers whom he said contributed only £155 million to the upkeep of their children while the Department of Social Security contributed £1·8 billion. The Secretary of State wants to cut benefits and excuse the poverty caused by his previous cuts of £79 billion from the benefits system since 1979.

The Opposition believe that parents should, of course, be responsible for their children, but when a young woman faces lone parenthood the last thing she wants is to be treated as a deviant and supervised in warden accommodation. That is a Dickensian solution to neanderthal thinking.

The Government have created massive poverty over the past decade. The changes in benefits in 1986 and 1987 created more problems for single parents. If the hon. Gentleman wants to help, he should seek to convince the Government that parenthood, not marriage, is the fundamental principle on which to base benefits for families with children. Many people have enormous problems that could be solved far more easily if they had a decent home. That is at the root of many of their problems.

The Bill is a disgrace. I shall vote against it, as I hope the House will.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 19 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business):—

The House divided: Ayes 84, Noes 144.

Division No. 266] **[3.50 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard	Holt, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Ashby, David	Hunter, Andrew
Bellingham, Henry	Irvine, Michael
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*	Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Blackburn, Dr John G.	Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Body, Sir Richard	Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas	Kilfedder, James
Boswell, Tim	Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*	Macfarlane, Sir Neil
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard	Mariand, Paul
Brazier, Julian	Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*	Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Buck, Sir Antony	Moate, Roger
Burns, Simon	Monro, Sir Hector
Butcher, John	Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Butler, Chris	Morrison, Sir Charles
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*	Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Channon, Rt Hon Paul	Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*	Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*	Pawsey, James
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*	Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Day, Stephen	Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Devlin, Tim	Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Dover, Den	Shelton, Sir William
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*	Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Fox, Sir Marcus	Sims, Roger
French, Douglas	Skeet, Sir Trevor
Gale, Roger	Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Gill, Christopher	Soames, Hon Nicholas
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan	Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Goodhart, Sir Philip	Stokes, Sir John
Gow, Ian	Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*	Temple-Morris, Peter
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*	Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Hague, William	Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*	Trotter, Neville
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*	Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Hayes, Jerry	Warren, Kenneth
Hayward, Robert	Widdecombe, Ann
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*	Wilshire, David

Winterton, Mrs Ann
Woodcock, Dr. Mike

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Shaw and
Mr. Roger Knapman.

NOES

Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mrs. Alice Mahon and
Ms. Dawn Primarolo.

Question accordingly negatived.

National Health Service and Community Care Bill (Allocation of Time)

4.1 pm

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I beg to move,

That the Order of the House [14th March] be supplemented as follows:—

Lords Amendments

1. The proceedings on Consideration of Lords Amendments shall be completed at this day's sitting and, subject to the provisions of the Order of 14th March, if not previously brought to a conclusion, shall be brought to a conclusion eight hours after the commencement of proceedings on this Order.

2.—(1) For the purpose of bringing any proceedings to a conclusion in accordance with paragraph 1 above—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided and, if that Question is for the amendment of a Lords Amendment, shall then put forthwith the Question on any further Amendment of the said Lords Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown and on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in the said Lords Amendment, or, as the case may be, in the said Lords Amendment as amended;

(b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining Lords Amendments as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown to a Lords Amendment and then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in their Amendment, or, as the case may be, in their Amendment as amended;

(ii) put forthwith the Question on any Motion moved by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in a Lords Amendment;

(iii) put forthwith with respect to the Amendments designated by Mr. Speaker which have not been disposed of the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said Amendments; and

(iv) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Amendments;

(c) as soon as the House has agreed or disagreed with the Lords in any of their Amendments Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith a separate Question on any other Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown relevant to that Lords Amendment.

(2) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) above shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

Stages subsequent to first Consideration of Lords Amendments

3. Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the consideration forthwith of any further Message from the Lords on the Bill.

4. The proceedings on any such further Message from the Lords shall, if not previously brought to a conclusion one hour after the commencement of those proceedings.

5. For the purpose of bringing those proceedings to a conclusion—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided, and shall then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown which is related to the Question already proposed from the Chair;

[Mr. Kenneth Clarke]

(b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining items in the Lords Message as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown on any item;

(ii) in the case of each remaining item designated by Mr. Speaker, put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in their Proposal; and

(iii) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Proposals.

Supplemental

6.—(1) Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons.

(2) Such a Committee shall report before the conclusion of the sitting at which it is appointed.

7.—(1) In this paragraph "the proceedings" means proceedings on Consideration of Lords Amendments or on any further Message from the Lords on the Bill, on the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons and the Report of such a Committee.

(2) Paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(3) No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, the proceedings shall be made except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

(4) If the proceedings are interrupted by a Motion for the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on the Motion shall be added to the period at the end of which the proceedings are to be brought to a conclusion.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am sorry to interrupt these important proceedings, but I hope that you will understand that this is a matter directly related to your responsibilities and the rights of the House of Commons.

You will be aware, Mr. Speaker, that, following the European Community summit in Dublin yesterday, a declaration of 40 pages was issued by the Heads of Government. It anticipated that the Prime Minister would be making a statement about it tomorrow. Understandably a number of right hon. and hon. Members, including myself, have sought to obtain a copy of the document, and naturally we went first to the Library, which is always extremely helpful and forthcoming on these matters. We were given to understand that the document would not be available in the Library until tomorrow because the Foreign Office had refused to supply it, on the directions of 10 Downing street.

We made our own efforts to obtain a copy and have done so through the office of the European Communities. I understand that copies are now in the Library, because the Library told the Foreign Office that it would seek to obtain the document elsewhere if the Foreign Office did not supply it.

Clearly, if that is true, it is a deliberate attempt by the Prime Minister's office to withhold from Parliament material that would enable Members properly to interrogate the Prime Minister tomorrow. It would be wholly unacceptable if the Library, which provides a valuable service to all right hon. and hon. Members, whatever their party, were prevented from providing that service, and I should therefore be most grateful if you would look into the matter.

Mr. Speaker: That is not strictly a matter for me, but if the Library is prepared to produce these documents that is certainly a matter for the Library and for me. The provision of documents of this kind is a matter for the Government. I am sure that what the right hon. Gentleman has said will have been heard by the Leader of the House.

Mr. Clarke: The motion proposes eight hours of debate on the Bill. The House will share my pleasure at the fact that we can anticipate that by midnight we will have completed discussions on this most important Bill. We are approaching the stage where we are about to start on the important process of implementing the reforms that the Government sketched out some time ago in a White Paper.

Obviously, no Government introduce such a supplemental timetable motion lightly. Hon. Members will agree that it is helpful to have some limit on our debates so that they can be ordered and we can conclude our discussions at an acceptable hour.

I have attempted to discuss the timetabling through the usual channels. I will say nothing other than it is unfortunate that the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) declined to discuss with me at all the basis on which we might proceed. That approach to parliamentary procedure shows that perhaps the hon. Gentleman expects to stay in opposition for rather longer than he publicly implies. Anyone contemplating government knows the importance of having discussions through the usual channels on matters of this kind. No doubt that follows from the way in which proceedings were conducted on Report. The House will remember that, after a comparatively peaceful and reasonable Committee stage, we suddenly had an all-night sitting on Report, with inordinately long debates on some amendments so that we covered only five amendments in nearly 18 hours.

In case anyone should argue that the Bill will not have had adequate consideration by midnight, I remind the House that in Committee the Bill received 109 hours of detailed consideration. More than 800 amendments were tabled, full discussion took place, and some amendments were made to the Bill. There was more detailed scrutiny in the other place where the Bill had eight days in Committee and four days on Report. More than 800 amendments were put before the other place and nearly 100 hours of further consideration took place there.

As a result, the Bill has quite correctly taken up an enormous amount of parliamentary time during the winter. I am told that the two Houses have given more consideration to the Bill than they did to, for example, the Water Act 1989 which we all remember was a Bill of equal political controversy. This one is even more important. In case it is argued that all that debate has led to inflexibility by the Government, I can tell the House that throughout the discussions we have responded to debate and made important amendments. I am told that in 24 policy areas substantive change has been made in response to parliamentary and other discussion.

Hon. Members may have noticed that 177 of the amendments before us are Government amendments introduced in another place. That sounds like a formidable amount of last-minute change, but it should not cause the House undue alarm because many of the amendments are drafting changes and almost without exception the others fulfil undertakings given by Ministers in response to pressure from hon. Members. Those not in response to

undertakings are the result of the Government's introducing new material which received a general welcome. I do not think that they are likely to give rise to controversy. For example, we are about to consider statutory consultation on the creation of national health service trusts.

We have incorporated provisions for a procedure on community care complaints, and the most important matter that we shall discuss in the time laid down by the motion is the fact that we have paved the way for a new clinical standards advisory group. On that I reached an important agreement with the presidents of the Royal Colleges of Medicine and the Royal Colleges of Nursing and the associated statutory bodies. I think that the climate in the health service has substantially improved since we reached that agreement with the leaders of the professions not only on the detail of the reforms, but on the need to make sure that we have a new mechanism which will keep under constant scrutiny the standards of clinical care given to patients. That falls within the remit of the debate.

Those are significant improvements. We have discussed almost all of them at great length on previous occasions and we shall properly give them a final eight hours of consideration today.

I believe that eight hours will give the House ample time to consider the amendments. There is not a great deal of genuine controversy on the amendment paper, although one important matter has been trailed which we shall undoubtedly reach later this evening. There is ample time to talk about ring fencing and other matters. There is little else that anyone will want to vote on or argue about. Therefore, I hope that the timetable motion is generally acceptable to the House.

4.10 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): In opposing the timetable motion, may I say that the Secretary of State once again has shown his ineffable imperviousness to criticisms of his measure. During his address he was unwise enough to say that the agreement on clinical standards with the heads of the royal colleges demonstrated, if I remember his words correctly, the improved attitude within the health service to his reforms. Those royal colleges are precisely the same royal colleges which, in a unique document on which they achieved joint agreement, recorded their view that

"there is no evidence that the changes overall will improve the standard of care, will improve access to care, will improve choice of care or will improve the cost-effectiveness of care."

That is the statement which the Secretary of State is desperately obliged to claim in support of the improved climate for his reforms.

The Secretary of State was good enough to make public the discussions that have taken place through the usual channels about whether there should be discussions about the timetable motion. Thereby he releases me from any obligation to maintain the confidentiality of the discussions. Therefore, I share with the House what I said to the Secretary of State's office. We refused to discuss tonight's timetable motion with the Secretary of State because throughout the Committee proceedings we discussed through the usual channels sensible arrangements for debating and timetabling the Bill. Those arrangements were in the interests of both the members of the Committee and the staff and patients of the health service who thereby secured adequate debate on the matters of importance in the Bill. The Secretary of State knows full well why I now decline to enter into any such discussions. Our discussions with him on the procedure in Committee were misrepresented by him as agreement to the principle of the Bill.

I am interested that the Secretary of State now tells the House that an enormous amount of time has been spent on considering the Bill. It was only back in March that he told the *British Medical Journal* that he was impressed by the smooth and rapid progress of the Bill. At that stage there was no suggestion that the Bill required guillotining. On the contrary, he cited the speed with which the House disposed of the Bill as a sign that he was winning the arguments.

The Secretary of State suggested that his motion will be helpful to the House. In this regard, as in so many others, I beg to differ with the Secretary of State. On Monday night, when the messenger brought from the House of Lords the amendments that we are to debate this afternoon, he passed along a corridor which contains a series of paintings depicting the triumph of Parliament in the civil war—the triumph of the rights of the House over arbitrary government and the triumph of the freedom of the House to decide for itself what issues it will debate and vote on. If King Charles I were capable of putting his head back on and returning to the Chamber, he would be astonished at the powers that the present Administration exercise over the Commons.

The Prime Minister and the Patronage Secretary exercise powers over this House of which King Charles could only dream. As my hon. Friends will be aware, King Charles's misfortune was that he had to deal with a Parliament of free men, not pressed by party faction, bribed by patronage from No. 10 or cowed by the threat of a row from the hon. Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight). It was a Parliament of Members who asserted the rights of this House for the people who sent them here.

The most remarkable feature of the proceedings is not that we are invited to dispose of 24 groups of amendments in seven hours after the debate on the timetable motion, which gives us just about one vote per group of amendments. We are used to the Government treating the House with contempt. This is the same ministerial team that on Report invited the House to dispose of 100 Government amendments in a single block vote, thus giving a wholly new context to the term "block vote." It is therefore no surprise that we should be faced with such a motion.

The real surprise would be if the Opposition were to find a single Conservative Member of Parliament voting with them tonight; it would be a surprise if any Government Back Bencher were prepared to vote for the rights of the House against the Government's proposals and had the courage to defend them without the protection of the guillotine.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow) *rose*——

Mr. Cook: The hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) is taking a close interest in the proceedings. Let me tell him about the extent to which Ministers assume that they can use him and his hon. Friends as rubber stamps. Let me outline the timetable for the rest of the week. Tomorrow the House of Lords expects to receive the results of our debate. The other place is expected to reach a conclusion

[Mr. Cook]

tomorrow. The press has been briefed to expect Royal Assent to the Bill on Friday. Tonight the House of Commons is faced with considering 187 amendments—but, no matter, the press has been confidently told that in 48 hours the Bill will become law. That is the real reason for the timetable motion; that is why the House has to consider the amendments and reach a conclusion by midnight. It is not because the Secretary of State is afraid that he will turn into a pumpkin and be towed away by 12 white mice at midnight, nor is it because he is frightened that I might warm to my theme, get carried away by the points that I want to make and speak for another two hours during the proceedings.

The reason why the Government have to get the proceedings concluded by midnight is that they have to get the measure back to the House of Lords before it rises tonight. The reason for guillotining our proceedings on the amendments passed by their Lordships is solely to allow their Lordships to go to bed at midnight.

Mr. Hayes *rose*——

Mr. Cook: If the hon. Gentleman wishes to intervene, I shall be happy to allow him to do so. If he does not, I shall not give way to him.

Mr. Hayes: I am amazed to hear the hon. Gentleman talk about block votes with the eloquence of Satan denouncing sin. We have debated the Bill at considerable length. There were tremendous contributions from both sides, particularly the Government side, in Committee. That is most unusual. *[Interruption.]* Yes, it is most unusual. It has made this measure much better than other measures that we have considered in the past. It has been properly debated and discussed. There is not a great deal to argue about. There will be a few little skirmishes on ring fencing, but the fact is that the overwhelming majority of the Bill has been accepted by Conservative Members and by the medical profession.

The hon. Gentleman did his best in Committee with a fairly weak case. However, most of the arguments were put forward by my hon. Friends. Nothing much happened on the Opposition side. Therefore, they felt so horrendously guilty about it that they had to keep us up all night to show their trade union friends that they were doing something. Now we are having this nonsensical debate. The hon. Gentleman did not consult my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health about the guillotine motion because he had not thought out his arguments on it. Judging by his speech, he has not even yet made up his mind.

Mr. Cook: I hope that the hon. Gentleman's intervention will at least have served the purpose of sparing the House yet another speech from the hon. Gentleman. I must, however, take up one point that he made during that stream of consciousness. Some of my hon. Friends will have noted it; it is thoroughly revealing of the difficulty that faces us in getting the Administration to believe that there are people in this country who oppose the measure. The hon. Gentleman said that the medical profession now accept the proposals.

Mr. Hayes: Eighty per cent. of them do.

Mr. Cook: Only today, at the British Medical Association conference, another major campaign was launched by the medical profession against the very matters that we are discussing. Does any Conservative Member ever listen to anything that is said by people outside this Chamber?

One can confidently predict that, as a result of the motion, a number of Lords amendments will not be debated. For instance, Lords amendments Nos. 111 to 114 are the third last group on the selection list. They have not a hope of being reached. They are, Mr. Speaker, among the amendments that you will almost certainly be called upon to put to the House forthwith at midnight. The House will then have to vote on those amendments, along with all the other outstanding amendments—in one single vote. We shall not only not debate them; we shall not vote upon them separately.

Lords amendments Nos. 111 to 114 provide that at least one member of a health authority shall represent the universities and teaching schools in that authority's area. The Secretary of State will be aware that the Opposition have tabled an amendment to build on that precedent and to require that one other member of the health authority should also be a member of the local authority for that district or region. It tackles one of the greatest perversities of the Bill, which purports to expand services to the community while at the same time booting off the health authorities the last remaining representatives of the very councils that provide those services in the community.

We want to hear from the Secretary of State whom he intends to put on the health authorities in their place. Will the new representatives be like the new chair of South-West regional health authority, who celebrated his recent appointment by writing to every member of the staff telling them that he has a lot to learn about what the NHS does and offering a holiday for two in Amsterdam for the best explanation in 50 words? The people whom we want to serve on health authorities are people who know more than can be said in 50 words about the business of the NHS. We want people who are committed to keeping the NHS a public service. I warn the Secretary of State that if, this autumn, he does not appoint such people to the health authorities, the Labour Government, when they come to power, will not be bound by those appointments.

Lords amendment No. 111 raises matters of controversy on the Labour Benches. But, in fairness to the Secretary of State, I remind the House that some of the measures before us tonight apparently are matters of controversy on the Treasury Bench. I was dumbfounded —almost struck dumb—by his claim that there are few items of genuine controversy before us tonight. We have before us tonight no fewer than five Government motions to disagree with Lords amendments.

The most perverse of those would strike out the ring fencing of community care required in Lords amendment No. 70. The House will certainly regard that as a matter of major controversy. I should point out, therefore, that the motion that we are invited to pass tonight prescribes that if we disagree with the Lords on that amendment and send it back to be debated tomorrow and if tomorrow the Lords decline to be persuaded by our disagreement and send it back to us, we shall have precisely one hour in which to dispose of that second message from the Lords and any other message that we may receive from them.

The Secretary of State can be forgiven for wanting to get that debate over quickly. After all, it concerns an issue

on which he stands entirely alone. Sir Roy Griffiths recommended ring fencing and the Select Committee concluded unanimously in favour of ring fencing. Every voluntary organisation that has commented on it has supported ring fencing, and 97 per cent. of directors of social services have demanded ring fencing. Even the proprietors of private residential care homes are terrified that the local authorities will not have the resources that they will require if there is no ring fencing.

Yet now, at this late stage in our proceedings on the Bill, we once again find the Secretary of State standing alone, convinced that everybody but him is wrong. Such defiance of all informed opinion gives the Secretary of State a heroic stature. He stands alone upon a peak in Richmond terrace. Like stout Cortez, he probably stands in silence, too, because I can make one prediction with confidence: if the timetable motion is passed, we shall not have time to debate all five Government motions to disagree with the Lords amendments.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I am sure that it has not escaped the hon. Gentleman's attention that, when stout Cortez stood silent on that peak, he had conquered the terrain on which he stood.

Mr. Cook: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman for convincing the House that at least one other hon. Member has read Keats.

As I was about to say, if the motion is passed, the House will certainly not debate all five Government motions. At midnight, Back-Bench Members will be invited to vote down the relevant Lords amendments without even hearing why the Government want them to do that. After that is over, my hon. Friends and I will go on a reasons committee to approve the reasons why the House disagrees with the Lords amendments. That will probably be the first time that any hon. Member hears what those reasons are.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, while he is sounding indignant about constitutional impropriety, he appears to be working to ensure that we do not actually discuss the Lords amendments, because he has taken a quarter of an hour out of the allotted eight hours expostulating rage about the inadequacy of time? When the hon. Gentleman concludes his remarks, we will embark on a debate on consultation on NHS trusts, on which subject he used five and a half hours on Report, when he first got into the macho "Let's liven it up" opposition that he did not previously display. Will the hon. Gentleman please allow us to get on to the substance of the issue rather than go over old ground again?

Mr. Cook: The Secretary of State helpfully brings me to my next point. He is perfectly correct. The first amendment is a grudging concession to my two-hour speech on Report, because, at long last, it would write into the Bill a requirement that regional health authorities must consult on opt-out proposals. That is welcome as far as it goes. The problem is that, although it obliges the regions to consult, it does not oblige the Secretary of State to pay any attention to the results of those consultations. Why? It is because every ballot and every opinion poll on this matter has shown that the right hon. and learned Gentleman cannot sell the idea that patients will get a better health service if local hospitals go it alone. The Secretary of State will never persuade the people who need the health service that a more commercial health service will be a more caring health service.

The Secretary of State knows that my hon. Friends and I have tabled a modest amendment that will require him not to make an order for opt-out unless the consultation for which the Bill provides reveals substantial support for opt-out.

My hon. Friend the Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) has a fine speech ready on the issue. She has been working on it for the three months since the Bill was considered on Report. I shall startle my hon. Friend by saying that I am willing to forgo hearing her speech. I am even willing to forgo the exquisite entertainment of hearing the Secretary of State explain how he can square an order for consultation with freedom for him not to be bound by that consultation. I shall forgo all that and offer the Secretary of State a deal. We will drop our amendment if he will drop his five motions to disagree with the Lords amendments. If he does that, we can conclude the business inside two hours flat, and we could all go off to dinner. To tempt the Secretary of State, let me say that I shall buy the beer. The right hon. and learned Gentleman cannot say, "You will vote down the five Lords amendments, and you will finish that by midnight." I note the wider irony of our proceedings. I cannot resist it.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: I would probably be out of order, Mr. Speaker, if I made a speech without giving way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Bennett: So that the nation and the House may get the hon. Gentleman's indignation into some perspective, is he any relation to the Mr. R. Cook who represented Edinburgh, Central and voted five times on 20 July 1976 to guillotine five separate Bills?

Mr. Cook: Yes, I plead guilty to that charge. As the hon. Gentleman has raised that point—it is not a wildly original point as it has been made in every guillotine debate of this Session—I shall make three points in response. I voted for the five guillotine motions on measures that were all in the manifesto and electoral address on which I stood. We are debating a motion on a Bill of which there was not a hint in the manifesto or electoral address on which the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) stood. Secondly, the 1974-79 Parliament approved 11 motions to guillotine 11 Bills, but since 1987 the Government have guillotined 12 Bills. Thirdly, if the hon. Gentleman checks, he will find that those guillotine motions did not apply to Lords amendments. There were no guillotine motions on Lords amendments until 1983, under the Administration which he purports to support.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): The score is three-nil.

Mr. Cook: As my hon. Friend says, a rugby score.

There is a wider irony about our proceedings tonight. The haste of our proceedings in the House this week conflicts with the collapse of the Secretary of State's timetable for his reforms in the world outside, where all his bluster cannot drown the noise of squealing brakes. When the Secretary of State produced the White Paper, we were told that by April health managers would be shopping round Britain for the best buy in, to use one of his

[Mr. Cook]

favourite phrases, an all-singing, all-dancing internal market. Those same health managers have been firmly told that in April they must stick so closely to existing referral patterns that no one will notice that anything has changed. The problem with the Secretary of State is not that he cannot get his reforms to work by April but that the Prime Minister is terrified that he might get them to work before the next general election.

Here I come to the appropriate final thought for the debate, which puts in context the motion to curtail our democratic rights. As the Bill ends its passage through Parliament, it is even more unpopular with the public than when it began. When the Prime Minister launched on "Panorama" the review that led to the Bill, she said:

"When we are ready, we shall come forward with our proposals for consultation. Should they meet with what people want, we will then translate them into legislation."

I must have nodded off through the consultation period.

The proposals in the Bill certainly do not meet what people want. The Bill has never been opposed by fewer than four votes to one in every opinion poll. Tonight, the Secretary of State will get his motion; he will get his Bill by midnight; and he will get Royal Assent on Friday. But then his troubles start because the debate leaves this place, the one place in Britain where he can find a majority for his proposals, and goes out into the country, where it has lost in every ballot that has been held. There will be no guillotine motion to protect the right hon. and learned Gentleman, no Whips to dragoon the voters and not even the hon. Member for Pembroke to egg him on with helpful reflections from *Hansard*. There will be only him and us. We shall pursue him around the country. We shall treat every consultation on opt-out as though it were a by-election. We shall hang the reforms round the necks of himself and his colleagues.

It is fitting that the Bill ends its proceedings with this squalid motion because it was introduced without any democratic mandate. The electorate, who were denied an opportunity to express a view at the last general election, will take their revenge at the next general election, not just to put the right hon. and learned Gentleman into opposition but to vote for a publicly funded, publicly managed health service run by local people accountable to local communities. That is the health service we believe in, and that is the health service that we shall create after this Bill is repealed.

4.33 pm

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): I was surprised by the disingenuous way in which the Secretary of State introduced the motion. He said that the House will be pleased to have completed discussion on the Bill by midnight. He knows quite well that Labour Members are anything but pleased about completing discussion by midnight. We want to have full and proper discussion.

The Secretary of State was wrong when he said that there had been what he called more detailed scrutiny in the House of Lords. The point is that the guillotine motion will not allow us to discuss the House of Lords amendments fully. That is what is wrong with the motion. By refusing to allow us to discuss these important amendments properly, he is insulting members of the House of Lords and he is guilty of failing to allow this House full and proper discussion of crucial amendments.

The major issues in the Bill are about both health services and community care. I have no doubt what will be sacrificed by the guillotine. Health services are important and have the backing of pressure groups, the royal colleges and, not least, the suffering patients, but on the whole the Government neglect community care. Certainly we shall not have an adequate opportunity to discuss that aspect.

The Secretary of State is failing to ensure that the 6 million people—according to the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys—who need community care receive proper consideration in the House. There are many disabled people and many more millions of old people who live alone or are looked after by relatives who themselves may be disabled or old. They will not be given the consideration that we should give them. I hope that, within the limited confines of the debate, we shall be able to have adequate discussions about disabled and old people who need community care.

We shall probably discuss the important issue of ring fencing. I remind the Secretary of State that, on the general timetable, it is illuminating to remember the build-up to the Bill. In March 1988, Sir Roy Griffiths published his report on community care. Twenty months later, after a great deal of pressure, the Government introduced their proposals in the White Paper. Only one week later, the Minister introduced the Bill. It is outrageous to rush these matters without proper discussion. The same is happening again tonight.

This is an enabling Bill and will give local authorities the opportunity to act in certain ways to help disabled people through community care. If the provision is poor, as it will be, the Secretary of State will be able to blame local authorities rather than the Government. That is the clever twist in the Government's handling of the Bill. The Secretary of State may say, "There they go, those terrible local authorities, falling down on the job, and here am I, a concerned Secretary of State anxious to help, but I cannot control the town halls," while not giving them enough money, denuding them of resources and denying them the cash to look after disabled people and old people. That is the trick that he will play. He will not even allow us to discuss those issues tonight. That is deplorable.

I have heard a rumour—it is only a rumour—that the Government intend to overturn the Lords amendments which ensure that people who run homes for those with a mental handicap must declare criminal convictions. If it is true, it is shocking. The idea that Ministers can allow crooks, thieves and possibly sexual molesters to take charge of those homes without declaring their criminal background is outrageous.

The Government, understandably, provide care for children. They say that they regard the welfare of children as important. But what about the welfare of mentally handicapped people? Their welfare will go by the board if the Government oppose that Lords amendment. What discussions will we be able to have about that? The Secretary of State referred to all the hours that we have devoted to the Bill including all those hours in Committee, but we will not be able to deal with the Lords amendments which will deny something that is very important—*[Interruption.]* The Secretary of State is not listening because he is enjoying a conversation with the Minister for Health.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am listening.

Mr. Ashley: I am glad. I would enjoy a conversation with the Minister for Health. She is a marvellous conversationalist and wonderful to talk to. However, I listen to the debates and I would appreciate it if the Secretary of State would listen to my point about the overturning of Lords amendments.

The Lords amendments are of great value. I was referring to the Lords amendments that will deal with people who run homes for the mentally handicapped. If the people running those homes have crooked backgrounds, we should know about that. We are entitled to know. It would be wrong of the Government to hide that information from us and it would also be damaging for the mentally handicapped. I hope that the Secretary of State will think again.

I have about 5,000 other points that I should like to have made, but I will not because I am aware of your eye on the clock, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Secretary of State is anxious to get on to the subject matter. We are also anxious to do that.

The Secretary of State does his homework and he works very hard. No doubt he has read the report of the debates in another place. Although he will not agree with me, I believe that the Lords made substantial points. They won their amendments by reasoned arguments, not by wild rhetoric or banging a drum. They were seeking to provide community care for the disabled and for old people. It will be a matter of great regret if those amendments are thrown out. It would be a scandal if they were thrown out without any discussion. I ask the Secretary of State to allow us more time to discuss those amendments.

4.41 pm

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): I want to detain the House for a few moments with a specific practical problem that arises from the timetable motion. I hope that the House will reject the motion, for the reasons outlined by the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook). He referred to two groups of amendments that we will not reach and on which we will have no proper discussion. Those groups are amendments Nos. 111 to 115 in schedule 1 and the equivalent set for Scotland, amendments Nos. 118 to 122.

I object to the timetable motion in principle, and I will also oppose it because it is extremely important that we discuss the amendments to which I have referred as there were further developments in another place earlier this week. The substance of the Bill was changed at 1 am on Tuesday morning in the other place.

The position of universities in England and Wales and in Scotland have changed. I hoped that the Secretary of State for Wales would be able to say something about that tonight, because that was a significant change. As a result, the universities in England and Wales and those in Scotland have moved out of step with regard to the Health Service. One of the few useful things that the Bill offered was an opportunity to bring those universities back into step, because they have been out of phase on and off for the past 15 years.

We referred in Committee to the universities' position in the wider context of the relationship between the universities and the health service. The amendments in schedules 1 and 2 to which I have referred were tabled by Lady Young and accepted by the Government on Report in the Lords. I believe that there was cross-party support for the arguments in Committee. That was clear from the way in which Lady Young moved the amendments in the House of Lords and also from the way in which the Government accepted them.

According to the amendments, universities have a duty to consult about appointments. It seems to me that, if the purpose of the amendments is to secure effective joint management, that consultation must take place. If that were to happen in Scotland, appointments in England and Wales would be brought into line with the present practice.

The position between universities in England and Wales and those in Scotland has been different in the principal Acts—the National Health Service Act 1977 and the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978. As a result of amendment No. 134, which was accepted by the Government earlier this week in another place, there is now a statutory duty to include appointments to the Scottish health boards from universities with medical and dental schools, as happens with regional and district authorities in England and Wales. In addition, however, there is a statutory duty under schedule 1 to the 1978 Act to consult the universities in Scotland about those appointments. My amendments would tidy up that position which exists as a result of the amendment that was accepted earlier in the week.

As we have a national system of education and a national health service—I read with interest the France report, in the name of the permanent secretary at the Department of Health, which appeared last week and which is signed by the Secretary of State for Health and the Secretary of State for Education and Science—it seems sensible that we should have a proper United Kingdom basis for that uniformity. It is disappointing that this timetable motion will prevent us from discussing that point. I should appreciate any clarification from the Secretary of State about my points.

4.46 pm

The Minister for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): In supporting the timetable motion, I must stress most strongly that this Bill has been thoroughly and rigorously scrutinised at great length already. It has spent 146 hours in this place, and 92 hours in the other place, and more than 2,000 amendments have been tabled to it. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has said, significant changes have been made to 24 areas of the Bill. No one can seriously claim that the Bill has been railroaded through. On the contrary, it has been thoroughly tested and significantly improved.

Yes, Conservative Members are in a hurry. We want to see the benefits of this legislation. We do not want to delay unduly. Six and a half months have passed since Second Reading, and during that time every aspect of the Bill has been rigorously and thoroughly scrutinised and debated.

I must reiterate the point made by my right hon. and learned Friend. All but five of the 182 amendments are either technical drafting changes or positive concessions made by the Government. My right hon. and learned Friend has already referred to the important clinical standards advisory group, which is an important further addition to our reforms. He also referred to the community care complaints procedures which we accepted as a result of discussions in Committee. There will also be statutory consultation on NHS trusts.

[Mrs. Virginia Bottomley]

Further improvements and developments have occurred as a result of careful debate and scrutiny. There will be consultations with carers' and users' organisations on community care plans. This is the first time that the interests of carers and users have been enshrined in legislation. The Bill also removes any doubt about the ability of local authorities to provide emergency treatment, and that is in recognition of an important point made by the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook).

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): I hope that I do not sound churlish, but the Minister said that this is the first time that the needs of carers have been embraced in legislation. Does that represent a total dismissal of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986?

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman knows very well that I take a serious and detailed interest in the 1986 Act and recognise the important contribution that it has made in this area. However, the Bill provides a new framework for care in the community for the elderly, the frail, the vulnerable, the mentally ill and the mentally handicapped. It will establish a new framework of care for the next decade and beyond. For the first time, we shall have a rational system with community care plans, opportunities for proper assessment and a complaints procedure. We shall be able to ensure that the vast resources that are already spent on care in the community are spent rationally and effectively.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): All that my hon. Friend has said is undoubtedly true, but it does not necessarily preclude ring fencing.

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend is drawing me into what will doubtless be the subject of a lengthy debate later in the evening.

It is clear, however, that local authority social services departments have more than held their own in relation to other spending departments in local government. They have increased their spending by 37 per cent. If my hon. Friend essentially distrusts local government——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I do.

Mrs. Bottomley: That is sad.

For many years local authorities have bemoaned the fact that the Government have insufficient confidence in them. However, we have confidence that they can undertake these important new tasks. Ring fencing would not mean a single penny more of additional resources. The role of ring fencing and specific grants lies in areas which have been neglected and which need special leverage. Examples include the mental illness specific grant, and the resources that have been devoted to AIDS. My hon. Friend will note the new proposition for ring fencing the money for those with drug and alcohol problems. Those matters were referred to several times in Committee. However, ring fencing the entire resources for care in the community would seriously undermine the role of local government.

I refer my hon. Friend to the remarks made by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) on several occasions, when he said that ring fencing tends to lead to a reactionary, fossilised and backward-looking attitude to those provisions. We want innovation and the development of appropriate services for care in the community that will need modern needs, on the basis of careful planning and rigorous scrutiny.

There has also been further recognition of the role of universities as members of the health authorities, and protection and enhancement of medical research and education in NHS trusts. That is an important further development. I do not accept what the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) said about the necessity for precisely the same mechanism in Scotland as in the rest of the country. His amendment might lead to individuals who are not from the locality of the authority becoming members of it. However, I appreciate his point and can reassure him that, when appointments are made to the authorities, a number of considerations will be borne in mind. Association with the district or region is obviously an important consideration.

The hon. Member for Livingston made the most outrageous allegations about those who are being appointed to serve on health authorities.

Mr. Kennedy: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way and do not want to delay her on this point. Although, unfortunately, I do not have the specific wording to hand, I am sure that her Department has made it clear that the intention behind the Government's thinking on that matter is to use people from the locality. The Minister's response did not seem to make such a strong commitment. If that is the Government's intention, why not include it in the Bill? There is anxiety that someone from one part of the country may be appointed to serve on a board in another part of the country, without necessarily having any grasp of the educational or health implications for that area.

Mrs. Bottomley: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the example of Salford, where there are teaching hospitals which will have a university member but where the medical school lies outside the district boundary. That is an example of a case that would be confined by the hon. Gentleman's amendment and where we could not achieve the end that we are seeking.

The issues that have already been raised will be reconsidered later today and will follow from those raised in the other place. However, I must return to the outrageous allegations made by the hon. Member for Livingston about members of health authorities. I should like to know whether the hon. Gentleman feels that he can justify them—not at this moment but perhaps in a later debate.

Greenwich health authority, for example, has—what a surprise—chosen as its representatives on the district health authority three Labour party prospective parliamentary candidates. That reveals its view of the sort of people whom it wants to put on the health authority. One individual concerned has absolutely no connection with the area—[HON. MEMBERS: "What is wrong with that?"] Opposition members ask, "What is wrong with that?" What is wrong is that it is characteristic of the Opposition, who constantly treat the health service as a party political football. Patients and those who work for the health service are heartily sickened when they see Opposition Members treating every development and improvement in the service as something about which they can make mischief and exploit for party political capital.

The hon. Member for Livingston has said that he will treat every consultation on an NHS trust proposal as a by-election, but I must advise him that Conservative Members know exactly what we are trying to achieve in modifying the membership of the health authorities. We want effective committed individuals, with a businesslike approach, who realise that when one is running a service that is the largest employer not only in this country but in the whole of western Europe, and which is worth £29 billion, party political placemen from the Opposition are not what is wanted. We want those whom we can trust to discharge their responsibilities effectively, to continue making the improvements in health care that we have seen over the past decade, and who can continue to work under the guidance of and in liaison with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, who has secured unprecedented resources for the health service and further improvements for the care of our people.

Mr. Robin Cook: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for drawing breath at that point. She has referred to the appointments made to the Greenwich health authority. Is she aware that one of the appointees is the leader of the Greenwich authority? He was elected to the authority and then elected leader of it. His appointment marks the sort of close relationship between the social services and the health authority that my hon. Friends and I welcome and wish happened more often in the country. However, if the Minister is taking that tack, will she explain how, in applying the criteria of businesslike, efficiency and commitment to the health service, it has just been concluded that the most appropriate chair for one of the Leeds health authorities is the chairman of the West Yorkshire Conservative Association?

Mrs. Bottomley: We are looking for those who have the ability to discharge their responsibilities effectively and constructively. A close working relationship between the health authorities and the local authorities can frequently play an important part in health provision. It is essential that there are close working agreements, especially for the care in the community proposals. However, those appointed are appointed because of the contribution that they can make to the health service, not so that they can represent avested interest or group.

I know that hon. Members want to make headway in debating the amendments at greater length. We are in haste to implement the reforms to ensure that the British people can benefit from an improved and more rationally run health service. Our care in the community proposals set a new framework for the next decade and beyond. Carers and users will be respected and recognised. My right hon. and learned Friend has included safeguards. Community care plans will be published and consulted on locally to ensure the good will of the local community in constructing proposals for the frail and the elderly.

Under this Government, more patients are being treated and we have more doctors, nurses and resources. Fundamental to our proposals for reform is the fact that we want better management and more effective use of resources. Above all, we want the patient to be put first. I urge hon. Members to support the timetable motion.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 305, Noes 200.

Division No. 267] **[4.58 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger

Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Wavaney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alastair Goodlad and Mr. Timothy Wood.

NOES

Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John (Coventry NE)
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKelvey, William
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*

Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen Adams.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Order of the House [14th March] be supplemented as follows:—

Lords Amendments

1. The proceedings on Consideration of Lords Amendments shall be completed at this day's sitting and, subject to the provisions of the Order of 14th March, if not previously brought to a conclusion, shall be brought to a conclusion eight hours after the commencement of proceedings on this Order.

2.—(1) For the purpose of bringing any proceedings to a conclusion in accordance with paragraph 1 above—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided and, if that Question is for the amendment of a Lords Amendment, shall then put forthwith the Question on any further Amendment of the said Lords Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown and on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in the said Lords Amendment, or, as the case may be, in the said Lords Amendment as amended;

(b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining Lords Amendments as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown to a Lords Amendment and then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in their Amendment, or, as the case may be, in their Amendment as amended;

(ii) put forthwith the Question on any Motion moved by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in a Lords Amendment;

(iii) put forthwith with respect to the Amendments designated by Mr. Speaker which have not been disposed of the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said Amendments; and

(iv) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Amendments;

(c) as soon as the House has agreed or disagreed with the Lords in any of their Amendments Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith a separate Question on any other Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown relevant to that Lords Amendment.

(2) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) above shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

Stages subsequent to first Consideration of Lords Amendments

3. Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the consideration forthwith of any further Message from the Lords on the Bill.

4. The proceedings on any sugh further Message from the Lords shall, if not previously brought to a conclusion one hour after the commencement of those proceedings.

5. For the purpose of bringing those proceedings to a conclusion—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided, and shall then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown which is related to the Question already proposed from the Chair;

(b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining items in the Lords Message as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown on any item;

(ii) in the case of each remaining item designated by Mr. Speaker, put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in their Proposal; and

(iii) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Proposals.

Supplemental

6.—(1) Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons.

(2) Such a Committee shall report before the conclusion of the sitting at which it is appointed.

7.—(1) In this paragraph "the proceedings" means proceedings on Consideration of Lords Amendments or on any further Message from the Lords on the Bill, on the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons and the Report of such a Committee.

(2) Paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(3) No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, the proceedings shall be made except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

(4) If the proceedings are interrupted by a Motion for the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on the Motion shall be added to the period at the end of which the proceedings are to be brought to a conclusion.

Orders of the Day

National Health Service and Community Care Bill

Lords amendments considered.

[The following Reports of the Social Services Committee are relevant: Second Report, Session 1989-90, Community Care: Future funding of Private and Voluntary Residential Care (House of Commons Paper No. 257); Third Report, Session 1989-90, Community Care: Funding for local authorities (House of Commons Paper No. 277); Fifth Report, Session 1989-90, Community Care: Carers (House of Commons Paper No. 410); Sixth Report, Session 1989-90, Community Care: Choice for Service Users (House of Commons Paper No. 444); and the Government's Reply to the Second Report of Session 1989-90 (Cm. 1100).]

Clause 5

NHS TRUSTS

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 6, line 6, at beginning insert

"Subject to subsection (1A) or, as the case may be, subsection (1B) below"

5.11 pm

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): With this it will be convenient to discuss the following: Lords amendment No. 2 in page 6, line 14, at end insert—

"(1A) In any case where the Secretary of State is considering whether to make an order under subsection (1) above establishing an NHS trust and the hospital, establishment or facility concerned is or is to be situated in England, he shall direct the relevant Regional Health Authority to consult, with respect to the proposal to establish the trust,—

(a) the relevant Community Health Council and such other persons or bodies as may be specified in the direction; and

(b) such other persons or bodies as the Authority considers appropriate;

and, within such period (if any) as the Secretary of State may determine, the relevant Regional Health Authority shall report the results of those consultations to the Secretary of State.

(1B) In any case where the Secretary of State is considering whether to make an order under subsection (1) above establishing an NHS trust and the hospital, establishment or facility concerned is or is to be situated in Wales, he shall consult the relevant Community Health Council and such other persons and bodies as he considers appropriate.

(1C) In subsections (1A) and (1B) above—

(a) any reference to the relevant Regional Health Authority is a reference to that Authority in whose region the hospital, establishment or other facility concerned is, or is to be, situated; and

(b) any reference to the relevant Community Health Council is a reference to the Council for the district, or part of the district, in which that hospital, establishment or other facility is, or is to be, situated."

Amendment (a) to the proposed Lords amendment in line 6, leave out 'consult' and insert 'ballot'.

Amendment (b) to the proposed Lords amendment in line 13, leave out 'consultations' and insert 'ballots'.

Amendment (c) to the proposed Lords amendment in line 13, at end add

'who shall not make an order under subsection (1) above, unless those consultations establish substantial support for an NHS trust among the staff of the hospital, establishment or facility and the local community it serves.'.

Amendment *(d)* to the proposed Lords amendment line 17, leave out 'consult' and insert 'ballot'.

Amendment (e) to the proposed Lords amendment in line 18, at end add

'and shall not make an Order unless those consultations establish substantial support for an NHS trust among the staff of the hospital, establishment or facility and the local community it serves.'.

Lords amendments Nos. 3 to 5 and 40.

Lords amendment No. 41, in clause 30, page 31, line 26, at end insert—

"(1A) The Secretary of State shall by regulations provide for such consultation as may be so prescribed to be carried out by a Health Board or the Agency, before he makes an order under subsection (1)."

Amendment (a) to the proposed Lords amendment in line 2, leave out from 'regulations' to end of line 5 and insert

'direct the relevant Health Board or the Agency to consult, with respect to a proposal to establish a trust:

(a) the relevant Community Health Council and such other persons or bodies as may be specified in the direction; and

(b) such other persons or bodies as the Board or the Agency considers appropriate;

and the relevant Board or the Agency shall report the results of those consultations to the Secretary of State, who shall not make an order under subsection (1) above, unless those consultations establish a substantial body of support for an NHS trust among the staff of the hospital, establishment or facility and the local community it serves.'.

Amendment (b) to the proposed Lords amendment in line 3, leave out 'consultation' and insert 'ballot'.

Lords amendments Nos. 42 to 44, 118 to 122, 141 to 145 and 171.

Mr. Clarke: The amendments are concerned with the consultation process on the establishment of national health service trusts when our reforms are implemented, beginning in April of next year. In our discussions of the proposed reforms NHS trusts are often referred to as self-governing hospitals. That is a rather simplified description because the NHS units interested in self-governing status as NHS trusts extend beyond hospitals. As far as I am aware, the hospitals interested range from some of the biggest to the smallest. There is also a great deal of interest in NHS units delivering services to mentally ill people and community-based services of one kind or another. There are even two or three ambulance services that are interested in the prospect of having much more control over the way in which their part of the service is run inside the NHS.

This is not the occasion for me to set out again at great length the virtues we see in returning to the NHS much more devolution of responsibility and accountability. That should be given back to those at the sharp end of the service—those people delivering care on the ground—where they have the necessary competence, enthusiasm and ability to discharge those responsibilities properly.

The first NHS trusts will be established in the spring of next year, when leadership will be provided by local people sitting on a board chaired by a leading figure of the locality. That board will comprise executive and

non-executive bodies on the smaller corporate-type model that we are advocating for health authorities and trusts under the regime. Those boards will put forward their particular plans for the development of their part of the NHS. Shortly after the Bill receives Royal Assent—I should imagine by the middle of next month—applications to establish NHS trusts will come to me and the regional health authorities from local enthusiasts. They will set out what they think they could do to raise the quality of care to their patients in their part of the NHS if given the necessary autonomy to do so.

There are many people in the NHS who will welcome the fact that NHS trust status will give them a much greater control over the day-to-day affairs in their hospitals. There are many who are anxious to get away from the detailed supervision of their affairs undertaken by district health authorities, regional health authorities, my officials and Ministers of whatever party is in power. I believe that a further injection of pride will be given to those local units that take advantage of the opportunity to establish an NHS trust. The staff of those units and all those served by them will have an increased sense of identity with the local hospital—their local part of the NHS—that is such a great feature of the service we are discussing.

5.15 pm

The Labour party has throughout bitterly opposed NHS trusts for reasons that have, at times, totally mystified me. Once or twice during our proceedings on the Bill I was struck by the irony of the fact that this particular part of the Bill reverses the policy of the National Health Service Reorganisation Act 1973, introduced by the then Conservative Government. By a further irony I was the Government Whip who ensured that we had a majority when we implemented the 1973 Act which introduced the system of area and regional health authorities. That was done in the teeth of the bitter opposition of the Labour party.

That Act brought to an end the long-standing system of local management of the NHS based on the old hospital management boards and similar arrangements throughout the service. Obviously we are not going back to precisely the way in which the health service was run in its first 25 years. We are introducing much more up-to-date and sensible arrangements that are capable of allowing local decisions. Nevertheless, it is right to go back to a system whereby the NHS, as in its first quarter of a century, brings out the best in local management, enterprise and ideas about how best to deliver care to local patients.

In 1972 the Labour party did not have a clue about why it was opposed to the creation of the health authorities. It firmly committed itself to hand the entire service to local government once it came to power. I remember that the then Opposition spokesman was emphatic about that. The Labour party did not reverse Keith Joseph's reforms, but kept them untouched and untroubled by new ideas from 1974 to 1980. Now the Labour party is dying in the last ditch to defend the rights of the health authorities we created, which were introduced to provide detailed supervision of the day-to-day management of every part of the NHS. The Labour party is defending the right of the district and regional health authorities to second-guess day-to-day management even when we identify local people who want to take responsibility in their hands through an NHS trust. That is what the debate has been about.

The amendments concern the necessary consultation on the establishment of NHS trusts when I receive applications from those promoters who wish to establish such a trust in their area. There is no change of policy behind the amendments and that is why I made a short plea earlier for us not to spend another five and a half hours talking about this, as we did on Report for reasons best known to those who face me in the Chamber.

I have looked up the Second Reading debate when we first presented the Bill to the House. On 7 December 1989 in column 502 of the *Official Report* I first made it clear that there would be public consultation whenever an application for an NHS trust was made. On 7 December we had the first debate on consultation, ballots, and so on. No doubt the Opposition will rehearse those arguments as we proceed tonight.

In the past few weeks the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) has claimed that things have changed since December and that my timetable has slipped. The hon. Gentleman has been whistling in the dark with some enthusiasm in the hope that the introduction of the reforms will be put back. I recommend the hon. Gentleman to read column 505 of the *Official Report* of 7 December where I first made it clear that the pattern of service in the first year of our reforms would generally reflect the existing pattern of service, because most people wanted to persist with that existing pattern. The opportunities for change will begin in April of next year. Ever since I produced the White Paper and advocated the reforms, I have made it clear that, thereafter, the changes will evolve steadily with everyone learning from experience. They will take advantage of the greater opportunities that the reforms offer to change the service, raise the quality of care and improve the value for money for the taxpayer from the huge sums of money that the Government are not committing to the NHS.

Our response to the repeated concerns that have been expressed in the House and in another place about how the consultation should be run and whether we really meant what we had repeated time and again—that there would be public consultation—was put into the Bill in another place. The amendments collectively ensure that a full process of public consultation will be undertaken.

Returning to what I said a few moments ago about the likely state of progress, if we obtain Royal Assent in the next few days, I shall formally invite applications for NHS trust status. My current expectation is that in the next month the people who believe that they will be ready to form the first NHS trusts in April 1991 will put in their applications. I do not have an exact figure, because it is essentially a matter for local initiatives, but I should expect more than 70 applications from the part of the health service for which I am responsible in England. Thereafter, in accordance with the amendments, the regional health authorities will carry out a process of public consultation with every relevant interest, including the community health councils, that appears on the face of the Bill.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman, but I stress that the numbers to which I referred relate to England and not to Scotland.

Mr. Foulkes: I appreciate that the Secretary of State was talking about the figures for England. However, he will agree that the principles remain the same north and south of the border. The new Ayr hospital is being set up in my constituency and the local health board informs me that there has been an expression of interest in self-governing status. From where does the Secretary of State expect that expression of interest? About whom is he talking and what groups does he expect to come forward with such proposals? If the vast majority of senior doctors and consultants in an area are against NHS trust hospitals, would he consider it viable to go ahead? I am asking not whether it would be acceptable or possible but whether it would be viable.

Mr. Clarke: The applications that I am expecting will come from groups of people comprising local clinicians, local nurses, local managers and perhaps local figures such as business people who may have had previous experience of the health service who, as a group, will put forward a proposition for the local NHS trust management of a particular unit. The formal applications will identify who is putting forward the proposals. I expect that most of them will identify the prospective chairmen and the people who would like to be members of the board. Most importantly, the applications will be the documents on which the consultation will be based and will set out proposals of that group for the management of the unit and the development of its services. It will set out the case for saying that that group should manage the unit with NHS trust status rather than continuing with the present direct management by the district health authority in England or the health board in Scotland.

Mr. Foulkes: Is the Secretary of State aware that in Ayrshire, and I am sure elsewhere, there was no local spontaneous request for NHS trust status? The only reason anything is happening is that Don Cruikshank, on behalf of the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, came and stirred things up. The managers of the hospital were promised that they would get phase 2 only if they were to consider trust status. They were then offered free the services of a consultant firm who will put up a package and stimulate interest in it. Interest is being stimulated centrally by the Minister and not locally. The proposal is being strongly opposed locally. It is being imposed from the centre by the Government without any local interest or support whatsoever.

Mr. Clarke: I do not know this Don Cruikshank, but he sounds a very enterprising fellow.

Mr. Foulkes: He runs the health service in Scotland.

Mr. Clarke: I am not responsible for the Ayrshire hospital. I would advise the inhabitants of Ayr to wait and see who is really promoting the reforms and what they say. I cannot gainsay what the hon. Gentleman says, because, as he knows, I do not have direct contact with the health board in Ayr—that is the responsibility of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland—but I know from my experience in England that opponents of NHS trusts have been given the most extraordinary descriptions of what is happening. The debate in the country has often been based on wild claims by the Labour party and local trade unions which will be gainsaid in July when real applications and promoters set out their plans. We are putting on the face of the Bill our commitment to consultation on our reforms and the nature of that consultation when we move on to much more sensible discussion.

So far, people keep carrying out ballots among consultants and staff and local authorities organise ballots among members of the public based on daft literature giving daft descriptions of what they say is going on in the hospitals. I shall come on to some of the daft literature in a moment, as most of it is being put out by the hon. Member for Livingston. In July, for the first time people will be putting forward proposals for improving their local hospitals and, as I said on Second Reading, wanting serious local discussion on the issues involved and the future quality of care and access to services for the local residents if NHS trust status was approved and went ahead with a particular collection of promoters.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Does the Minister realise that it has been proposed that the local hospital in Inverclyde should opt out? Why is he frightened of democracy and the right of local people such as the people of Inverclyde to conduct a ballot? There is a demand for a ballot. I thought that a ballot represented the process of democracy. The Conservative party is in government as a result of that process, so it should not be frightened of giving the local people of Inverclyde the right to a ballot to decide whether they want anyone other than the health board to run their hospital.

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to the hon. Members for Renfres, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) and for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) for bringing me up to date on the process in Scotland. I am delighted to hear that applications for self-governing status are likely to flood in north of the border and that there is interest in Ayr and Inverclyde. We have no lack of confidence in ballots. I propose to argue yet again the case against reducing serious plans for local health care to semi-political yes/no ballots among selected groups organised by the local Labour party.

Mr. Graham: That is insulting.

Mr. Clarke: It is not insulting. The hon. Gentleman was not here for the speech of the hon. Member for Livingston, who made it quite clear what his approaches will be when local enthusiasts put forward proposals next month for self-governing status. Was he interested in the quality of care? Was he interested in the health service? Did he want to have discussions about the details of its management? He said:

> "We shall treat every consultation on opt out as though it were a by-election."

The Labour party has taken that approach to health reforms for the past 12 months. So far it has not produced one serious proposition to reform or improve the national health service. The Labour party's policy could be written on the back of a postage stamp. I regret that, since we first brought forward our proposals, the Labour party has joined some of the professional trade unions, as well as the TUC affiliates, in inventing ridiculous scare stories which they can exploit locally to win votes for the Labour party. I warn the Opposition that, if their reaction to local doctors, nurses, managers and people committed to the

health service putting forward proposals is to run around behind front organisations such as Save our Hospitals, Health Emergency and other groups, trying to terrify patients into voting for the Labour party against illusory fears, it will rebound on them very badly.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way in a second.

The National Association of Health Authorities—an association of health authorities in England and Wales—is in favour of our reforms.

Opposition Members will recall the Vale of Glamorgan by-election which they won by making a great deal of health service reforms. It was quite clear in Glamorgan that at that early stage, the Labour candidate and those helping him had persuaded the public in Glamorgan that our health reforms meant that they would have to pay for their treatment. That sort of by-election campaign is distasteful and discredits the Labour party. It should not repeat it on the consultation process on the NHS trust. I have my hands on a document that makes it quite clear that it intends to repeat that scurrilous behaviour.

5.30 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is the Secretary of State aware that, given his position, he is quite right to be cautious and wary of balloting or any form of democracy, rather like the leaders of the old eastern Europe countries? Is he aware that in my borough, where the Manor hospital is on the list, there was a household referendum organised by the council with questions approved by the health authority that is keen—at least the full-time administrator and Tory chairman are keen—on opting out? That authority agreed that the questions were fair. In the referendum, 78 per cent. said that they were opposed and 17 per cent. were in favour. Given those figures, is it not clear that the reason the Secretary of State does not want balloting is because he knows very well that he would lose by a landslide majority?

Mr. Clarke: As I said on 7 December, we shall have public consultation when we have the local plans and sensible local discussion. The eventual decision must wait for production of those plans so that their quality can be evaluated. In Walsall and elsewhere, the Labour party has jumped the gun before the proposals have been made so that it can describe them as it likes. Some Labour local councils have money coming out of their ears because of the community charge that they have levied. They have spent much of their charge money on political propaganda and telling the local population that their hospitals are under great threat. They then carry out ballots on the issue. Money has been wasted on political propaganda by elected councillors in places such as Redditch and Walsall.

The National and Local Government Officers Association is pouring money into groups such as Health Emergency and Save Our Hospitals a long time before anybody knows what is proposed for local hospitals. That is what lies behind those ridiculous ballots. That may be repeated—we have been promised that it will in the summer. I think that there will be a proper process of public consulation. The public are concerned about their health service. Sensible people will read the documents and discover what is proposed. I hope that they will make proposals about what they would like to see in the service. The Labour party's campaigning will be seen as irrelevant and something that tries to exploit fear.

The Labour party thinks that this is all about a by-election and wants to reduce the issue to the organisation of local ballots. When the health service was first set up by my great predecessor, Nye Bevan, it was a controversial change. No ballot of any kind was organised in 1948. In the 1945 general election both parties were committed to the national health service, but setting it up was controversial—doctors voted 9:1 against Nye Bevan and his suggested contract. Quite rightly, he took no notice of the 9:1 ballot because he discussed the matter seriously in the House and got his majority. In the intervening 40 years, no Government have ever thought it sensible to organise a ballot, among whatever electorate, on the details of the management and financing of local hospitals.

Let us take the example of a medium-sized firm in the constituency of the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick). Locks and chains are no longer made in Walsall, but let us imagine any modern and thriving town. No one would believe that changes in the management of a local firm should be the subject of a ballot organised by Walsall council, subject to leafleting by local trade unions. Whatever products are made in Walsall, I dare say that they are less important than the services given by the national health service. There are few things more important than the health care given to our population by the national health service. Therefore, we should have the highest standards of management, efficiency and value for money in the NHS. We should not reduce its management to a political circus for the benefit of Opposition Members who want to fight by-elections on the back of it.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): I have heard the Secretary of State make that argument before, and I have never found him convincing. I remember the Secretary of State in one of his previous roles in the Government—as Secretary of State for Employment—advocating the extension of ballots in connection with trade unions and industrial relations. He seems to cut his cloth conveniently according to which job he holds. The Secretary of State says that management issues should not be subject to ballots. He also says that key social and political issues should not be subject to ballots when they affect important services such as the national health service. How does he square that with the way he voted on opt-out schools, where a ballot must take place on the management of the school and a resource that is of great importance socially—of equal importance to the national health service? Is it just that the Secretary of State finds it convenient to cut his cloth in one direction for the health service, because he knows that he will lose the ballot, and in another direction on opt-out schools?

Mr. Clarke: I am glad that I eventually persuaded Opposition Members with my arguments on trade union ballots. I remember that they were against them, said that scabs would interfere with the proper running of trade unions, and restrict their right to take industrial action against whoever they pleased. With teeth clenched and holding back their wilder colleagues, Labour Members now say how much they welcome the introduction of ballots for trade unions, so that strikes can be organised only with the consent of union members. I hope to

[Mr. Clarke]

persuade the hon. Gentleman with my arguments today. We have just agreed to debate these amendments for eight hours—I know that we are covering some familiar ground.

Education involves a tightly knit group of users. We are not talking about ballots of staff alone. It is not just the teachers who make the decisions, because they do not own the school. We do not run workers' co-operatives in education or health. But there is a defined group of people at any one time—a set number of pupils—who receive the service. They are the only ones directly receiving the service and their parents are the ones who are offered a vote on education.

In the health service there is hardly any unit or hospital where the catchment area is so predictable. We do not have hospitals that serve only the people who live in the same borough and do not take people fom outside. Plainly, the staff are not a group of people who can decide about management because the hospital does not belong to them. With the greatest respect to consultants—who are probably the key staff and deliver the service—the hospital does not belong to them. Consultants are always described as though they are some sort of amorphous, block body. There is a huge difference between consultant orthopaedic surgeons who have beds and admit patients, consultants who may be academics with contracts, anaesthetists and radiographers. Consultants are not a set body of people with one collective set of interests and views.

The public served by a hospital come from anywhere. If any of us were to be ill tomorrow in this Chamber we probably would not have the first idea to which hospital we would be admitted. Therefore, there is no electorate among whom we could organise the ballot. The health service is such a giant organisation and so complex that it is not patronising to say that scarcely any member of the public understands how it is managed and financed. One problem is that it is such a chaotic system that not everyone inside it knows how it is managed and financed.

The idea that the document proposing how it should be run in future should be based on some electors who answer a simple yes/no question about the development of services in their district, guided as they will be by the sort of rubbish put out by the Labour party in leaflets while consultation is being carried out, is bad. It would be irresponsible to run a great national service such as the NHS in that way. The Labour party is irresponsible and has no ideas for the service. Its members see this as an opportunity to make mischief and win votes by terrifying old people about the service that they are likely to get.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): The Secretary of State appears not to have learnt the lesson of the Vale of Glamorgan by-election when there was a thorough discussion about the health service and the nature of the health service that people want. Our excellent candidate, and people such as my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) and others who thoroughly debated the health service, received a positive response and people responded positively to our proposals for the health service. As we seem to be educating the Secretary of State about what is happening outside England, let me bring him up to date on the position in South Glamorgan. At present, the South Glamorgan health authority is scrabbling for cuts worth £7·2 million——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is intervening. Whatever else we do in this Chamber, we do not fight by-elections all over again.

Mr. Clarke: As the hon. Gentleman knows, I am not responsible for the South Glamorgan health authority. Welsh Question Time would be a better place to raise such matters.

Let me move on to the kind of consultation that we envisage. I have described what I want.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): I have not had the advantage of listening to the Committee's deliberations. As my right hon. and learned Friend knows, I am a simple fellow and I should like a simple answer to a simple question. Will the patient be better off with a self-governing hospital or with the great bureaucratic trail which, in Stockport, for example, goes from the hospital to the Stockport district health authority to the North West regional health authority to the Elephant and Castle to the Treasury and then all the way back down the trail?

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend's question makes it clear potentially where the answer lies if the NHS trust is well judged and the right local people have the right local plans. The first part of his beguilingly simple question is the key for all members of the public. When I, as Secretary of State, look at applications for NHS trusts, I shall make the final decision on the basis that he suggests in the first part of his intervention: is a self-governing trust likely to improve the service to the public and will it be in the interests of the NHS to have that degree of local freedom? I hope that we shall then have non-political, serious, local discussion involving those who work in the service, those who are served by it and anyone who has a sensible proposition to put forward.

The Labour party will apparently join in that three-month public consultation. It does not always join in. Often it joins in behind the shield of organisations with names such as Hospital Alert, Health Emergency and Save Our Hospitals, into which the public's community charge has been tipped. The BMA is also promising a great campaign. The BMA and the Labour party ran a pretty silly campaign last summer and they appear to be saying that they will run the same one this year.

The Labour party's document "A question of trust" contains its manifesto for opt-out ballots. Yet again, it shows that all these months in it is still proposing to go round this summer putting out exactly the same myths. I have never used the phrase "opting out" to describe the proposals, because it does not describe them. The hon. Member for Livingston and his hon. Friends continually talk about hospitals opting out of the NHS. The hon. Gentleman has the courtesy to agree that that is his case. He is not on the stumps now; he is in the House of Commons. He knows that nothing will leave the NHS. NHS trust status has nothing to do with a hospital leaving the NHS. It is local management within the NHS and it is utterly untrue for him to sit there rah-rahing in words that he uses on the platform, saying that such hospitals will be leaving the NHS.

5.45 pm

The treatement will be free. I have already mentioned the Vale of Glamorgan by-election where electors were clearly told that they would have to pay for treatment.

That has all been repeated in the document. It uses weasel words. Anyone reading about the opt-out ballots that the Labour party is running will see the heading

"Treatment will not be accessible".

I will not read what follows, but there is nothing that describes the reforms which remotely justifies that statement. Then it says of treatment,

"It will not be free."

That is an utterly disgraceful assertion.

The Labour party has pressed for public consultation and the amendments, which it will not vote against, give the public the consultation that it has demanded, but its response is to issue guidance which will result in anyone following it not telling the truth when he tries to get Walsall council or some other band of idiots to hold a local ballot and get a negative answer.

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): The Secretary of State takes exception to the term "opt out", but he will confirm that, after he has made an order, such hospitals will be run by a board of directors which will own the property and have full legal title to it with the freedom to sell such part of the property as it chooses. That board of directors will hire and fire everybody employed in the hospital and be responsible for balancing the hospital's books by trading in services and being responsible for raising every penny by selling the services. That board of directors has the freedom to go to the City of London and borrow on the private market. Under the Bill, the board of directors has the freedom to make profits and retain profits year to year. There is no material particular in the ownership and structure of such hospitals which differs from any Nuffield or BUPA hospital.

If the Secretary of State is so confident that the statements in that document are weasel words which cannot convince anybody, why is he so afraid to let the local people decide? Does he not understand that the arguments that he has been advancing for the past half an hour are precisely the same arguments that Wellington used against the Reform Act 1832—that elections were too complex, that they could not be reduced to simple decisions and that people were not sophisticated enough to understand the issues? Why does he not have the courage to put his policies to the decision of the electorate?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman repeats on the Floor of the House the kind of nonsense that he puts about outside and—here I congratulate him—without the trace of a smile or a flicker of his beard, although he must know that the NHS trusts that we are talking about bear not the slightest resemblance in any serious particular to a BUPA, Nuffield or any other private hospital. The land for which they are responsible will remain NHS land. Local NHS managers will be empowered, as local managers are now, to sell up to certain limits, but above a low limit they will require the consent of the Secretary of State before they dispose of land. The patients will be NHS patients, not paying a bean for the service, receiving it free.

Contrary to another untruthful statement in the document, the staff will all be NHS employees. They will be public servants receiving public service pensions. They may agree with their local management to vary from the national pay rates in the NHS, but they will be NHS staff. The board will not have any shares in anything, because there will not be any private capital. No profit will be made. Nothing will be distributed to anybody. It will not be a commercial undertaking.

The hon. Gentleman makes my case by getting up and giving us a fantasy vision of an NHS trust as some kind of private hospital when he knows, or should know after hundreds of hours of debate, that what he has just described is nonsense and a travesty of our descriptions of how to run the NHS better with the right local promoters.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that there have been informal discussions with one of my local district health authorities about the real possibility that the whole district might become self-governing, which clearly demonstrates the rubbish being talked by Opposition Members?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Many people in the service are enthusiastic. We have always promised full public consultation on proposals. The amendments put in statutory form the public consultation that we promised, and they should have allayed all the serious fears. There are no serious fears on the Opposition Benches; there is mere political opportunism that if Labour Members misdescribe the proposals enough they might win a few votes for the Labour party in the course of the public consultation process. That will be irrelevant to the public consultation process. There will be a serious discussion about how best to improve the local health service.

I invite the House to agree with the Lords in the relevant amendments to ensure that public consultation has a statutory foundation and that we can put our repeated promises into effect.

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): If the Secretary of State is as confident as he seems to be that these proposals are minor, technical, managerial matters which seem to be engendering a new breed of people whom he describes as local enthusiasts, why does he not agree with our amendments? Why does he not agree that there should be a ballot, or that after consultations have been held a hospital should opt out only if there is support for it to do so?

When the right hon. and learned Gentleman talks about not taking seriously local people's views about whether their hospital should opt out, he underplays the importance of opting out, implying that it is a minor, technical change. Yet elsewhere he stresses that the creation of opted-out hospitals is one of the key proposals, and so it is. That is why people want, and are entitled to, a say in whether their local hospitals opt out of the local national health service. Our amendments, which the Secretary of State will oppose——

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre) *rose*——

Ms. Harman: I shall give way later; I want to develop my argument.

Our amendments would give people at local level the right to stop their local hospital opting out of the local NHS by a decision of the Secretary of State. Under the Bill, all hospitals will be forced to compete for patients in the internal market—[HON. MEMBERS: "And why not?"] Patients will lose choice because the quality of care will suffer as hospitals cut corners, competing to win contracts by reducing their costs. The internal market will affect all hospitals——

Mr. Mans *rose*——

Ms. Harman: Not now.

[Ms. Harman]

Opted-out hospitals are to be the leading edge of the internal market. They are to be the market leaders, as the Secretary of State would describe them in his salesman's jargon.

To play this role, opted-out hospitals are to be cut loose from their local communities. No longer will they be directly managed by the local district health authority; no longer will they be an integrated part of local hospital and community services. There has been much talk of the freedom that will be bestowed on opted-out hospitals—the freedom to drop uncompetitive services if they are expensive and do not bring in enough revenue, for instance. These will be services such as those provided for the long-term chronically ill, geriatric patients and the mentally ill.

Opted-out hospitals will have the freedom to divert services to private patients—[HON. MEMBERS: "Not true."] I suggest that hon. Members read the Bill, because I am basing my comments on it.

Opted-out hospitals will have the freedom to divert services to private patients to stoke up their income. They will have the freedom to bid for contracts and perhaps draw in patients from other district health authorities by offering waiting times so as as to get bigger contracts from neighbouring health authorities.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): Would the hon. Lady be kind enough to be straightforward and tell us precisely where in the Bill all her allegations or even the suggestion of those allegations come from? She knows very well that what she has just said is wholly inaccurate, because district health authorities—and, if need be, the Secretary of State—will be able to intervene if there are local eccentricities of the kind that she suggests.

Ms. Harman: In Committee we proposed amendments on all these points which would have prevented opted-out hospitals being cut loose from their local communities, and the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) among others, voted against them. We proposed amendments that would guarantee local access to core services for the elderly, for children and for psychiatric patients, but they were voted down. We tried to put safeguards in the Bill, but the Conservatives voted them down——

Mr. Mans *rose*——

Ms. Harman: I shall carry on for a bit.

It has been suggested that opted-out hospitals will have the freedom to bring in patients from Europe. The location of St. Thomas's hospital at the channel tunnel terminal is seen as a wonderful opportunity to provide services to patients from Europe. But that is not how people living near St. Thomas's, who want to use the hospital see it. They know that they will lose. When opted-out hospitals exercise their muscle in the market place, local people will be the losers. If they are unfortunate enough to need one of the services that have been dropped as uncompetitive, they will no longer be able to turn to their local hospital—they will have to go elsewhere. The so-called guarantee of local access to certain key services described as core services, which had pride of place in the White Paper, has no place in the Bill.

Mr. Hayes *rose*——

Ms. Harman: Local people have no guaranteed right to those core services in an opted-out hospital. In Committee, the Government voted down our attempts to guarantee local access.

Mr. Hayes *rose*——

Ms. Harman: The hon. Gentleman was there; he knows that they voted down our guarantees of local access to services for children, the elderly and the mentally ill——

Mr. Hayes *rose*——

Ms. Harman: I have already given way once to the hon. Gentleman, and I know that he will seek to catch the Chair's eye later.

If private patients prove more lucrative than local NHS contracts—*[Interruption.]* I hope that the hon. Member for Harlow will listen to what I am saying. He seems to be getting agitated.

If private patients prove more lucrative than local NHS contract patients, local people will lose out to patients under contract from BUPA, to which the opted-out hospital could be selling its services—or the French equivalent might even come first. If a neighbouring consortium of district health authorities which had formed themselves into a purchasing consortium wanted to place a large contract for a large throughput of patients, to win that contract an opted-out hospital could agree terms which gave patients under that contract preference over patients from the local district health authority. There is nothing in the Bill to stop that. There is no reason why opted-out hospitals should not act in that way as they will no longer be part of the local health authority. That is the whole point of opting out.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Perhaps I may reassure the hon. Lady. The only proposals in the service for consortia of district health authorities for purchasing purposes are coming from district health authorities which contain self-governing units. Local district health authorities would put together what is usually called their purchasing roles—I prefer "planning roles"—to put themselves in a stronger position to stipulate the quality and sort of care that they want from the self-governing hospital in their territory.

Ms. Harman: The Secretary of State does not understand how his internal market will work. Consortia of local district health authorities coming together to increase their purchasing power need not buy contracts only from their locally managed hospitals or even from their local opted-out hospitals. They could buy contracts with other local opted-out hospitals. The right hon. and learned Gentleman's argument does not, therefore, negate what I have said. The situation is exactly as I have described it: large purchasers can arrange contracts with opted-out hospitals in such a way that people coming under the contract offered by the consortium of district health authorities would receive care in preference to local people.

Opted-out hospitals will not look to their local communities because the chairman will be appointed by the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State's appointees in the regional health authority will appoint the non-executive directors. The chairman and non-executive directors—direct or indirect appointees of the Secretary of State—will appoint the non-executive directors, so the

focus will be on the Secretary of State, not on the local community. That is why local people whose hospitals are targeted for opting out see it as a threat and want to have a say.

All the talk about local enthusiasts springing up all over the place is nonsense. People who work in hospitals want to have a say because they care about the services that they help to provide and because they feel that they know about patient care. They also want a say because they would no longer be employed by the district health authority under Whitley terms and conditions. The Secretary of State said that those people would still be national health employees and that hardly anything would change. We spent many hours in Committee discussing clause 6. I remind the Secretary of State that that clause provides for the transfer of staff from health authority to national health service trust employment. Without their approval, they would no longer be employed by the district health authority but by the opted-out hospital. Of course they should have a say.

6 pm

Mr. Clarke: At present staff can be transferred from one district health authority to another if a particular part of the service is transferred. People may be transferred from an authority to a trust, but they will still be national health service employees. The Labour party pamphlet on that is plainly wrong when it claims that the staff will not be national health service employees.

Ms. Harman: The Secretary of State seeks to mislead the House. People who transfer from one district health authority to another retain the same Whitley council terms and conditions. Staff who transfer from a district health authority to an NHS trust will take with them their contract of employment, but they will not take with them their right to trade union membership and to have their trade union recognised to negotiate on their behalf. The contract of employment, which is backed by a national structure of union recognition, would therefore be nothing more than a piece of paper. The Secretary of State knows the difference between a contract of employment backed by nationally recognised negotiating procedures, and a piece of paper, the contents of which are unenforceable.

Mr. Clarke: I think that the hon. Lady has conceded that such people will remain national health service employees. She has moved on to what she is really worried about—that local management might choose not to be governed by Whitley council national rates. That is what the Labour party wants to defend. People might choose to recognise their own local trade unions. As the hon. Lady knows, the Whitley council arrangements cover trade union representatives such as those from the General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union on the ambulance men's Whitley council who do not have any members working for the national health service in that grade. The recognised trade unions at Whitley council level include trade union representatives who may have no relationship whatever with the trade union membership of that grade of staff in a local hospital or unit. People will remain NHS employees, but they can be represented by local unions of their choice.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Secretary of State has moved a guillotine motion to restrict debate on this important Bill. He is now seeking to utilise the little time that we have with a series of interventions. If he wants time to discuss the matter further, he should lift the guillotine.

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is not a matter for the Chair. The hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) had given way. I think that the Secretary of State has finished his intervention.

Ms. Harman: One of the advantages canvassed by the Secretary of State in support of opted-out hospitals is that they will have the freedom and opportunity to cut through nationally agreed pay terms and conditions, and he has said that people will not necessarily have their union recognised. People should at least have a say before their terms and conditions of employment are changed so materially.

The Government have made contradictory statements about consultation. They were finally backed into an amendment in another place which would require consultation before opting out. We support that amendment, because the Government should of course consult. If consultation is to have any meaning, the Secretary of State must not just consult but must take that consultation into account. The Government amendment says that there will have to be consultation, but there was fierce opposition to our amendment which said that they should take into account the results of such consultation. Unless they take that course, they will make a mockery of consultation. It would be a sham for the Government to proceed with opting out after they have consulted and found no substantial support for opting out among the local community or the staff.

We know why the Secretary of State opposes ballots. He is redolent of sincerity, so he has clearly undergone some sort of psychological transformation. His arguments about ballots are ludicrous, but he seems to believe them. Anyone not in the same peculiar state as the right hon. and learned Gentleman will realise that he and the Government are against ballots because they know that they will not be able to win them. The Secretary of State said that there was no ballot about the creation of the national health service. But there had been a general election—that was the ballot.

The idea that the subject is too complicated for patients to understand is ludicrous and insulting. I presume that the Secretary of State also thinks it too complicated for consultants to understand and that that is why they should not be entitled to a ballot. He said that a ballot is not held for a Walsall lock and chain factory, so why have a ballot when a hospital wants to opt out. He does not seem to realise that people throughout the country regard the national health service and their local hospital as very different from the local lock and chain factory.

The Secretary of State's opposition to ballots is based purely and simply on the fear that they will show overwhelming opposition to opting out. The ballots already conducted have shown a tide of opposition. No matter where they take place, who conducts them or what the question is, the Secretary of State can find no support for his proposals. He talked about our "misleading leaflets", but he has spent millions of pounds of taxpayers' money on grotesquely misleading leaflets. Yesterday I picked up 12 leaflets produced by Trent health authority involving a scandalous misrepresentation of the effect of the proposals.

Mr. Clarke: What are they?

Ms. Harman: There are 12 of them. I do not want to go through them all, but I will write to the Secretary of State.

Despite spending millions of pounds of taxpayers' money, the Government have failed to win the argument and lull people into a false sense of security. Their propaganda has not worked. That is why they fear ballots. I shall give a few examples. People working for the West Lambeth health authority were balloted and 82 per cent. were against applying for self-governing status and 18 per cent. were in favour. In Doncaster, which I visited yesterday, the borough council commissioned a MORI poll and found that 68 per cent. of people were opposed to the local hospital, Doncaster royal infirmary, opting out.

The Secretary of State says that such ballots are a waste of money, but they would not be a waste of money if he paid some attention to them. It is a waste of money to test public opinion only if there is a determination to ride roughshod over it. General practitioners local to Guy's hospital were balloted and 66 per cent. were against that hospital, to which they refer their patients, opting out. In the 28 hospitals where ballots have been held, even consultants have voted by a ratio of 2:1 against their hospitals becoming self-governing. The Secretary of State says that the local enthusiasts who seem to be covering the country include enthusiastic consultants. Mr. Paddy Ross, chairman of the BMA consultants committee, says in a letter:

"I remain very concerned about the fact that in many of the front-runner hospitals, plans for self-government still appear to be progressing despite clear evidence of lack of support from consultant staff. We have identified some twenty eight hospitals on the Department's list of those likely to progress to Trust status in April 1991, where recent ballots of consultant staff have been held on the issue of self-government. As you will see from the results of these ballots, in 21 of the hospitals the consultant staff have overwhelmingly rejected the concept."

Already some expressions of interest have been shaken out of the system because of the overwhelming hostility which the Secretary of State knows exists. In January 1989 the White Paper triumphantly trumpeted that 320 hospitals would be available to opt out. In June 1989 the figure was only 189. In November 1989 it had dropped to 79. In May 1990, although the Secretary of State still holds out that about 70 hospitals are interested in opting out, the chief executive said that 50 hospitals were likely to become self-governing trusts. Already hospitals are being shaken out in recognition of the overwhelming local opposition to opting out.

The Secretary of State says that even consultants' views will be overridden if they dare to oppose opting out. Now only the views of the patients matter, but we are not allowed to ask the views of the patients—the only person who knows the views of the patients is the Secretary of State, so only he can make the decision. His tactics of public misinformation simply have not worked.

Let us consider the tactics used with the consultants. The tactic with the public was misinformation, but with consultants it has been slightly different. First, the tactic was to ask consultants, "Why do you not express an interest? Expressing an interest does not commit you to anything. All it says is that you are interested in finding out more information." Of course, as soon as they were lured into an expression of interest, consultants were immediately written down as fully in support of opting out. The first tactic was to lure consultants into expressing an interest because it hardly made any difference. But they would be ridiculous if they did not want information about what might affect their local area.

After the "expression of interest" tactic, a combination of blackmail and bribery was used. That was referred to by the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes). The Government said, "We will see you all right if you opt out. You know that this is a highly political matter for us and we will see you all right if you are one of the first opt-outs. You know—nudge, nudge, wink, wink—that we cannot afford to let you fail. But if you do not opt out you have a large deficit to worry about. It looks like phase 2 is in doubt and you can forget phase 3." That was the message sent round to browbeat consultants who disagree with the internal market and opting out into believing that they should vote to opt out as the only way in which to survive in the jungle. That is disgraceful. Despite that tactic, the Secretary of State has failed to take the consultants with him.

I should like to take this opportunity to make our position clear. One of the Secretary of State's most annoying misrepresentations is his misrepresentation of our position. I will state it in words of one syllable which I hope that he will understand. We do not agree with the internal market. Health care is damaged by the fragmentation of the services into competing units. We do not agree with riding roughshod over public opinion when people do not want local hospitals to opt out. We believe that people should be consulted and that their views should be taken into account. We make this promise to people whose hospitals are threatened with opting out. The Government and the Secretary of State might not be prepared to listen, but we are. That is why we shall press these amendments to a division.

I finish by repeating the words of Ken Gibson, an 80-year-old gentleman whom I had the opportunity to meet when I visited Doncaster royal infirmary last night. He said, "During the war we brought sandbags to the Doncaster royal infirmary to protect our hospital from the enemy. We have been fighting to protect our hospital ever since. It is our hospital. It is not the Secretary of State's to give away." I believe that people such as Ken Gibson should have the right to vote on the future of his hospital and to have his views taken into account.

6.15 pm

Sir George Young (Ealing, Acton): I hope that the House will agree with the Lords in the amendments and will reject the amendments tabled by Opposition Members. I simply cannot understand why the Labour party makes such heavy weather of the establishment of self-governing trusts within the national health service. I should like to give three reasons why it is wholly misguided in what it plans to do this afternoon.

First, we already have self-governing trusts within the NHS. General practices and health centres in many constituencies are self-governing trusts within the NHS. They are the most popular and successful model of management within the NHS. The Bill proposes to extend that model of management to other parts of the NHS. The people who work in health centres and general practices decide how the unit should be operated. Any savings are ploughed back. Such centres are responsive to local needs and are not involved in the bureaucracy of the NHS. The Government seek to extend that successful, popular model

of management to other parts of the NHS. The Labour party is making a fool of itself by seeking to prevent the extension of that style of management.

Secondly, we already have self-governing trusts within the public sector. We have established them in education and on roughly the same model in housing, where it is fairly common to devolve the management of estates to local people.

Mr. Keith Bradley (Manchester, Withington): What about ballots?

Sir George Young: I shall come to the issue of ballots in a moment.

We heard all the same propaganda that we heard from the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) today when it was proposed to allow schools to become self-governing. None of the fears expressed this afternoon materialised with self-governing or grant-maintained schools. Such schools are popular. Some were given grant-maintained status by the Secretary of State and others were not. I should be surprised if any Labour Government said that they planned to nationalise or bring back under local authority control some of the popular grant-maintained schools that have been established.

We have made it possible for local authority tenants on an estate to run the estate themselves. We have devolved the management of such estates. The Government are not afraid of ballots on such issues. We have established arrangements for ballots on grant-maintained status for schools, on the creation of housing action trusts and on the transfer of new town property to local authorities.

The reason why ballots are not practicable for NHS trusts were given by the Secretary of State. The electorate is well defined for a ballot on a housing action trust, on new town property or on a school. The electorate for a hospital or ambulance service is not well defined. We have established that it is simply not practicable to hold a ballot on whether an NHS trust should be created.

I now come to my third reason. I suggest that Opposition Members read an Adjournment debate initiated by the then Bob Mellish, now Lord Mellish of Bermondsey, in 1979 about St. Olave's hospital in Bermondsey. The thrust of his argument was that St. Olave's was run far better when it had a board of governors. He wanted to return to the days when people identified with their local hospital, the hospital was run by local people and it was easier to raise money for it. He deplored the transfer of the management of St. Olave's from the board of governors to a district health authority.

The Bill seeks to give the opportunity to Bob Mellish —were he still here—to support the reversion to local management of St. Olave's and many other hospitals. I suspect that if he were in the House this afternoon he would speak in favour of devolving management— *[Interruption.]* I see that the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) agrees with me. Bob Mellish would be on this side of the argument. He would argue for local control and against the bureaucracy of the NHS.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): The hon. Gentleman told the House how wonderful it was to have ballots in the schools sector. Is he really saying that it is impossible and inconceivable to hold a ballot of local people who, after all, are the consumers of the national health service? Is it not possible within every community health council to hold a ballot? When were CHCs consulted? Is the hon. Gentleman saying that democracy is too inconvenient for administrative reasons, or is it really for political reasons, of which the Government are all to well aware?

Sir George Young: I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman was in his place when the Secretary of State dealt with that point. He made it clear that, if any of us were taken ill, we should not have the slightest idea which hospital we might be referred to. It is impossible to define the catchment area of large hospitals such as Bart's and Guy's. Many cottage hospitals were closed by the Labour Government. There was no ballot then. That was a far more dramatic decision for local people to cope with than the change of management that we are debating.

The hon. Member Livingston (Mr. Cook) said that every proposal for self-government would be treated as a local by-election. There have been four local by-elections in Ealing during the past two years, three in Labour-held wards and one in an Alliance-held ward. The Conservative party won all four by-elections. If the Opposition want to have a fight about this in Ealing, I suspect that they will be on dodgy ground.

If a proposal is put forward that a hospital in my constituency should become self-governing, we shall consider it on its merits. We shall not be influenced by the fact that the Labour party is campaigning against it. We shall consider whether it would be good for local people. If it would be good for them, we should back the proposal. If we decided that it would not be good for them we should not back it. For the Opposition to try to turn this into a popularity contest between the two major parties is wholly counter-productive. I welcome the amendment. I hope that the House will support it.

Mr. Winnick: I apologise, Madam Deputy Speaker, for the fact that after I have finished my speech I shall have to leave the Chamber to see whether the Select Committee on Procedure is still sitting.

The Secretary of State for Health and the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) have put forward all sorts of reasons why balloting is unnecessary and irrelevant. The Opposition know why the Government oppose ballots. If ballots were held they would lose by a landslide. If the Secretary of State believed that local communities would accept his proposals, would he say that balloting was wrong and irrelevant? Of course not. He would say the very opposite. He would argue that the Conservative party believed in democracy and balloting. He knows, however, as we do, that local communities are not in favour of his proposals.

The Secretary of State jeered at what my local council, Walsall, has done. I congratulate it. The local health authority decided not to hold a ballot on the future of the district general hospital—the Manor, as it is generally known. The local authority therefore decided to hold a household referendum. I congratulate it on its initiative. If the Secretary of State suggests that warped and twisted questions were asked in order to get the kind of responses the local authority wanted, I must point out to him that those questions had already been put to the health authority. It was asked whether it approved the questions; it was not asked whether it approved of balloting, because it did not. For the Secretary of State to sneer shows his contempt for the views of the local community.

[Mr. Winnick]

The result was that 6,004 were in favour and 27,639 against; 78·5 per cent. were not in favour, while 17 per cent. were. The local authority asked people whether they believed that they should be consulted, and 94·7 per cent. were in favour and 3·3 per cent. were against. It also asked people whether they thought that opting out would affect the service that the Manor provides. Fifteen per cent. said that a better service would be provided and 8·5 per cent. said that it would make no difference, but 68 per cent. said that it would result in a poorer service.

The Secretary of State says that those questions do not count. That shows his arrogance. He believes that local people should have no voice and should not be asked for their opinion. To him, democracy is a charade. I do not believe that.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *rose*——

Mr. Winnick: The people in my borough have a deep attachment to their district general hospital. I concede that people do not always know which hospital they will be sent to. People who do not live in the borough are treated—rightly—at the Manor. However, nearly all those in the borough who need hospital treatment are likely to go to the Manor. They have a link with that hospital.

Mr. Clarke: No proposal was put forward by anyone to establish a local national health service trust. The council campaign was all about opting out and threats to local services—hence the Romanian-type election results. Of course we believe that local people should have a say. We have always promised local consultations. The amendments that we are debating are in line with the opinions expressed by 94 per cent. of the respondents, who presumably had been told, quite falsely, by the council that the Government resisted the idea of local consultations.

Mr. Winnick: The best form of local consultation in this matter is democracy. That is the system that has operated in this country since the Reform Act 1834 and the other Acts that allow people to have a voice. We believe that the best way for people to express their point of view is by voting. The Secretary of State refers to Romania. The former Communist leaders in eastern Europe did not want genuine elections to be held. They were, rightly, frightened of democracy. The recent election results in most eastern European countries at least show that they knew that they would be turfed out. That is why the Secretary of State and his Cabinet colleagues are so hesitant about and are opposed to the holding of ballots on controversial proposals.

Mr. Graham: The Secretary of State suggests that those who call for a ballot are influenced by the Labour party. The local Labour party in my area has not called for a ballot; a well-known newspaper, which is not a Labour party paper, called for a ballot.

Mr. Winnick: My hon. Friend illustrates the fact that opposition to the proposal goes far wider than Labour party supporters. The Opposition make no apology for being associated with the campaign. We fought for the creation of the national health service. The Secretary of State quoted Nye Bevan. I imagine that the Tories will soon be claiming him as one of their own. However, we remember the Tory opposition to which he was subjected in the House of Commons. There was strong opposition from the Conservative party to the creation of the national health service. However, the Labour party has always been associated with the NHS and we are determined to defend it at all costs. Why, therefore, should we apologise about what we consider to be a halfway house towards privatisation?

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): The hon. Gentleman says that he and his colleagues are prepared to defend the NHS at all costs. He has spent the last few minutes, however, saying that fact and truth are important. If I understood him correctly, one of the questions to which he referred—which might have been agreed by the local health authority, though I care not who agreed it—asked whether people were in favour of opting out. If the words "opting out" were used, the truth was not put to the local people when they voted. No such suggestion has been made.

Mr. Winnick: The people in my borough require no lectures from the hon. Gentleman about what they know or do not know. They have followed the debate and they know what the position is. I challenge the hon. Gentleman to allow a ballot to be held on the issue in his constituency and to stand by the result. The result in his borough would almost certainly be the same as that in my borough.

I tabled a written question to the Secretary of State in which I asked him to list the national medical organisation that had made representations to him expressing support for the proposal that national health service hospitals should become self-governing. I received his reply yesterday. Not one national medical organisation seems to be in favour of the proposal. The Secretary of State said in his reply that much of the discussion with the national organisations had been about the detailed implications and practical details of the implementation of the proposals.

The Government cannot name a single medical organisation, and we know why. As my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) pointed out, it is not just the Labour party or the British Medical Association that opposes the proposals—and, incidentally, the BMA is not normally looked upon as a Labour party front organisation. What about the joint consultants committee? I can hardly imagine that that body's representatives are all eager to vote for Labour at election time. The House should listen to what they have to say:

"These proposals"——

the opting-out proposals——

"inevitably change the prime aim of the management of these hospitals, from the provision of adequate care to the community as a whole to the financial success of the hospitals. The considerable experience of such hospitals in the USA shows clearly that there will be pressure to encourage admission of patients with conditions that can be treated with financial benefit to the hospital rather than to admit those patients—often the chronic sick—whose treatment is likely to lead to little or no such financial benefit."

The joint consultants committee takes the same view as we do; it is highly sceptical and highly suspicious of the Minister's proposals.

6.30 pm

I take the view that, whatever one calls such hospitals —self-governing hospitals, national health service trusts or anything else—they will place a greater emphasis on commercial considerations, on the selling off of land and property. As I said, they will undoubtedly be a halfway

house to privatisation. The Minister argues—as one would expect him to—that they will remain part of the national health service. We know that initially they will, but we also know that the Government are hostile to the national health service and that they seek to destabilise it, even if, understandably, they do not have the political courage to repeal the Act, as many Tories would like them to. After all, the national health service goes against the very foundations of Thatcherite policy and ideology. This proposal is another means of destabilising the national health service.

The hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) said that those in my community did not understand the questions in the poll. They understood the questions perfectly well, and they understand what the Tory Government are about. They understand the Government's hostility to the national health service. That is why we are perfectly justified in fighting the proposals all the way.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) commonly talks a fair old load of rubbish, but he has excelled himself this evening: I have never heard a greater load of rubbish. His assertion that the Government are hostile to the national health service flies in the face of every single fact —[HON. MEMBERS: "Eye tests?"]—and everything that has been done—[HON. MEMBERS: "Eye tests?"] I am not sure whether we have parrots or Members of Parliament on the Opposition benches. They sound rather like parrots to me.

No Government who have trebled expenditure on the health service can possibly be described as hostile to it. We have far more doctors, nurses and dentists than ever before, and far more in-patients and out-patients are being treated than ever before, and with infinitely more complicated and expensive treatments. The hon. Gentleman's statement flies in the face of the facts.

No Conservative Member has any objection whatever to ballots, but let us ensure that the information given to those taking part is absolutely clear and straightforward. The Labour party has constantly used the words "opting out" to frighten people into voting against hospitals obtaining self-governing status in the straw polls that it has set up. It is a lie that hospitals are to opt out of the health service. No hospital will be opting out of the service. It is quite true that, if people believe the propaganda that the Labour party has been peddling—if they really believe that we intend hospitals to come out of the national health service—they have good reason to vote as Labour Members say they do. But it must be clearly understood, by a far wider public than have so far understood it, that there is not the slightest question of a hospital that opts to become self-governing opting out of the national health service.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Does the hon. Lady know that the Conservative party voted against the health service in the first place? Why does not she admit that the Government are doing all this complex organising and reorganising because, if they dared to tell the truth—that they are against the health service—they would be thrown out? They are doing all kinds of things to pretend that they are not against the service because they do not dare to say that they are.

Dame Jill Knight: That is the last time that I shall give way, as stupid comments take up time and get us no further. The hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) said that she objected to Conservative Members saying what the Labour party's views were. I have the same feeling about what the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) said. He has not the slightest right to say what the Government intend to do because he does not know. He does not listen and he does not take a blind bit of notice of what the Government have done so far. He made a historical point about the voting on the National Health Service Act. In fact, a Conservative, Sir Henry Willink, was the originator of the terms of what later became the national health service. The Conservative party voted not against the principle of the health service, but against the way in which the legislation was being introduced—*[Laughter]* This is historical fact. Opposition Members can go to the Library and look it up.

The hon. Member for Walsall, North is fond of quoting the BMA. He may like to remember that, at the beginning, the BMA opposed the national health service root and branch. It has always opposed any changes in the national health service. [HON. MEMBERS: "It was wrong."] The fact is that it was against it. If the hon. Member for Hillsborough wants a history lesson, I shall be happy to give him one. In any case, he can check everything that I have said in the Library. All the facts are there on record.

There is another very important point. Never once have those who have a political motive for trying to hit the Government in any way they can asked the general public, "Are you against bringing back the matron?" In many cases, that is what self-governing hospitals would entail. There is hardly a patient or a patient's relative in the country who would not very much like to have the matron back in place. Hospitals were infinitely better run when we had matrons, and I for one want to see them back. If hospitals are self-governing, they will have their own boards—and they ran very well wen they had them before —and they will have the opportunity, should they wish, to put a matron back in place. Labour Members should try telling their constituents that and see whether they vote against the proposals.

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): I make no apology for being somewhat parochial; I suspect the some other hon. Members—certainly Labour Members—will wish to voice their concerns about opting-out proposals in their areas.

In Committee, I expressed my concern that, last December, the district general manager of my health authority in Wakefield proposed that the entire authority should opt out. I was concerned that that had been done without any consultation or discussion with the local bodies that were interested—not even with the local health authority itself.

Since that time I have had vast correspondence from people in my area. Every letter—there are hundreds—has been in opposition to the proposal for opting out, which is the Government's philosophy behind the legislation. I have not received one letter from a constituent who favours what is being put forward by the Government or by the district general manager in Wakefield.

Locally, the whole affair has been a costly shambles. As a direct result of the proposals put forward by the district general manager, the district finance officer was sacked because he had the bottle to say that he objected to the expenditure of scarce national health service resources on proposals for something of which he could not see logic

[Mr. David Hinchliffe]

and which were not supported at local level in any way. In a letter that he wrote to the district general manager before he was sacked, he wrote:

"Managers complain of dangerously low levels of nursing staff and in this context they are throwing money away on the issue of the opting out process."

The district health authority in Wakefield has been taken to court by that gentleman for unfair dismissal, being forced to pay £24,000 in lieu of a year's salary—I assume that it was because he was wrongly dismissed—and having to pay out huge amounts on its own legal representation and, I understand, the costs of Mr. Corner, the district finance officer.

I suspect that the whole shambles will cost about £40,000. I shall happily give way if the Secretary of State wants to query that. I am having difficulty obtaining the details, but we know that Mr. Corner received £24,000 compensation. On top of that there was a complicated legal case. In addition, the health authority has had to pay for another officer to replace Mr. Corner since he was suspended and sacked.

The only good thing that has come out of the matter is that the regional health authority has leaned on Wakefield health authority and the district general manager is to take what is termed early retirement. I and everyone in Wakefield hope that he will be joined in early retirement by his proposals for opting out.

Local people should have a say in such matters. People in my constituency have been deeply perplexed and amazed by the events of the opting-out process in Wakefield health authority. They foresee the problems that will arise when opted-out hospitals operate within the context of the national health service. The complete lack of planning of any sort of health care will make it impossible, if we are all competing against each other, to plan a coherent national structure that will respond to known and recognised needs. Hospitals will treat patients who generate the most income. Chronic patients, not the acute sector, will be neglected and forgotten because they do not attract the finances that other sectors can get.

Local people recognise that quality will go by the board, that cheapness will rule and, that the quantity of services will be affected. In future, traditional services—for example, the excellent maternity services in my area—may go by the board and local people will no longer have in their own health authority areas the services that they have had for many generations, certainly since the NHS came into being.

The patient will have absolutely no choice where he or she is treated. My constituents, who, by and large, are utterly opposed to private medicine may end up being treated in a private hospital. It is unacceptable for people who have campaigned and fought for the national health service—a state health care service—to end their days in a private hospital such as Methley Park, which is in my area.

I am aware that many of my hon. Friends wish to contribute to the debate, and I do not want to take up too much time. However, it offends me that the Secretary of State compares the management of a private firm in Walsall to the opting out of the hospital service in any constituency. How on earth can he suggest that there is any common ground between the running of a private company in Walsall and the running of the national health service? All hon. Members can see the difference. The Secretary of State's remark was stupid, and it illustrates his concept of the national health service.

6.45 pm

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have never heard a more ridiculous description of what I said. I expressly said that the national health service is much more important, in the service that it delivers, than whatever is manufactured in Walsall. I said that it was irresponsible, therefore, to run the management and financing of a nut and bolt factory in a sensible way but to turn the management of the national health service into a party political football subject to idiotic referenda of the sort that the hon. Gentleman describes.

Wakefield has suffered more than any other part of the health service from the importing into the health authority of party political squabbling for the past five or six years. The difficulty in Wakefield is that different parts of the Labour party argue with each other and bring all their quarrels to the health authority. Every aspect of the health authority's dealings is part of the local industry of propaganda in the newspapers, as the hon. Gentleman has illustrated by even making the hiring and firing of staff and the position of individual officers a matter of party political controversy in which he immerses himself completely. His activities and those of the Labour party have made Wakefield health authority almost impossible to run.

Mr. Hinchliffe: I am grateful to the Secretary of State for that personal tribute.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman needs to read the official record of what he said. I was astounded that anyone could be so naive as to make that remark about the management of a private company. We are talking about a public health service that should be run in the interests of the public. We pay for it. It is beyond me how a comparison can be made between a private company and the national health service.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): The problem, as my hon. Friend will remember, is not the political aspect of the health authority, it is the health authority's major decision to transfer waiting list money, which would have provided 500 operations at Pontefract general infirmary, to Methley Park private hospital for only 230 operations. Therefore, 270 of my constituents had to continue on the waiting list for operations that could have been done in Pontefract infirmary if the health authority had not decided to transfer that money to the private sector.

Mr. Hinchliffe: My hon. Friend has been active on this issue in the Wakefield area. I am sure that, like me, he resents the suggestion that we have anything other than honourable motives in defending the health authority against some of the Government's attacks and against some of the agents who have been placed in positions of prominence in Wakefield district health authority.

I am aware of the concern of community health councillors throughout Britain about the way in which their role is being eroded. Local authority representatives will be removed from health authorities with effect from next year. We have seen the complete erosion of local

democracy or influence in the health service. It is essential that we support the amendments and give local people a say in their health service.

Mr. Rowe: Not long ago there was a sick joke about a child saying: "Mummy, mummy, mummy, why am I running round in circles?" The answer was, "Shut up or I'll nail your other foot to the floor." When I hear the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) I am often reminded of that exchange. In an elegant and vocal way, she runs round and round in circles because her foot is nailed to the floor by her passionate devotion to the over-provision of hospital accommodation in south London. One of the clear abuses of the present administration of the national health service is that there is a dense concentration of very large hospitals in south London which are often so desperate to find patients that they will go trawling round the home counties and beyond looking for people to treat.

That presents a serious difficulty for the Opposition —who are the local people who will decide what should happen to their local hospital? Is it people who have travelled from Hastings, Dover and the south coast of England to be treated at St. Thomas's hospital, or is it the declining population within walking distance of St. Thomas's? It emerged in Committee that the prospect of some of the constituents of the hon. Member for Peckham having to travel four miles to hospital instead of half a mile was a burden too intolerable for her to bear. Patients in my constituency must frequently travel long distances to hospitals like St. Thomas's, because the enormous concentration of resources in south London means that places such as Medway are grossly underprovided with the resources to which they are entitled according to the growing size of the local population. Under the present cumbersome national health service arrangements, they are deprived of services, and I foresee no prospect of the proper quota being reached for a long time.

I am in favour of alternative methods of organising hospitals and other parts of the health service to ensure that local conditions receive rather more consideration than under the present cumbersome arrangements. South East Thames regional health authority and many others delay and increase the cost of decisions that should be taken locally.

The second-guessing that occurs among regional health authorities is probably the quickest way of destroying the morale of good consultants, managers and heads of department in local hospitals. I have said before, but I shall repeat it as Opposition Members' memories are dramatically short, that there is a clear example of that in one of my district health authorities which, having valued its capital stock most scrupulously using the most professional of firms, decided to sell some of its property, to the benefit of its patients. But the regional health authority said, "We are not sure that you have done it right. We shall appoint a similar firm and revalue the entire stock." When it reached almost exactly the result, it discovered to its dismay that the property market had crashed and that it was not worth selling the stock. My constituents are suffering from a much lower level of health provision than if the district health authority had been able to take decisions much nearer the ground.

The opportunity to be a self-governing trust will motivate managers and professional staff better than any other proposal. Earlier in life, I had the tremendous opportunity of working in the Whitley system in Scotland. On behalf of the Secretary of State, I received letters from all over Scotland saying, "Would it be possible, please, to readvertise the post of pharmacist in our hospital as the post of senior pharmacist, because having advertised it as pharmacist we have discovered we cannot get anybody?" The Secretary of State had to take those decisions.

Things have improved a little, but, as we all know, in a prosperous part of the country such as my constituency it is impossible to find national health service cooks because of competition from local firms. The solution being pressed on the Secretary of State by the health service unions is dramatically to upgrade the pay of cooks from John O'Groats to Lands End. That is an absurd proposition and would lead to costs escalating out of proportion to need or opportunity.

We should make it possible for local self-governing trusts so to organise their affairs that, taking account of the state of the local market, they can decide whether they will raise the salaries and wages of some staff, whether they will contract out to private firms or whether they will find another way of tackling the problem. That is good management and is what self-governing trusts are about. All the nonsense being spuriously generated by the Opposition is so much folderol that should be dismissed out of hand.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): It was disingenuous of the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), who unfortunately is no longer present, to say that this part of the Bill giving hospitals self-governing status was a minor devolution of responsibility and power and to compare it with GPs and how similar parts of the health service currently work. That glossed over the extent of the fundamental change that the internal market, of which self-governing hospitals are part, will make.

This is the most far-reaching and fundamental change to the health service and the administration of health care since the service was established 40 years ago. The Government cannot deny that.

I am most worried about the move towards new commercial management, financial accountability, and efficiency, because the present process of accountability, although it is an intangible part of the current system, works. It certainly works in the Borders health board area. Local patients and consumers have confidence in the accountability process because it reflects their views. The new system of management, with executive health boards, regional and district health boards and regional health authorities, squeezes much of that accountability from the current system. The Government ignore danger at their peril.

The debate has not filled me with confidence. If the consultation process is conducted in the same way as the debate has been conducted in the House, the public will be extremely perplexed. If that analysis is correct, the Secretary of State should consider holding ballots so that he can at least control the arguments. He can ensure that the information that is made available to the public is objective on both sides of the argument.

I am against self-governing trusts, which would be inappropriate for and unpopular in the borders. If the Secretary of State is worried about political organisations and front organisations causing confusion by advancing arguments that are either distorted or untrue, by accepting the amendment for ballots he would be able to control them and ensure they are fair and are administered

[Mr. Archy Kirkwood]

properly. Ballots would inform the consultation process positively and the Government would be daft not to accept them.

If the Secretary of State leaves the consultation uncontrolled, he will get exactly what he has been evincing worries about this evening—distortions and half-truths. That would do nothing but confuse the public, which is not in anybody's interests. It is a basic tenet of democracy when dealing with something as important as the NHS that the Government should do everything possible to achieve full consultation. That must embrace the opportunity of a ballot to the results of which the Government would have to pay attention.

7 pm

Mr. Wilshire: As Opposition Members were so lacking in enthusiasm to accept interventions, before I come to the one point of substance that I wish to add to the debate, I shall say a word or two about their remarks. They need to be commented on as early as possible.

The hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) made three points which Tory Members sought to challenge, but did not get the opportunity to do so. I hope that I wrote down correctly what she said. No doubt she will put me right if I did not. First, she said that self-governing trust hospitals would seek to attract patients by cutting corners.

Ms. Harman *indicated assent.*

Mr. Wilshire: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for confirming that. Once again, she made it clear that she has not the first grasp of the best way to achieve and improve quality in anything. It shows a complete poverty of thinking and a lack of understanding. I can think of no example of anybody who has a choice in buying a product or using a service choosing an inferior one. The only way to attract patients is by offering a better quality of service.

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wilshire: I shall give way with the greatest pleasure, even if Labour Members do not like to do so.

Mr. Martlew: Can the hon. Gentleman not think of circumstances in which people choose according to price rather than quality? Why, for example, are there so many Lada cars running round in my constituency?

Mr. Wilshire: That is yet another example of a failure to grasp what we are talking about. We are talking only about the choice of quality of product, because the NHS is paying the bill. The patient does not have to address himself or herself to the price tag, but only to the quality of the service on offer. That is the difference. Yet again, the Labour party demonstrates its complete failure to grasp that elementary point.

Secondly, the hon. Lady, speaking on behalf of the official Opposition, said that it was against the internal market. That suggests that the Labour party has not learnt the first thing in the past 10 years. It is still saying that it is against the internal market in the health service, and therefore against choice. Despite all the wonderful rhetoric in the glossy brochures that it has has been circulating recently, it is still peddling the view that the Labour party knows best what is good for patients and that patients cannot be trusted to make a choice.

Mr. Foulkes: We are talking about ballots.

Mr. Wilshire: I hear what the hon. Gentleman says, but I am only quoting the comments of Labour spokesmen. It was they, not me, who said that they were against the internal market.

Thirdly, the hon. Lady said that the staff want their say because they care about patients. Again, I hope that I quote her correctly.

Ms. Harman *indicated assent.*

Mr. Wilshire: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for confirming that. She then elaborated on what she meant rather than what she had said, which was that the staff care about their union membership. It seems that the Labour party is anxious to ensure that people working in the NHS should have it made easy for them to belong to trade unions that care so deeply about patients that they will either organise strikes or work to rule.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): If the benefits of the internal market are so obvious, why will not the hon. Gentleman allow patients to make the choice in a ballot?

Mr. Wilshire: Another problem with Opposition Members is that some of them wander in halfway through debates, having missed what has been said. The best answer to that is either to be here at the beginning or to read *Hansard* tomorrow morning. I most certainly will not go over that ground again.

The hon. Lady said that staff want their say because they care about patients. Then she explained that what they cared about was union membership. We were further told that they cared about national agreements. We have already made it clear that national agreements are the bane of the life of hospital managers. I know it only too well from the west London area where it is almost impossible, under the current Whitley arrangements, to attract and keep nursing staff. I address this point almost more to my right hon. and hon. Friends than to Opposition Members. If we truly believe that the best people to manage are the managers whom we appoint, we must give them control of the structures being created and of pay and conditions. We must have the courage to say that effective management means managers negotiating with their own staff. It is nonsense for managers in London to be fettered by what is happening in John o'Groats. Management must be devolved down to the hospitals.

The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), whom I am glad to see back in his place, challenged me to respond to what might happen in my constituency. I can tell him what happens there. I have not held a ballot, but a petition is going the rounds. The organisers of the petition tell me that there are 20,000 signatures on it opposing what is being suggested. I accept that the petition is not about self-governing trusts, but it will make the point and allow me to answer the hon. Gentleman's challenge. The petition suggests that my constituents are against closing two hospitals and building a new hospital in a completely inaccessible place. Clearly, they would be against that, would they not? The only snag is that the

organisers failed to tell my constituents that so far there are no details of where the new site will be. Yet 20,000 people oppose the new site because it is inaccessible.

Mr. Winnick: Obviously, I cannot comment on that local issue because I do not know the details, but no doubt there is another side to it. Would the hon. Gentleman be willing to hold a ballot about whether the hospitals in his borough should become self-governing, if the questions were approved by both sides and if the Electoral Reform Society carried it out? Would he object to such a ballot?

Mr. Wilshire: I am happy to put it on record that I should be absolutely delighted to have a ballot in my constituency; it will be called the general election. *[Laughter.]* To meet the hon. Gentleman's requirements, I am happy to put it on record that I shall fight the general election and put in my manifesto, as I am sure my party will, that we believe in this Bill, which will then be an Act, and in self-governing trusts. We shall put that to the electors. Last time they gave me 60 per cent. of the vote and I have little doubt that they will be enthusiastic to return me again. If the hon. Gentleman manages to be returned, he will have his answer.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): Why does not the hon. Gentleman answer the straightforward question that has now been put to him twice? He knows that general elections cover a whole range of topics. As he stressed the need for patients to choose quality, will he be prepared to give patients in his constituency the chance to choose quality by a ballot on these proposals? Yes or no?

Mr. Wilshire: My patients and electors will be given the chance to choose the quality of their present Member. That is what the democratic process is all about.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsbrough (Mr. Flannery) said that the Conservative party had voted against the national health service in the past and therefore all Conservatives are against the national health service. I was slightly more than a gleam in my father's eye when the vote to which the hon. Gentleman referred took place. No doubt he can tell me what year the vote took place, but I do not believe that I was out of my pram—*[Interruption.]* I am sure that some hon. Members think that I have not learnt much since. However, I should be extremely grateful if the hon. Member for Hillsborough would stop trying to suggest that because the Tory party did something some years ago, I must be in favour of transporting people who steal sheep. That is what he seemed to be arguing. I am not in favour of that.

Mr. Flannery: Sadly, the hon. Gentleman is conveying to us the impression that he has not really got out of his pram yet. The Conservative party has always been against the national health service and voted against it. The British Medical Association has had the grace to say that it has changed its mind and that it now supports the NHS. However, the Conservative party is still, by its actions, proving that it is completely against the health service.

Mr. Wilshire: The hon. Gentleman has made the other point that I wanted to make against him. Not only does he insist that, because something happened 50, 100 or 200 years ago, those of us who were not involved are, by definition, of the same mind. He has just shown that he does not understand that, and he has also claimed to be a mind reader. He suggests that he knows what the Conservative party believes. More importantly, he tried to put words into my mouth by suggesting what I believe. I have always believed in the national health service and I am sure that I always will. I have always done everything possible to further it. It is a gross misrepresentation to suggest that an Opposition Member knows what Conservative Members think.

The hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) would not give way either, so I must respond to him now. He said that self-governing trusts would make central planning impossible. He is yet another member of the Labour party who has failed to understand the principle of how to get quality services. He suggests that command planning from the centre is the best way to run a public service. He obviously has not learnt any lessons from what has happened in Russia or in eastern Europe over the past 12 months.

The hon. Member for Wakefield also thought that it was grossly unreasonable or, dare I say it, somehow morally wrong that his constituents should be expected on occasions to be treated in a private hospital.

Mr. Hinchliffe: It is morally wrong.

Mr. Wilshire: I am glad that that is on the record. Obviously his view of Labour policy is that it should abolish the private health service.

Mr. Hinchliffe *indicated assent.*

Mr. Wilshire: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman for nodding. A Labour Member has now said in the House that he wants to abolish the private health sector.

I did not serve on the Standing Committee of this Bill and I have not been closely involved with it. I have no intention of going over the general ground. However, those hon. Members—including some Conservative Members—who are against self-governing trusts appear to be in favour of ringfencing. I do not want to pre-empt the ring-fencing debate, but hon. Members who are against self-governing trust hospitals, but claim to be in favour of ringfencing, are deploying a very curious train of thought.

7.15 pm

When I served on a health authority, we safeguarded community care and the community health budget, bearing in mind the fact that the great debate in the health service has always been the demands of the acute sector against the demands of community care, by ringfencing them. I understand the ringfencing argument to be about protecting community care. If Opposition Members are in favour of protecting the community budget by ringfencing it, why are they against what is in effect the ringfencing of acute district general hospitals by allowing them to become self-governing trusts? I believe that one of the greatest assets of self-governing trusts is that the remainder of the budget which is outside the acute sector is protected and care in the community is safeguarded. I should have thought that, as they support ring-fencing, self-governing trusts would appeal to Opposition Members.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): If my hon. Friend had the misfortune to live in the Lancashire county council area or to be in charge of community care there, he would find that it blows every penny that comes its way on the least important things. That council is quite different from my local health authority, which is highly efficient —*[Interruption.]* The two horses are of a completely

[Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman]

different colour. Lancashire county council is profligate, but the local health authority is very good and efficient, as are the hospitals.

Mr. Wilshire: I am sure that my hon. Friend's comments will be noted in Lancashire.

I want to challenge Opposition Members and one or two of my colleagues about ringfencing. If hon. Members are against self-governing trusts and they vote that way tonight, bearing in mind the fact that the trusts are the best way to ringfence the acute sector, I fail to see how in all conscience they can vote in favour of ringfencing something in local government. The two arguments do not hang together. I believe that Members must be consistent and I will explain later, if I catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, why ringfencing in local government would be nonsense.

Mr. Bradley: I will try to bring the debate back to the issue of opt-out. I will also be brief, because we have suffered long rambling speeches from Conservative Members. The Conservative party has tried to get as many of its Members as possible to speak to talk about specific issues that affect their constituencies.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe), I have received hundreds of representations from my constituents opposing the proposals for opt-out. I have not received one letter in favour. That is particularly significant, because the world-famous Christie hospital is in my constituency. Local people are very proud of that hospital and they have raised thousands of pounds for it. I strongly believe that Christie hospital is at the top of the list of hospitals which the Government want to see opt-out as soon as the Bill becomes an Act.

We must consider what has been happening to the opt-out proposals during the Bill's passage through the House, and in that context I want to refer to Christie hospital. The management of Christie, at a very early stage, expressed an interest in opting out. However, the management only consulted some consultants in the hospital.

The Secretary of State said tonight that he does not believe that the consultants should be the sole custodians of views about whether a hospital should opt out and that there should be more consultations with staff. In Christie, no other staff were consulted. Similarly, the local community and local representatives such as the community health council were not consulted. The issue was not even drawn to the attention of South Manchester health authority because the authority did not believe that it should have a say in whether the hospital should have expressed an interest.

It is absolutely clear that hospitals are seeking opt-out status because of the financial crisis in many health authorities. The financial crisis facing south Manchester health authority is the reason why Christie hospital is expressing an interest in opting out.

The Secretary of State recently crept into south Manchester to look at what was going on. The headlines in the local paper stated that all that the people of south Manchester ever did was moan about the state of the health service. Well, they have plenty to moan about. In the last few years, we have had ward closure after ward closure; waiting lists have been growing and staff have not been recruited because of lack of money. Now, Christie hospital has admitted for the first time that it cannot open a crucial ward because of lack of money. As the Secretary of State has said, the unit manager of the Christie hospital is the local enthusiast—he is the only local enthusiast—who has put forward proposals for opting out. He admitted in an article in the local health paper that

"a Unit such as Christie with potential for growth and development of cancer services must recognise that for the foreseeable future there will be no growth monies available from Regional funds. From April 1990 the budget of the North West Region begins to reduce and this will inevitably mean that already hard pressed district Health Authorities"—

such as south Manchester—

"will encounter further financial problems".

That is why the hospital is going down the road of opting out.

The consultants are fed up with the lack of resources. They are prepared to go along with the proposals as long as they believe—as I do—that the first hospitals to opt out will be stuffed full of money by the Government to show that such hospitals can be successful. I believe that the Government will go forward to the next general election on that basis.

For its "consultation", the management has produced a glossy magazine——

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth) *rose*——

Mr. Bradley: No, I shall not give way.

Mr. Pawsey *rose*——

Mr. Bradley: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman, because he has only just walked into the Chamber.

The management has produced a glossy new magazine to try to justify its opting out, which states:

"we would still be required to treat a similar number of patients, but we would have no guaranteed funding because the service contracts would be held by South Manchester Health Authority."

That is what the management have told the staff. However, in a written answer the Under-Secretary of State for Health has stated that, whether the contract is held by the NHS trust or by the directly managed hospital in south Manchester, the money will go to the hospital where the patient has been treated. Therefore, the management are not telling its staff the truth about the way in which the funds from the contract will be allocated.

The management then ask how they should continue the consultation process. As I have said, they have already drawn up a document, which they are ready to throw at the Secretary of State at the first opportunity, which states that the staff should try to borrow a copy of the document from the administrator so that they may know what is going on. They can then attend a series of public meetings at which only the general manager will be allowed to speak. Instead of having a show of hands at the end of the meetings to determine the views of the staff in the hospital, the general manager himself will assess the consensus and judge the feeling of those in the room. The general manager—the local, the only, enthusiast—will determine whether to submit a formal application.

That is the way in which consultation is taking place, and that is why we in south Manchester say, on behalf of Christie hospital, that we want a ballot. We want the staff to be able to express their view. We cannot believe that the Government are not prepared to accept the idea of ballot,

which is what they argued for in education and housing. The hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) said that he does not support ballots on the opt-out of hospitals, because where there have been ballots on, for example, education and housing, they have proved popular.

I ask the House to consider whether one single school has opted out in Manchester. Has a single council house moved to the control of a private landlord? The answer is no, because people in Manchester know the value of the public sector and of public provision. They know the value of local accountability for those services. That is why the people of south Manchester want hospitals that are directly managed by local people, which are locally accountable and which are properly funded within the public sector.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): It was not my original intention to speak at this point. However, I feel that I must do so to give the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) some assistance in a vital matter. All of us who know the hon. Lady know that she would not have the slightest intention of deliberately deceiving the House, but I fear that if an important passage in her speech at the beginning of the debate stands without correction, she may succeed in deceiving the House, albeit unwittingly and by strong implication rather than explicit statement.

When the hon. Lady was talking about ballots, which are the central issue of the debate, she said that, notwithstanding the extremely compelling technical reasons against holding ballots to determine public opinion about the proposed changes in the administrative arrangements for hospitals, it is right and reasonable that such ballots should take place. When she dealt with the sensible if obvious point that in 1948 the Labour Government did not introduce any specific ballots on their own administrative arrangements for hospitals, which were contained in the National Health Service Act 1946, she replied. "Ah, but the difference is that at that time we had had a general election."

The clear implication of the hon. Lady's statement was that there had not merely been a general election, which there had been in 1945 and which the Labour party won —just as we won the election three years ago—but that, in its manifesto or otherwise, the Labour party had made clear its proposals for the administrative arrangements for hospitals that it would incorporate into any national health service Bill that it might introduce. The hon. Lady implied that when the public went to the booths in the election of 1945, they knew exactly what administrative arrangements for hospitals they were voting for. She suggested that that was unlike what happened with the Conservative in 1987.

In case any hon. Member has forgotten, I remind the House that no such thing occurred. The Labour party's 1945 manifesto did not make any reference to the administrative arrangements that it was proposing to introduce for hospitals. Indeed, no statement on that subject was made during the whole of the campaign that summer. That was for the very good reason—this is why I can be dogmatic on the point—that, at that stage, the Labour party itself had not decided on the administrative arrangements.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Does my hon. Friend accept that Christie hospital does not belong to its staff? It belongs to the people of the north-west and it would be extremely difficult to ballot all those people. I must advise the House that in some specialties, 49 per cent. of the patients dealt with by my local health authority are out of district, mostly from Cumbria. On average, it is 29 per cent., but the proportion is 49 per cent. for some specialties. Who exactly does the Labour party expect us to ballot? It is not possible to find a constituency to ballot on these things, although that is what Opposition Members are suggesting.

Mr. Davies: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend's helpful comment. There are strong reasons for not having ballots, and no doubt Labour was right in 1948 in not holding specific ballots on that issue.

The hon. Member for Peckham suggested that there was no need for ballots, not because technicallly they are not feasible or were otherwise undesirable, as my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) suggested, but because the public already knew in 1948 what the arrangements would be and voted accordingly.

Mr. Robert Litherland (Manchester, Central): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

7.30 pm

Mr. Davies: No. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will be able to catch your eye later, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The truth is quite contrary to the hon. Lady's argument. When the electorate went to the polls in 1945, it had every reason to suppose that whichever Government was elected—Conservative or Labour—they would introduce a national health service along the lines of the Willink White Paper of 1944. I was not alive at the time, but I am sure that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will remember as though it were yesterday that when that White Paper was produced by the then coalition Government, it set out a plan for the health service that contained almost all the features that were eventually incorporated in the Labour Government's national health service in 1948, with one vital difference, in that the Willink White Paper did not propose hospital nationalisation. In 1945, without giving any warning to the electorate, Labour introduced the nationalisation of hospitals, with none of the specific ballots that, according to the hon. Member for Peckham, it would have been reasonable to expect Labour to hold.

I could make a powerful political point, because the facts I have set out could explode the sincerity of all that has been said about ballots by Labour Members this evening. However, there was a more positive reason why I rose to speak. It was to help maintain the integrity of the debate by giving the hon. Member for Peckham an opportunity to set the record straight and to make it clear that there is no difference between the attitude towards ballots taken by Labour in 1948 and that of the Conservative party in 1990.

Mr. Redmond: The majority of people in the Doncaster health authority area are totally opposed to the opting out that is supported by a small minority. The Secretary of State continues to display arrogance and conceit. He ought to be present, because I do not want to say anything behind his back. I welcome the Secretary of State back to

[Mr. Redmond]

his place, and repeat that his arrogance and conceit continue. Thank God, people fought to get rid of that kind of dictatorship during the second world war. They will fight again to do so.

If the Secretary of State is so convinced that he is right, the simple answer is for him to ballot the people. If he wants to be doubly sure, why does not the right hon. and learned Gentleman convince his master to call a general election? I am convinced that the vast majority of people are wholly opposed to the Government's reforms for a two-tier system, which will lead to privatisation.

The Secretary of State condemns local authorities that utilise local money to sound out people's opinions. Doncaster is Labour-controlled, but it not only stated its opposition to the reforms—which the Secretary of State might argue was party political propaganda—but consulted local people. The Secretary of State says, in effect, that consultation may take place but that he will ignore it.

The pity is that the Secretary of State did not spend the millions of pounds used to promote his views and to hold meetings throughout the country with unit managers and other interested parties on consulting the public, which would have been a far better use of that money. The Secretary of State spent millions promoting his voice and his master's voice against local authorities who spent a few pounds. He ought to be interested in freedom and democracy. The iron curtain has gone, but the dictatorship that used to exist behind it now exists in this country. The Government use the phrase "the enemy within", but the enemy within now are Conservative policies that seek to undermine our social fabric.

Whom will the Secretary of State consult? What criteria will he set and how will a local authority determine whether its application to opt out meets them? The right hon. Gentleman said that he will ignore consultants and any other group that consults its members or holds a ballot and then opposes the reforms. That is the kind of dictatorship and arrogance that he uses to bulldoze opposition.

The Government imposed a guillotine on this important debate, and now Ministers intervene time and again. If the Secretary of State wanted to explain his policies, the Government should not have guillotined debate but fully utilised the time available to explain their proposals. The right hon. and learned Gentleman has failed to convince the majority of the public.

The newly appointed chairman of Doncaster health authority, the newly appointed unit manager and the newly appointed district nursing officer all support opting out. They are the people that the Secretary of State has connived to put in place so that he may claim that Doncaster supports his proposals, when that is false. If the Secretary of State wants to be true to himself, he should return to the Dispatch Box and announce that he is withdrawing this ludicrous and uncaring Bill.

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): In the northern region, the dwindling list of hospitals that want to opt out is down to five, and they are located in the city of Newcastle. The opting out and trust proposals that would affect the citizens of Darlington and Tynemouth, which are among the shrinking band of Tory seats in the northern region, have also been dropped. That is an interesting sign that the Government are not confident about the little lifeboat that they have launched for the national health service.

We in Newcastle are confronted with opting out by all four of the city's major hospitals, but we are told by the Secretary of State that they do not anyway belong to us, as patients or as citizens—yet he is apparently content for them to belong to a small band of self-appointed people. No one knows who they are or what credentials they have. He is happy about that. As the proposals for NHS trusts are tested, the credentials of the people who lend their names to those trusts will be closely tested.

The Secretary of State, in one of his throwaway remarks that will come back to haunt him, described local councils as a bunch of bandits. We suspect that that description far better suits the type of people who will self-recruit, self-appoint and keep the NHS trusts in their pockets for ever.

My hon. Friend the Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) was absolutely right to highlight the process that is going on in Newcastle in the four hospitals that are the subject of opt-out proposals. She said that there is a whispering campaign of bribery and blackmail and that promises of promotion, pay increases and extra resources for particular facilities are being made to grease the wheels and smooth the process of opting out. We must have ballots so that such below-the-line rumours and whispering are forced above the line so that they are on the record and publicly known.

I note that the ministerial team are furiously engaged in a discussion about this matter. The unit general manager in Newcastle may be promising a Westminster or a Wandsworth to the people who work in those hospitals, but it is much more likely that the Minister will be gifting them something more like a west Lambeth. Promises to run those hospitals on Westminster or Wandsworth lines will prove to be a mirage; west Lambeth will be the reality. That is not good enough. Such major proposals cannot be forced through on the basis of false promises.

The Government's proposals are fundamentally wrong because of the false expectations that they are arousing in some people's minds. The proposals will be undone not by anything that we do in this House tonight, but by what the Secretary of State does or fails to do. If people proceed with the trusts, they will find that they have been cheated. Those people, above all, will remember the proposals with regret.

My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) said that we shall fight against the proposals as though we were fighting a by-election. I understand what my hon Friend means, but by-elections have a date at which they must terminate. In cities such as Newcastle we shall not fight against the proposals in that way; we shall persist with the scrutiny with rigour and record all the promises, the whispers and the rumours. We shall never forget them.

The hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) is apparently willing to say to nurses in west London that if NHS trusts are accepted they will be free of the NHS pay scale and paid more. With what? Do the Government propose to issue some kind of NHS junk bond with which to pay the money? The answer is no.

All those false promises will be placed on the record. It is much better to force such a corrupt and unacceptable method of doing public business into the open so that such practices can be properly recorded. Whether or not the Government decide to do that, the job will be done. Such

practices will be recorded and will not be forgotten. They will bounce back again and again in the lifetime of the Government.

Mr. Fatchett: I agree with what my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) said in his excellent speech.

During the debate, one Conservative Member after another—when the Government have found it possible to get people into the Chamber to support the Bill—has said that the opt-out proposals are self evidently popular. They have said that there is no argument about the nature and potential success of opt-out hospitals. If that is so, why are Conservative Members so afraid to put that proposal to the electorate so that the people can have a voice? They are running away from the issue.

The Secretary of State told us that the enthusiasm for the proposals would come from a small group of independent-minded people, some of whom would be local business people with or without experience of the NHS. The Secretary of State has now invented another category of person capable of running the NHS with his approval —someone with no experience of it, that is to say, someone who has spent all his life as a patient of the private sector and who supports it. That is the person who the Secretary of State believes is capable of running the NHS. We do not want such self-appointed people running the NHS, but those who represent the public and who are concerned about the NHS and have its interests at heart.

7.45 pm

The Secretary of State has tried to be emollient and I know that that is difficult for him. I understand why the chairman of the Conservative party said that the right hon. and learned Gentleman needed some advice on public relations. In his attempt to be emollient, the right hon. and learned Gentleman said that he would consult and listen, but at no point in his speech did he tell us what the test would be before he said no to a particular trust proposal. The answer is simple—if the proposal is backed by a small group of Conservative party supporters and Conservative central office wants it, it will go through.

Let us consider a local example dear to my heart and to that of the people of Leeds—St. James's hospital, now nationally known as Jimmy's after the television programme. What will happen to that hospital? What test would the Secretary of State use to determine whether that hospital should opt out? The health authority, the consultants, the community health council, the non-medical staff and the public of Leeds have said no to that hospital opting out, so on what moral grounds could the Secretary of State approve a decision to allow it to opt out? Yet as there is a Conservative party nominee in the chair of the health authority and the unit manager is a close advisor of the Secretary of State, I suspect that there is no question but that the decision on that hospital opting out will go ahead roughshod without any reference to public opinion.

My hon. Friend the Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) spoke of bribes and blackmail. It is interesting to consider what has happened in Leeds Western health authority in relation to the general infirmary. The district general manager, without the approval of the health authority, appointed an outside consultant to write a report on the future of the general infirmary. That report was commissioned and paid for by one of the key ideological advocates of the opt-out proposals. The report's sole conclusion was—surprise, surprise—that it would be in the interests of the general infirmary to achieve opt-out status. The report also stated that, if the hospital continued in its current state, with its current fabric, it would not be fit to be judged a modern hospital. Rumour after rumour has come from the chairman of the authority and the district general manager. That has been passed on to the consultants, the staff and the public. The message is clear: "If you do not opt out, the money for phases 1 and 2 of the general infirmary will not be forthcoming". Those are the tacties of the bully boys who have gone into the gutter in desperation to force their proposals through.

The obvious conclusion from the debate is that the Conservatives have no confidence in their proposals. They are driving them through for pure ideological reasons, and that will be part of their down fall. We look forward to campaigning on this issue, because we know that we speak for the public on the NHS.

Mr. Foulkes: I shall take just a couple of minutes to show from our experience in Ayrshire that the Government's proposals represent one of the biggest cons ever perpetrated on the British people.

The chairman of the health board confirmed in December that throughout Ayrshire there was no interest in opting out. The Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, one of the ideologues of the Government, could not stand that, so he instructed the health board to manufacture an interest. The administrator in north Ayrshire was against the proposal and said that there was no interest. What happened to him? He was moved sideways to a position where he had no influence.

The administrator in south Ayrshire decided to go along with the health board. He used bribery, saying that phase 1 of the hospital will come about more easily under NHS trust status, and the hospital agreed to consider it. The consultants voted on it and, as 89 per cent. of them were against opting out, they decided not to consider it. In spite of that, the unit administrator went ahead with the proposals and a working party has now been set up to look into the possibility of opting out. The Scottish Office is paying for consultants to carry out a business plan. That demonstrates the way in which they are considering the proposal. It is not a care plan or a feasibility study, but a business plan.

We know what will happen next. That business plan, which will be prepared by the end of August without any of the necessary information being available, will be accepted by the health board nominated by the Tory Ministers. They will agree to that plan and put it up to the Secretary of State and of course he will accept it. There is no demand for it in Ayrshire, yet it will be forced on the people of Ayrshire. It is absolutely clear that, if there were a ballot, the people of Ayrshire and Arran would reject it overwhelmingly. That is why all Opposition Members who represent Ayrshire constituencies support the amendments to the Lords amendments. Although we support such ballots, one ballot that would end all such proposals once and for all—and we would much rather have that ballot as quickly as possible—is a general election.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have had a long and rather animated debate on a proposal that we have discussed many times before. Those who may be listening to our heated exchanges might be surprised to reflect on the fact

[Mr. Kenneth Clarke]

that the Government amendments moved in the Lords, which I suggest we agree to, are hardly controversial. They were tabled in support of the proposal that we have been advocating from the beginning—that there should be widespread consultation on all applications for NHS trusts. We are now putting that consultation in statutory form. I hope that the debate might have served to educate people more generally about exactly what we shall be consulting on. However, public consultation cannot possibly start until we have promoters in Ayrshire, Doncaster or wherever, coming forward and explaining their proposals for the hospitals for which they are responsible. Then people can give sensible and considered views.

The amendments that I am resisting concern ballots, about which the Labour party has made repeated claims for the past six months or so. I shall not repeat my arguments, but I believe that the Labour party, which is stuck for ideas on what to propose, prefers political campaigning on local ballots based on fears about our proposals. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) was correct to describe the nature of most of the ballots that have taken place so far. It is extraordinary to compare such ballots with the ordinary electoral process, as there are no promoters and no definite proposals. Nobody will be arguing the case for local NHS trusts until we receive the applications next month.

However, in various localities people have produced the most extraordinary claims about what they suppose NHS trust status will mean in their localities. They have talked about hospitals opting out of the national health service. We heard that a pensioner in Doncaster was persuaded that sandbags were needed to defend the national health service against Tory assault. The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) kept going back to the vote in 1948 which was one of the most galling exchanges on health service policy that I have heard for a long time.

Such ballots produce a sort of Romanian election result if no one is proposing anything or arguing the case for NHS trusts and there are no propositions to consider. All we have is sometimes a highly financed and organised campaign against a non-existent proposition. Proceeding in that way can achieve a 9:1 result against what it is suggested will happen.

We are about to move on to genuine consultation, but first we need some NHS trust applications and some descriptions by the promoters of what is proposed for hospitals in each locality.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): When I called for ballots of staff and patients in Bradford, I was told by Ministers that the main reason why ballots were opposed was that the issues surrounding self-governing trusts were too complicated and complex to be considered in ballots. When all the information is known, will the Secretary of State accept in principle the offer of ballots for staff and patients to decide those important issues? Bearing in mind that we had a referendum on whether to remain in the EEC and that the Government have held ballots on schools and housing, why on earth are they continuing to resist ballots on the national health service?

Mr. Clarke: When the proposals are produced, it will be clear that they are complex matters concerning the future of each part of the service, how each part of the service might be developed and how financial management and other matters will be arranged. It would be ludicrous to reduce them to a yes/no answer. I have repeatedly said that the national health service does not belong to the staff who happen to be in post, so a straight staff ballot should not decide those issues. The problem of having a ballot of patients is that there is no catchment area of patients for each hospital. Hospitals are not run on that basis and there is no identifiable group of the population who could sensibly be balloted, assuming that one could find enough people to absorb all the proposals.

When applications come in, there will be no simple response to any of the proposals, even among the consulting staff, the nursing staff and everyone else who supports the health service. Many people will want to make suggestions concerning particular aspects of the service, and I hope that that public consultation at local level will not be damaged by the Labour party's clear intention to turn every application into a simplified by-election.

Let me deal briefly with the comments made about the internal market by the hon. Members for Peckham (Ms. Harman) and for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood). The phrase, "internal market" is jargon that leads people into arguments about commercialisation and so on. It is quite convenient jargon, but it is always misused. It is not true that the proposal for NHS trusts has anything to do with the internal market. The basis of distributing the money in future according to so-called contracts, agreements between the planners and purchasers on the one hand and the providers of care on the other will apply to all hospitals and all units regardless of whether they are self-governing NHS trusts. The NHS trusts will look for referrals and their revenue in the same way as other hospitals do. We are talking about the extent to which, within the new system, self-governing trusts will have their own local board of management and will not be answerable to the district, the region, my civil servants and to me for day-to-day matters, compared with others that will still remain subject to the DHA.

I regret that the hon. Member for Peckham said that the Labour party is against those aspects of the reforms. She tried to make the position clear, as the Labour party never has before. I refer her to the article that appeared a couple of days ago written by Chris Ham, who has been one of the more reluctant supporters of my reforms. He does not suggest them all; he does not support self-governing hospitals. The last time that I said he was a Marxist he corrected me and said that he was not a Marxist, although he writes for *Marxism Today*. However, he has supported most of the White Paper proposals, because he takes the view that although he is obviously far to the left of me, he believes in well-managed public services that strive for the same levels of efficiency and public responsiveness as the best of the private sector. As someone who in on the left, he firmly believes that a public service such as the NHS is capable of being at least as well run and responsive as the private sector. I share his view. We are striving to bring the NHS up to the levels of performance achieved by private sector organisations delivering less important services.

In his latest article, Chris Ham yet again particularly commended the division between those in the health authorities who work out the population's health needs

and seek to use the money available to procure the provision of health in line with need, and those who have to provide those services. It would be a disaster if the Labour party, for purely populist reasons, were incapable of taking on board the best aspects of the reforms.

8 pm

National pay has been mentioned. I wholly agree with what my hon. Friends the Members for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) and for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) said about reactions to the proposals in their districts and the way in which they rightly said that running through many Labour Members' speeches was what they actually fear about self-governing hospitals. Much of the argument about NHS trusts is bogus—for example, that people think that opting out of the NHS is the same as privatisation. I have difficulty in being persuaded that even passionate Labour Members seriously believe a word of that.

What makes some people in the service excited—from the British Medical Association, through the Trades Union Congress affiliates to the Labour party—is that they see national pay, terms and conditions being changed. The staff should not see that as a threat; it was rightly welcomed by my hon. Friends. Contrary to them, the hon. Member for Peckham gets passionate about defending Whitley council arrangements, national trade union recognition arrangements and other factors that stop the management having any discretion locally about how they recruit and reward their staff.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) began our debate by making one of the best defences of the concept of local, responsible management in our national health service that I have heard for a long time. I commend what he said. We shall be consulting about the proposals for the next three months and more. I commend the amendments made in another place that will pave the way for the public consultation that we have always promised.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 2, in page 6, line 14, at end insert—

"(1A) In any case where the Secretary of State is considering whether to make an order under subsection (1) above establishing an NHS trust and the hospital, establishment or facility concerned is or is to be situated in England, he shall direct the relevant Regional Health Authority to consult, with respect to the proposal to establish the trust,—

(a) the relevant Community Health Council and such other persons or bodies as may be specified in the direction; and

(b) such other persons or bodies as the Authority considers appropriate;

and, within such period (if any) as the Secretary of State may determine, the relevant Regional Health Authority shall report the results of those consultations to the Secretary of State.

(1B) In any case where the Secretary of State is considering whether to make an order under subsection (1) above establishing an NHS trust and the hospital, establishment or facility concerned is or is to be situated in Wales, he shall consult the relevant Community Health Council and such other persons and bodies as he considers appropriate.

(1C) In subsections (1A) and (1B) above—

(a) any reference to the relevant Regional Health Authority is a reference to that Authority in whose region the hospital, establishment or other facility concerned is, or is to be, situated; and

(b) any reference to the relevant Community Health Council is a reference to the Council for the district, or part of the district, in which that hospital, establishment or other facility is, or is to be, situated."

Read a Second time.

Amendment proposed to the Lords amendment: (c), in subsection (1A), at end add

'who shall not make an order under subsection (1) above, unless those consultations establish substantial support for an NHS trust among the staff of the hospital, establishment or facility and the local community it serves.'.—*[Ms. Harman.]*

Question put, That the amendment to the Lords amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 210, Noes 295.

Division No. 268] **[8.2 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
[illegible]y, Peter
[illegible]rman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas

Macdonald, Calum A.
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Salmond, Alex
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Martyn Jones and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion

Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown, and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

Question accordingly negatived.
Lords amendments Nos. 2 to 5 agreed to.

Clause 6

TRANSFER OF STAFF TO NHS TRUSTS

Lords amendment: No. 6, in page 7, line 18, at beginning insert

"Subject to subsection (4A) below"

8.15 pm

The Minister for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 7, 45, 46, 91, 136, 137, 139, 140, 150 and 170.

Mrs. Bottomley: The amendments deal with the transfer of staff, both to NHS trusts and from health to local authorities as a consequence of the community care changes in the Bill. The changes relating to the transfer to NHS trusts simply complete the provisions already in clauses 6 and 30. The transfer of staff from health to local authorities, by contrast, is set out in a new clause and in a series of equivalent Scottish amendments. Nevertheless, the same principle unites the amendments—that staff who transfer from one body to another should not lose out in the process. All the amendments provide various protective measures for staff who change employer in those special circumstances. I am sure that the statutory safeguards that they provide will be welcomed by those staff.

Amendments Nos. 6 and 7 and their Scottish equivalents provide statutory protection for staff who transfer from health authority to NHS trust employment before a trust's operational date. In particular, they specify that, for such staff, employment with an NHS trust shall be counted as continuous with health authority employment. Such staff will be few—mainly a small group of key staff, such as the new trust chief executive, who need to prepare the trust for carrying out is full range of functions.

The issue addressed by the new clause and the equivalent Scottish amendments was raised by Sir Roy Griffiths in his Report on community care and discussed at some length by the Committee, particularly the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke). That is the need to ensure that the services of experienced staff employed in long-stay hospitals are not lost when responsibility for their patients passes to another authority. Apart from knowledge of individual patients, such staff have a wide range of skills which are equally valuable in a community setting.

The new clause allows regulations to be made to provide for such staffs' service with the NHS and with local authorities to be counted as continuous. That means that their NHS service will be counted for the purposes of any future redundancy payments or action for unfair dismissal. We have opted for a regulation-making power rather than direct power here, because this is a matter which affects a range of interests—health and local authorities and representatives of NHS staff—with whom we shall discuss the regulations.

Question put and agreed to.
Lords amendment No. 7 agreed to.

Clause 8

TRANSFER OF PROPERTY, RIGHTS AND LIABILITIES TO NHS TRUST

Lords amendment: No. 8, in page 9, line 6, leave out from "section" to end of line 7.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 9 to 13, 20, 47 to 52, 69, 123 to 128 and 146 to 149.

Mr. Dorrell: This group of amendments completes the provisions relating to the financial and other working arrangements for NHS trusts in England and Wales and in Scotland. The amendments build on the financial structure for NHS trusts which was endorsed in Committee and on Report.

The amendments raise four issues. Amendments Nos. 123 to 125 and their Scottish equivalents deal with the funding of NHS trusts before their operational date. They give the Secretary of State power to require health authorities to meet expenses of trusts incurred during this period, in other words before income starts to flow in from NHS contracts. Such expenses are not expected to be substantial, but they will cover key issues such as the pay of a few senior staff who transfer to the NHS trust at an early stage.

Amendments Nos. 10 to 13 and their Scottish equivalents alter the definition of NHS trusts' originating capital debt. They allow all relevant assets to be included in the calculation of the debt. They also allow the Secretary

[Mr. Dorrell]

of State to leave out certain assets and liabilities from the calculation of the originating capital debt. This will enable the Secretary of State to exclude donated assets, for example, from the calculation. These amendments will ensure that the originating capital debt of NHS trusts reflects the true value of their net assets. They mean that the interest payments on the debt will correspond accurately to the capital charges to be paid by directly managed units, putting all provider units in the NHS on an equal financial footing.

The new clauses introduced by amendments Nos. 20 and 69 allow the Secretary of State to establish schemes for meeting costs of claims for clinical negligence and other liabilities incurred by health authorities, NHS trusts and, in Scotland, health boards and the common services agency. At present, health authorities bear their own risks and do not insure. However, many regions hold back funds for districts to meet the costs of particularly large clinical negligence claims. In Scotland and Wales, pooling arrangements to share the cost of high-value liabilities are operated by the Secretary of State. The Bill as it stands will not allow NHS trusts to participate in any pooling arrangements or other risk-sharing schemes. Trusts would have to meet their own liabilities without the option of spreading the risk. I do not believe that trusts, which will remain fully part of the NHS, should have to meet liabilities on a different basis from health authorities. These clauses will enable NHS trusts to participate alongside other health service bodies in risk-sharing schemes established by the Secretary of State.

Amendment No. 128 gives National Health Service trusts powers to purchase land compulsorily in certain circumstances subject to the Secretary of State's prior consent. Again, this amendment is designed to put National Health Service trusts in an analogous position to health authorities, for which the Secretary of State is able to purchase land under the procedure set out in the Acquisition of Land Act 1981. Compulsory purchase orders made under this new power will be subject to the Secretary of State's confirmation. As an additional safeguard, the amendment specifies that no such order may be made without the Secretary of State's prior consent to the proposed acquisition. These provisions will, I am sure, guarantee that this power is used only exceptionally and when it is in the wider interests of the National Health Service.

The other amendments in this group are all minor, technical amendments, and I do not propose to detain the House by describing them. I commend the amendments that I have described, and the minor ones, to the House.

Question put and agreed to. [*Special Entry.*]

Lords amendments Nos. 9 to 13 agreed to.

Clause 18

INDICATIVE BUDGETS FOR DOCTORS' PRACTICES

Lords amendment: No. 14, in page 18, line 39, leave out "by way of a budget"

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendments Nos. 15 to 19 and 53 to 57.

Mr. Clarke: This group of amendments changes the terminology in the Bill. What were previously described as indicative prescribing budgets will be called, if the amendments are agreed to, indicative prescribing amounts. This remains the same GP prescribing scheme as we have debated frequently before, but I hope to persuade the House that the change in nomemclature is desirable —as their Lordships were persuaded that it was.

There are two reasons for the change. First, it puts behind us the extraordinary campaigning and the fears aroused by the arguments about indicative prescribing budgets last summer. Hon. Members will recall that, when we first produced our reforms, various interests outside took the view that if the patients could be terrified enough about the prospect of change it would be possible to stop any reforms of the way in which the NHS is run.

Those interests invented a scurrilous claim that indicative prescribing budgets would lead to patients being deprived of medicines that they might require because their doctors would run out of money to prescribe their drugs. I regret to say that huge sums of money were put into the campaign and a great deal of effort was expended on frightening a lot of elderly and vulnerable patients into believing that they might not get the treatment they required. Eventually, I am glad to say, the BMA was persuaded to withdraw the claim and to agree that there was nothing in the Government's scheme that gave rise to any risk of any doctor ever having to refuse a patient medicine.

Unfortunately, the Labour party took longer to come round, because its members had leapt on to this nasty bandwagon and hence took some time to get off it. We all accept now that nothing in the proposals before us in any way imperils patients always being able to receive the medicines regarded as necessary by their doctors. In any case, all our previous debates and the campaigning about indicative prescribing budgets may be put behind us by going over to the word "amounts".

There is another, practical, problem. Much of the debate about my health service reforms keeps turning on budgets of various sorts. I accept that there is sometimes genuine confusion in the arguments of supporters, and frequently in the arguments of critics, about the sort of budgets that will be given to GPs who choose to become fund holders—what we call GP practice budgets—and about indicative prescribing budgets, which are budgets given to all GPs as an indication of what their prescribing costs would be expected to be if they incurred the ordinary and desirable level of costs for the patient mix on their lists.

It will be helpful for the prescribing scheme if we change to the term "indicative prescribing amount", leaving the word "budget" to describe the sums of money that will be negotiated with GPs who choose to become fund-holding GPs because they believe that, by controlling that amount of money, they will be able to influence the development of local services in a way that best suits their practices.

There is no change of policy—merely a desirable change of nomenclature. The Government firmly believe that it is necessary to eliminate wasteful expenditure on drugs in cases in which unnecessary amounts or too expensive drugs are prescribed. It is also sometimes necessary to eliminate dangerous over-prescribing in cases of large quantities of, say, tranquillisers being poured

down the throats of patients for long periods on repeat prescriptions without the patient having to see the doctor who was originally responsible for the prescription.

All hon. Members agree that we should cut out wasteful and dangerous prescribing. Everyone pays lip service to the idea that we should keep down the drugs bill to what it is necessary to spend—no more and no less. I hope that we shall have no more scurrilous attacks on the Government of the sort that we heard last year, and that people will campaign in line with what they say and want. The new scheme will take us nearer to the health service spending only as much as is necessary on drugs. If we can get the scheme running and if the amendments are agreed to, I believe that the phrase "indicative prescribing amounts" will make the scheme better understood.

Mr. Michael: These amendments appear to be a concession; the Government seem to be agreeing to delete all reference to GP drug budgets. But I warn the House that all is not what it seems. I also challenge the Minister to respond to this brief debate with a commitment that the Govenment have refused to write into the Bill.

The only fictitious and scurrilous aspect has been the Secretary of State's appalling series of attacks not only on the Opposition but on every professional group in the NHS, during the debate on this and on virtually every other aspect of the Bill.

In his opening remarks, the Secretary of State gave away the true position—in his words, there is no change of policy. In his words, this remains the same GP prescribing scheme. The Opposition have acted responsibly in warning the professionals and the public what to expect if the Secretary of State is allowed to get away with his changes to the national health service.

We have to deal not only with what is in the Bill but with what is not. The removal of waste and the elimination of over-prescribing or under-prescribing are fine aims, and in due course the Opposition will seek to tackle those matters. The trouble with the GP prescribing scheme, as the Secretary of State described it, is that the Bill does not assert the primacy of patient care in deciding what medication should be given to a patient. The Secretary of State failed to write that into the Bill. That point has been made to me most strongly by doctors.

8.30 pm

Another point made to me is that the Lords amendments make only cosmetic changes to the legislation. It looks like an improvement to have the word "budget" replaced by the word "amount" in clause 18, but is it really? Is there any real change in the meaning? The Secretary of State says that there is not. Will the law when it is enacted be different as a result of this change? Again the Secretary of State says no. This is the result of a game of word search on a word processor to find a different way to say the same thing.

In recent working papers, we have seen a softening of the rhetoric, just as we saw a softening in the Secretary of State's style in this debate. While the legislation does not explicitly threaten the cash limit, there is no guarantee that a Secretary of State for Health or a Secretary of State for Wales or for Scotland will not impose explicit cash limits in future.

Amendments offered to the Minister in Committee were rejected. That rejection clearly demonstrated the Government's refusal to give the precise and simple reassurance in law that the Opposition, doctors and patients want, need and deserve. I remind the Secretary of State of the two amendments that he rejected. The first said:

"there will be no sanction, financial or otherwise, applied against a practice which exceeds its indicative drug budget."

"Drug amount" is the term that the Secretary of State prefers. The second amendment stated:

"nothing in this section shall interfere with a medical practitioner's decision to supply pharmaceutical services according to his clinical judgment."

We sought such protection in law, but it has not been given. Those amendments were important, because they sought to protect the doctor's right to prescribe in the patient's best interest. The traditional confidence of the patient in the doctor is the basis of our national health service. It is incredible that the Government are prepared to put that at risk. Public and patient confidence is important.

We drew the Secretary of State's attention to the 1989 poll showing that nearly 25 per cent. of the sample believe that the plan to give doctors a drug budget—or drug amount—would lead to doctors failing to prescribe expensive drugs even when they were necessary. Half the poll sample thought that the drug budget would make doctors more careful, but in what way would they be more careful? They would be more careful not in terms of care in prescribing but in the way in which they controlled the finances. In this matter, as in so many others, the Secretary of State has claimed that we were crying wolf and raising unreal fears.

Since our debates in Committee, we have seen the truth. We have also come to understand why the Government are willing to accept the Lords amendments. They do not need drug budgets in the Bill to undermine patient care, because that is happening already. The damage has already been done to our beloved NHS. The accountants and the computers are already taking over. The examples are manifold, but I will give just a couple. A Cardiff woman went to her doctor for a repeat prescription for an inhaler for asthma. She was told that she could not have that one any more because it cost £17 and the GP could not afford to prescribe it under her budget. The patient was told that she would have to have a cheaper inhaler. A Welsh GP tells of the family practitioner committee producing its estimated budgets for this year and being given only half the budget needs, based on experience.

We hear of more and more people having to have a full medical examination before a doctor will accept them on his list. I do not entirely blame the GPs for that, because a doctor has to consider existing patients. The Government and the Secretary of State are to blame for placing GPs in a dilemma by introducing distortions in the operation of the National Health Service which are wrong in principle and wrong in practice.

The Bill gives great powers to the Secretary of State. He could promise that this shell Bill and the proposed reforms will not stop patients getting the medication that they need, but sadly, that would be an empty promise. The threat to patient care will not be removed by the amendments. The damage is being done and the Bill still fails to offer the positive protection of patient care, which will have to await the general election and a Labour Government.

Mr. Kennedy: I do not want to go into matters as deeply as the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr.

[Mr. Kennedy]

Michael). In an emollient way, the Secretary of State described why he was replacing the word "budget" with the word "amount". Presumably a civil servant or the Minister or a policy adviser thought of this change. Was it thought up by the same person who tried to get everybody to use the term "community charge" rather than the term "poll tax"? If so, may we have that person's name?

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): I support the amendment. It is sensible because it strikes at one of the main propaganda weapons of the Opposition. They and many of their supporters have many times deployed that weapon against the Bill and it has caused great upset and distress to elderly patients and the chronically sick.

Conservative Members are constantly faced in their surgeries with people who say that, if the Bill goes through, the doctor will not be able to prescribe drugs or give the necessary treatment. That has caused great anxiety, and, despite the Government's reassurances, the Opposition have peddled that argument time and again in an attempt to creat anxiety for political purposes. The beauty of this change of name to deal with the drug budget is that it finally buries what I can only describe as that calumny. Eventually the Opposition will come round to recognising that we are not out of our minds and will not deny sick people the drugs that are necessary to cure them. The constant repetition of that calumny has raised totally unjustified anxieties.

I welcome, as I think do all hon. Members, the desire to deal with waste and the need to encourage under-prescribers to prescribe drugs for their patients. No one will interfere with a doctor's right to prescribe what he thinks is necessary for a patient. That must underpin any decision that is made by a doctor and it underpins the Bill. Making it clear that this is not a budget but an amount underlines that and gives much needed reassurance to the patient.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) asked who thought up the change of nomenclature. I assume that it was thought up by Lord Butterfield, the Cambridge professor of physic, who moved in another place the amendment that was accepted by the Government. I shall spare the hon. Gentleman most of my strictures, because I think that the campaign waged by the Labour party has been much worse than his. He showed an unfortunate and unintended lapse of taste when he suggested that the Cambridge professor of physic, a distinguished member of another place, was engaged in some sort of public relations exercise.

The amendment makes a sensible change. I presume that the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye, like my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) and me, wants to turn the page on some of the campaigning that we have seen on the subject. That caused much harm and frightened many elderly and vulnerable patients.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) continues to move round the subject. There is not and never has been any question of a doctor being put in a position where he could not prescribe the necessary medicine for his patients. It is total nonsense to suggest that that was ever in question. There is no question of any sanction being applied to a general practitioner who prescribes a necessary medicine. The only scrutiny to which a doctor will be subjected by other doctors is an inquiry into the possibility of wasteful, dangerous or out-of-date prescribing. The prescribing doctor will be expected to correct such prescribing if it is found. The introduction of the change is already having some beneficial effects.

Mr. Michael: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way in a moment.

The only good thing about the campaign last summer was that it drew more attention than ever before to prescribing costs. The hon. Gentleman said that the labour party had always been against wasteful prescribing. In all the time that I have been connected with health, the Labour party's voting and actions have never supported that bland assertion. The Labour party has resisted our every attempt to reduce the level of waste in prescribing. As a result of that attention and the new data and information available to doctors, there is already evidence that in preparation for the change doctors are examining their prescribing practices. Those who are wasteful in comparison with their colleagues are taking action. The growth in the cost of drugs to the health service is markedly slower this year than in past years and we have not yet introduced the change. Doctors who know that they will be exposed as over-prescribers are taking action to ensure that the "prescribing amounts" do not catch them out next year.

Mr. Michael: The Secretary of State confirms my point on the extent to which administrative action and fear are already having an effect. I invite him to confirm one point. He said that the only judgments made will be by doctors. In Committee we asked for that assurance and it was never given. We were told that the family practitioner committee or a successor body would make the judgment, and that it would be an administrative decision, although taken with the advice of doctors. Tonight he said that doctors would make the judgment. It will be only peer review, if the Secretary of State's sentence is taken at face value. I invite him to say whether he meant it entirely in that way, because I should not like to misrepresent what he said.

Mr. Clarke: I reached an agreement with the profession some weeks ago that the relevant committee of the family practitioner committee would be composed of other doctors. We have reached an agreement on the composition of these committees. With great respect, the hon. Gentleman is amazingly mealy-mouthed in his retreat from last summer's ruthless and unscrupulous campaign. At one point, he said how important it was that every patient had full confidence in the ability of his or her doctor to give all the treatments required. I have never been persuaded by statements made by spokesmen from either the Labour party or the British medical Association that it is important that patients have confidence in their doctors. A great deal of money and effort was put into destroying that confidence last year. A great deal more money was spent on opinion polls to see how effectively patients had been frightened. That was then claimed as a judgment on the reforms of the NHS.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way in a minute.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth raised two entirely fresh calumnies which he clearly intends to pursue. He quoted the case of a Cardiff doctor who had told a patient that she could not prescribe a particular appliance because she could not afford it under her budget. The hon. Gentleman knows that that example cannot be genuine because budgets have not been introduced. If the hon. Gentleman had such a case, instead of encouraging and airing it, he should have told his patient that it could not be true. I do not know whether any doctor said that she could not prescribe something because it was not within her budget. But as there are no budgets in place, the hon. Gentleman knows that it must be untrue.

The *Daily Mirror* follows a practice similar to that of Labour Members. It publishes the most fictitious rubbish in the paper. As evidence in support of its allegations it produces letters from patients saying, "I do not care what my doctor said, I believe that he could not afford to do what he said he could do." That is regarded as evidence to support the *Daily Mirror*'s claims that doctors cannot afford to prescribe certain drugs.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth also suggested that doctors turn patients off their lists because they cannot afford them. The hon. Member for Peckham is also fond of all this. We have explored all the allegations to which the *Daily Mirror* gives terrific support. So far not one has turned out to be truthful or accurate. The accounts given by the hon. Member for Peckham on the Floor of the House usually turn out to be a ridiculous description of the case about which she is campaigning. I do not believe that anyone has yet found a patient anywhere in the country who was turned off a doctor's list because of the introduction of the NHS reforms. But Labour Members keep saying that they have.

8.45 pm.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth made a particularly witty contribution. He said that his patients were discovering that when they went to a new doctor they were given a full medical examination so that the doctor could decide whether they were old and frail and if so throw them off. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that one feature of the new GP contract, which his party bitterly fought, is that GPs are required to offer a full medical examination to new patients. It is a popular innovation with patients. It is an improvement of our family doctor service.

Patients are given a full medical examination to enable the GP to obtain information about his new patient and be appraised of his or her possible health needs. What does the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth do? Cynicism knows no bounds in opposing the NHS reforms. He tells his constituents that the improvement in the service implies that they are given an MOT test to find out whether they are too expensive. That is how the Labour party won the Vale of Glamorgan by-election. That is how they propose to fight the consultation process over the summer.

Eventually, the more responsible Members of the Labour party will feel ashamed of themselves for aligning themselves with all the more reactionary and backward-looking elements in the NHS. By doing so, they have covered up their lack of policy. Even when mild amendments are proposed by Lord Butterfield in another place, they take the opportunity to arouse public fears which they know are unreal for unscrupulous objectives.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield) *rose*——

Mr. Hind *rose*——

Mr. Tom Clarke *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Is the Secretary of State giving way?

Mr. Clarke: I give way to the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke).

Mr. Tom Clarke: I am grateful to the Secretary of State, even though I have almost forgotten the point on which I wished to intervene. The Secretary of State has left me, if not other hon. Members, with a distinct dilemma. I hope that he will not worry if I tell him that some people detect in him a degree of over-sensitivity and almost paranoia. All afternoon he has said that the Government have involved themselves in an exercise of consultation. Yet when we identified the points on which various individuals, distinguished professional bodies and even the Labour party disagreed with the Government, it became a campaign and it became disreputable. What is the difference between consultation and a campaign?

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: With great respect, I said that we have always promised public consultation on self-governing trusts. We promised it throughout Second Reading, throughout the five and a half hours of debate about it on the previous occasion when the Bill was debated in the House and I have repeated the promise during three hours of debate tonight. Without anyone contesting it, I have introduced the statutory provisions to enable it to take place. I look forward to serious consultation.

As the Opposition chose to discuss these drafting amendments by going back to yet more complaints about prescribing, I chose to give my view yet again of their campaigning on a sensitive subject such as NHS care.

Mr. Tom Clarke: The Secretary of State is paranoid.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am not paranoid. The British Medical Association campaign collapsed in ruins last autumn and the Labour party's campaign ground to a halt shortly thereafter. Now it is trying to get going again.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton *rose*——

Mr. Hind *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: All that I am anxious to do is to persuade Labour Members from now on in their undoubtedly equally ineffective debating, they avoid methods of campaigning which frighten innocent members of the public.

Mr. Winterton: While I accept the assurances of my right hon. and learned Friend, before he finishes his speech on this amendment, will he pay tribute to the pharmaceutical industry of the United Kingdom, which has played a major role in the balance of payments, provided employment and has always been responsible? It has made a major contribution to improving the health of people in the United Kingdom. Furthermore, does he agree that a majority of doctors has always prescribed

[Mr. Winterton]

responsibly? If my right hon. and learned Friend's assurances are to carry weight, he must ensure that the good work of the pharmaceutical industry and doctors can continue.

Mr. Clarke: I hesitated to give way to my hon. Friend because he is a persistent critic of mine and he has only just come in to the Chamber. I was trying to shorten the debate. However, I gladly agree with all the points that he made. The pharmaceutical industry took no part in last summer's campaign. All the people I know in the pharmaceutical industry are in favour or responsible prescribing. No one in the industry makes a case for wasteful and unnecessary prescribing.

That is true of the vast majority of doctors. Last year many of them used leaflets that told a lot of lies about the scheme and frightened many of their patients. A majority of doctors put excessive faith in the accuracy of the literature that they are provided with by the BMA. The leaflets and the allegations have completely disappeared. This minor drafting amendment puts that chapter behind us. Responsible doctors and other responsible people connected with the industry are in favour of spending as much on drugs as is necessary—no more and no less. We are introducing a scheme that will enable us to implement that desire. The Labour party always pays lip service to that, but in its actions and campaigns it does everything possible to undermine every attempt to get NHS prescribing costs under control.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 15 to 20 agreed to, one with Special Entry.

Clause 22

DISTRIBUTION OF GENERAL MEDICAL SERVICES

Lord's amendment: No. 21, in page 23, line 10, after "specify" insert "(a)".

Mr. Dorrell: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to consider Lords amendments 22 to 34 and 59 to 68.

Mr. Dorrell: The amendments primarily reflect the outcome of discussions with the medical practices committees about the practical implications of our proposals on GP manpower, job-related GP appeals and part-time working by GPs. They therefore address the management issues relating to general practice.

The first group of amendments deals with GP manpower. We made it clear in the White Paper that we intended to take two additional powers to improve our ability to manage the number of GPs practising within the GP service. The relevant paragraph of the White Paper, paragraph 722, commits the Government unreservedly to ensuring that there is adequate access to family doctors across the country. It also says that it is a legitimate concern of the Government to ensure that there is a proper balance in the number of doctors as between the hospital service and general practice.

In order to give practical effect to those policy aspirations, the Government announced that they intended to take two further steps to enable it better to control the total cost of the NHS. We announced that we intended to seek reserve powers to control, if necessary, the number of GPs entering into contracts with the NHS. We also said that we would seek in due course to reduce from 70 to 65 the retirement age for GPs.

The amendments address the first issue, the total ceiling on GP manpower. We now accept that we should define the reserve powers to control GP numbers as applying nationally, not area by area. There was some concern that the powers could not be made to work effectively and deliver the results that we wanted if we sought to exercise the power to control total GP numbers at any level below the national level. The amendments provide us with the power to impose that total limit on GP numbers at national level. Separate limits may apply in England and Wales. Clause 38 provides that separate limits can apply in Scotland.

The second of the management issues that is addressed by this group of amendments deals with appeals. We had intended that the two medical practices committees should consider appeals on points of law by GPs against decisions by the family health service authorities in England and the health boards in Scotland. However, the committee doubted whether it would be practical for it to deal satisfactorily with appeals from GPs on points of law. Therefore, we have accepted the argument that the appeals process should continue to be directed to the Secretary of State rather than to individual family health service authorities.

This group of amendments also clarifies the provisions relating to part-time working and job sharing by GPs. It builds on the major innovation that was announced in the White Paper and introduced into the Bill on Report in this House. We have made it clear that all GPs will need to be admitted to the medical list on either a part-time or full-time basis. GPs can appeal to the Secretary of State against decisions by the medical practices committees to refuse to vary the conditions on which they were admitted to the medical list. GPs already working part-time under locally agreed arrangements will be transferred automatically to the new scheme. Their position will therefore be fully safeguarded.

The amendments improve the provisions in the Bill for the management of general practice, to the benefit of both GPs and their patients. I commend them to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 22 to 69 agreed to, some with Special Entry.

Lords amendment: No. 70, before clause 40, insert the following new clause—

" .—(1) The Secretary of State shall, with the approval of the Treasury, make grants out of money provided by Parliament towards the expenses of local authorities incurred in connection with the exercise of their community care functions.

(2) Grants made in accordance with subsection (1) above shall be used by local authorities solely for the provision of community care for purposes described in plans drawn up in accordance with section 44 below.

(3) The Secretary of State shall not later than 30th November in the year preceding any financial year lay before Parliament his estimate of the total amount of grant likely to be disbursed under this section in respect of that financial year, together with a statement of the sums requested by local authorities and the formula for distribution between such authorities, and shall at that time publish forecasts for the following two financial years."

Amendment proposed: (a), after subsection (2), at end insert—

'(2A) The Secretary of State shall by regulation make a scheme whereby local authorities may make payments to disabled persons or other persons in receipt of community care services for the purchase of care or personal assistance services, subject to subsection (2B) below.

(2B) For the purpose of the scheme made under subsection (2A) above, section 29(6) of the National Assistance Act 1948 shall not apply.

(2C) The Secretary of State shall issue guidance to local authorities in association with the scheme made under subsection (2A) above, for the purpose of assisting them in ensuring that any payment made by them under the scheme are subject to arrangements sufficient to ensure that the authorities have satisfied their fiduciary duties.'.—*[Mr. Rowe.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the Government motion to disagree with the Lords in the said amendment, and Government amendments (b) and (c) in lieu of the Lords amendment.

9 pm

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I should explain to the House that, although the amendment is unacceptable, the Government, recognising the widespread concern about the subject, have tabled an amendment to clause 47 that would enable me and future Secretaries of State to make grants to voluntary organisations to assist them with the expense of providing services to people who are over-dependent on drugs and alcohol.

Lords amendment No. 70 touches on ring fencing and the arguments that we have had during the passage of the Bill about whether grants made by central Government towards the costs of the new care-in-the-community responsibilities that will be placed on local authorities should somehow be ring fenced.

Before we plunge into the intricacies of local government finance, which I shall try to avoid but which are almost unavoidable, we should at least touch base. We are talking about a policy which is certainly the most popular that I ever put forward and which has received widespread support—the policy of making clearer the responsibilities for care given in the community to elderly, disabled, mentally ill and mentally handicapped people. The policy was based on the second Griffiths' report on this subject.

In future, local authorities will have new resources and responsibilities to make an individual assessment in the case of each citizen who may need support to live in a non-institutional, non-NHS setting, and to reach a judgment about how best to provide services, within the resources available, and to support those people, and the families and friends who help to care for them, in achieving the best possible quality of life in or near their own homes.

We have had many arguments about the subject. At one point, I was accused of going too slowly in my response to the Griffiths report. Then I was accused of going too quickly—of rushing to include proposals in the Bill after a short period of consultation. But at no stage has anyone seriously challenged the desirability of that policy, and we are now talking about its implementation. The Government have always made it clear that, when the new policy is introduced, adequate resources should be available to enable the local authorities to put the framework in place and to begin the process of steadily raising the quality of care in the community to the level which I am sure people will expect such services to reach by the end of the decade.

The obvious source of finance is the transfer, by agreement, of money from the budget of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security—away from the present arrangements which give open-ended access to income support to those who go into residential care homes—across to local government, as an added contribution to central Government grant, to enable it to finance the individual assessment of its provision of care in residential care homes or by way of domiciliary provision. We have always said that we shall not only transfer what the Department of Social Security is spending at the time of the transfer but will anticipate the growth in the social security budget and make reasonable assumptions about the direction in which demography and the desire to expand services are likely to take local authorities.

There is no doubt that the Government have embarked on a policy that is popular and widely accepted in the field. We have also undertaken that, when the policy is introduced, extra resources will be transferred to the local authorities in the manner that I have described.

The result is that, although Lords amendment No. 70 is very important—I have no doubt that there will be controversy about it in the House—we are arguing not about the wood but about one of the trees. In my opinion, exactly what we mean by ring fencing and by this particular intricacy of local government finance remains somewhat obscure to those who think that they have views on the subject. In the minds of some, ring fencing has acquired a symbolic quality. They have heard that rather nice people are in favour of ring fencing and have concluded that, if the Government oppose ring fencing, there must be some doubt about the Government's commitment to our own policy or about our commitment that the local authorities will have the resources to implement that policy.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): Does the Secretary of State agree with Sir Roy Griffiths's definition of ring fencing in the White Paper?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with the definition, but I do not agree with Sir Roy Griffiths's proposal—and nor do the amendments exactly reflect those proposals. In his report to the Government, Sir Roy advocated specific grant as a mechanism for transferring funds. I must admit that I do not have his report instantly to hand, but I have obviously discussed it frequently with him. He regarded specific grant as a mechanism whereby central Government could control local government expenditure on the subject, and central Government could exercise influence over the provision of care by local authorities.

I cannot speak for Sir Roy, but I think that he adheres to many of his proposals. I work closely with him, because he is deputy chairman of the NHS policy board, and, indeed, was at a board meeting with me this afternoon. His suggestion was that each care plan produced by local government should come to central Government, and that money be released through specific grant when the Government are satisfied with the plans provided.

We did not go along with that proposal—I do not believe that it is practicable. It would involve me and my Department taking on a great obligation and having people to vet community care plans before distributing money. I do not want officials in my Department second-guessing what local authorities are doing. It is unreal to imagine that we can get that degree of control

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over local government. I also do not think that it is much of a sanction to threaten that we shall not release money to Hackney until we are satisfied that Hackney's plans are all right. It would not work like that. For that reason, we have moved away from Sir Roy's proposal.

Various other forms of ring fencing are kicking about. Some people solemnly suggest that we should have a specific grant that specifies the maximum to be spent by local government on the policy, keeping rigid control in the hands of central Government. The Lords amendment envisages a minimum, with local government finding other money from elsewhere, principally the community charge, on top of the ring-fenced sum for the new money to be added. Although I accept that it is not a million miles from Sir Roy Griffiths's proposal, Lords amendment No. 70 does not represent the Griffiths report, any more than the Government's version does.

Mr. Tom Clarke: The Secretary of State says that the amendment does not necessarily reflect precisely Sir Roy's recommendation. Conversely, will the Secretary of State confirm that Sir Roy has publicly supported the Lords amendment?

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I did not know that he had done that, but I have made it clear—I have had fairly regular contacts with Sir Roy Griffiths—that I think that he is still attracted by the idea of a specific grant. However, he also understands that, after considering the point, the Government decided that it was not appropriate. I tried to give the reasons why, at an early stage, we turned from that part of Sir Roy's otherwise excellent report from which we extracted the main points of policy that we have been following.

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that, in the Select Committee report, we offered him five variations of ring-fencing specific grants, from which he may take his choice?

Mr. Clarke: Perhaps I should return to why I do not like any specific grants of the kind that have been described for all the new responsibilities and care in the community.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way once more and then I must deal with the general case.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the danger with ring fencing is that it can become restrictive and therefore deny essential flexibility?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, and I am sure that that is the case. The people in another place who supported amendment on ring fencing—quite a number of my hon. Friends and some Opposition members are urging it now—believe that it would be a useful mechanism to put a lever on the Government to put up the amount of money that we spend. That is good in a good year. However, it would give the Government every opportunity again to identify to other parts of the local government system the restraints that they want to impose on the growth of care in the community in future years. I am not sure that the short-term reasons that attract people to that arrangement at the moment are likely to be good and lasting for all time. It is a double-edged sword which some directors of social services are asking us to wield in their budgets.

My starting point is what the policy is. We are clearly giving local authorities responsibility for policy, and they should expect to be accountable for it. Responsibility involves a range of activities, such as assessing individual clients, and arranging for care. As in all social policy, that involves a local authority taking on board the choice of priorities, deciding what can be afforded for certain clients and the emphasis that it wants to give, and deciding what priority to give to that part of its policies as against other parts of its social services provision. Those in responsibility cannot make judgments about finance in different parts——

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way later, because if I am not careful I shall make a long speech.

Those in local government are accountable to their electorate for all local government services. It is artificial to extract accountability for part of its services.

It is a mistake for the House and the Government to believe that somehow we can transfer responsibility to local government but retain the ability to make key judgments about what proportion of the social services budget should be spent on community care. All the history of central Government trying to do that with local government shows that it is unworkable.

The Association of County Councils is against ring fencing. Many people in local government remember when far more local government money came from specific grants on which Parliament and Government insisted. They felt hog-tied in their choice of priorities.

Following that path would sit curiously with the other provision that we give local government. A case for ring fencing could be made for every aspect of local government policy. The Department of Health steered the Children Bill through the House last year. Hon. Members who served on the Standing Committee and those who took part in debates in the other place were enthusiastic about raising the standard of local authority care for children. In the light of what has happened this year, I am convinced that, if they had thought of ring fencing, all those enthusiasts, including Conservative Back Benchers, would have tabled an amendment to ring-fence the money for local authority provision under the Children Act 1989, which will become a new obligation on local authorities in October next year.

Some hon. Members take part in education debates. The House would be full of enthusiasts for ring fencing education grants. In recent years, there has been a growth in specific grants for education, which, by and large, are resented by education authorities, although the small grants tend to be fairly desirable. We cannot return to a system whereby, when the House is dealing with a new subject, we suddenly invent a new separate and specific grant for a part of local authorities's responsibilities.

Mr. Hind: Many Conservative Members are concerned that my right hon. and learned Friend should answer the criticism that was made by the directors of social services in their response to the Griffiths report, in which they bluntly said that they were concerned that certain local

authorities would spend the community care budget on filling holes in the road. That is what started the ring-fencing argument.

Mr. Clarke: I accept what my hon. Friend says. Many of the people who are arguing for ring fencing believe that. I have given the general case against it, which is why we should not go down this route as a response to those fears.

I do not believe that those fears are real. Every director of a local government service would like his budget to be protected while he retains the ability to raid other people's. The person in charge of transport would love to have his budget ring-fenced and to be a predator on other budgets, and the same applies to directors of education and social services. Since we have made block grants to local government, it has been much more free to choose between one service and another. All the experience shows that social services do not lose under block grants. Year in and year out, the expenditure of most local authorities on social services tends to exceed that set down as the norm by Government under the grant-related expenditure assessment or the standard spending assessment and the money comes from other services such as transport, which is a frequent loser. There is nothing to suggest that social services have suffered predation by local authorities for the sake of other calls on their budget.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South) *rose*——

9.15 pm

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend is aware that the block grant was introduced by our right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) and our hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) under a previous Conservative Government and that there is considerable support, even on the Government side, for the reintroduction of a specific grant, not least from our hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds.

Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the Government are handing over to local government considerable responsibility for vulnerable groups? Will he share with the House his concern that if local government were capped even more than in this financial year, as it could well be, those vulnerable groups who cannot represent themselves—the mentally ill, the mentally handicapped, the elderly and the disabled—could be disadvantaged because money allocated in the standard spending assessment by the Government for community care may not all be spent on community care, but may be spent on more desirable, romantic sectors of local government expenditure?

Mr. Clarke: Obviously, my first answer is the one that I have just given. Experience of local government tends to show strongly that social services do not lose out to other services. It tends to be the other way round, because most local authorities of whatever political complexion tend to share my hon. Friend's concern for these groups. Local authorities tend to protect spending on those groups rather than on other parts of the budget, such as holes in the road, which in past periods of local government restraint have obviously not rated highly in the priorities.

I shall return to my hon. Friend's argument having dealt with my final practical point. I am still unclear about how the advocates of ring fencing think that they would ring-fence an identifiable block of work. Local government already has care in the community responsibilities. All our social services authorities provide home helps, meals on wheels, respite care and many other services to people in the community. A new responsibility is now being added.

There would be appalling problems in trying to define exactly the subject matter of the community care block grant. In particular, one would have to decide where to put the line between this and the rest of the social services budget. There are endless practical cases where a particular client, to use the social worker word, is not in the category labelled "care in the community client" rather than "other social services client". The work is blurred at the edges, so definition would be difficult.

The amendment leaves to the Secretary of State and his Department the other simple task of deciding on a formula to distribute the money, and so on. The amendment has practical problems.

My hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) and many other right hon. and hon. Members are worried that without ring fencing we could leave vulnerable groups open to possible losses in their budget which we might otherwise avoid. Obviously, we depend mainly on the policy, which is an improvement. The new funds that will be given will pave the way to an expansion of service. Furthermore, other controls are built into the Bill which will enable us to monitor the provision of care.

All local authorities will be required to produce community care plans. They will be required to consult on them with health authorities and others. Therefore, we shall have more opportunity to feed in news about the quality and nature of local authority provision than now. Part of the new policy includes enhanced powers for the social services inspectorate. Therefore, other areas of what I would call, perhaps unsuitably, quality control are being built into the Bill. Inept use of local government grant powers will not be the effective way to look after the standards of provision.

If hon. Members want to return to the old system of distributing money to local government whereby it was given set sums for each task, they should vote for the amendment. The Association of County Councils is against the amendment, and I believe that most of the other local government associations would not be in favour of returning to the old method of giving out money on a service-by-service provision. I believe that we are right not to want to return to the old system. The block grant is an improvement, particularly for matters which are a local government responsibility. For such matters, local government must decide its priorities.

Dame Jill Knight: My right hon. and learned Friend referred to the Children Act 1989. In the light of the Stephanie Fox case which occurred only a week or so ago, does he believe that the money allocated by the House to protect children under the provisions of that Act was sufficient and was used to protect that child? It was the intention of the House that the money should be used in that way.

Mr. Clarke: I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me if I do not refer to the Stephanie Fox case in detail. My hon. Friend the Minister for Health answered a parliamentary question about that case recently. I do not believe that resources were the key issue in that case, but

[Mr. Clarke]

I should prefer to give a more considered response if the matter is raised in a more structured way on another occasion. I will give way to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) if he still wants me to.

Mr. Ashley: I thought that the Secretary of State was avoiding me. The Secretary of State argues that if we press for ring fencing for community care, we should logically extend it to education, children and other needs. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman consider the possibility —I believe that it is a certainty—that those receiving community care are not popular in the sense of receiving a popular allocation? They are not politically popular. As the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) said, severely disabled people, and especially mentally disabled people, are not popular. That is why money for them should be ring-fenced. We would not press for general ring fencing.

Mr. Clarke: I hope that I can meet the right hon. Gentleman's point. Some of the people about whom we are talking are, to use his phrase, politically popular. The elderly are popular, as are the disabled who are a powerful lobby, in which the right hon. Gentleman takes an active part. I agree that some local authorities are less inclined to give the correct priority to mentally ill people. I also believe that local authorities are inclined to cut grants to voluntary bodies when they are under budgetary pressures. Drug and alcohol abuse are not always popular recipients of social services money.

The case is made for specific grants, in education, social services and elsewhere on a smaller scale than the amendment contemplates. I am in favour of small specific grants, where we give a block of money to local government to induce it to provide a service which, if it were left to itself, it would be inclined not to provide. From the word go, we have always had a proposal for specific grant for community care services and for mentally ill people.

Some local authorities have a bad record of community care provision for mentally ill people. Some hardly bother with it at all. For that reason, we are introducing a new and particular form of specific grant. The money will be handled on our behalf by the district health authorities which will disburse the money to local authorities as they produce plans which fit in with the health authorities' plans for the discharge of patients from hospitals or the care of patients in the community.

In response to the Lords amendment and to the pressure from all sides on ring fencing, with which I have dealt, we have looked again at the position of people who are dependent on drugs and alcohol and at the work of the voluntary bodies that deal with drug and alcohol abuse. Among others, my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) referred in Committee to the fear felt by the voluntary organisations about the arrangements that we were proposing for the financing of care in the community. That concern was also raised in another place. Voluntary organisations have expanded their work in recent years, largely on the basis of the current availability of income support at the registered home rates. That is one of the things that we are doing away with. Under the new policy, there will be no access to such income support.

We have all encountered people who work with those with drug and alcohol abuse problems who say that they fear the loss of income support money because they are dependent on the local authorities which might not give them the necessary grants. That is why our amendment proposes that the Secretary of State should be able to make specific grants to local authorities for use in helping voluntary organisations with the services that they provide for people who are dependent on drugs or alcohol. Our amendment refers to

"persons who are, have been, or are likely to become dependent upon alcohol or drugs".

The provisions would enable local authorities to assist with the preventive work that is undertaken by the voluntary organisations, as well as to assist them with the services that they provide for those who are dependent on drugs or alcohol or who are recovering from such dependency.

I hope that, having heard me answer the general case, the House will accept that we have responded to an important point that has been worried away at ever since the Bill was introduced. People have named the voluntary bodies which could envisage the loss of their income support funding and which were dubious about whether their local social services departments would want to continue giving them a grant for their work with, for example, drug abusers. Indeed, as the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South said, some local authorities might be tempted to give a pretty low priority to the work of outside agencies for unattractive groups, such as drug abusers.

Therefore, I say to the House—if I was in another place, I should say it to their Lordships—that I hope that those who have worried at that issue will accept that they have won a significant point. Alongside the commitment that we have already given to make specific grants for the services for mentally ill people, we are now putting on the face of the Bill, in primary legislation, a specific provision for grants to voluntary organisations, which the Government will fund. The Government will be accountable for the sum of money that is allocated for that purpose. To use the jargon, that money will be ring-fenced and local authorities will be able to spend it only on grants to such bodies.

Mr. Hinchliffe: The Secretary of State seems to have undermined his central argument against the Lords amendment by making a concession on that point—although I welcome the fact that he has. Like many people outside the House, I am puzzled by why the right hon. and learned Gentleman has conceded on the issue of specific grants for mental illness, but not for mental handicap. I cannot see any logical difference between the two.

Mr. Clarke: I was always in favour of specific grants for mental illness services. I was a strong advocate from the word go, and such provision was always in the policy. If the hon. Gentleman looks at the current provision made by the local authorities, he will find that only 3 per cent. of the total budget is spent on services for mentally ill people. The proportion varies from authority to authority. In some authorities the provision is minuscule. The provision for services for the mentally ill had therefore been given too low a priority.

There is also the problem of liaison with the health authorities themselves. I believe that most hon. Members support modern mental illness policies and accept that

there should be smaller institutions and care in the community. However, most of us also accept that that works badly in practice. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield is alway pressing me about people who slip through the net and he sometimes attacks the policy. However, he is right to say that we know that, however good that policy may be in theory, it does not work well in practice in the country at large. That is why there is a wholly separate case for a specific grant for mental illness provision.

My proposition is based on the view that where it is reasonable to suppose that certain groups might be unpopular, a small amount of the local government allocation can be ring-fenced in specific grants. That is the way in which we shall induce authorities to spend more than they otherwise would on that part of the provision. It is taking that much too far—I do not think that I have undermined the basic case—to say that a huge block of money, being a high proportion of the money available for care in the community activities, should be ring-fenced and specific grant-based in that way. There is no evidence to suggest that social services have come under pressure from other services under the comparative argument for resources. There is no really sensible way of separating the money with clear borders, from the rest of social services provision.

Going for specific grants of that kind would be to go back on every development in local government finance in recent years. Some aspects of the relationship between central Government and local government finance are an improvement on some years ago. To stay with the basic objective of a block grant, leaving local authorities to choose priorities among their overall responsibilities, remains sound.

9.30 pm

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): I spent eight years as a local authority member, and served on social services committees for six of them. In the whole of that time, the debate was about more freedom for local authorities to decide their own priorities and how money was to be spent. We welcomed the abolition of specific grants for a whole range of local authority services. It is peculiar to hear people arguing to go the other way and to suggest as do some in local authorities, that they cannot trust themselves? Does not my right hon. and learned Friend find that strange, and does he have more faith in local authority members than do some right hon. and hon. Members?

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend makes a persuasive point and is correct in saying that the balance of local government opinion in recent years is that the way things have gone is to be welcomed by all political parties.

I have a letter from Mr. Robin Wendt, secretary of the Association of County Councils, who says:

> "This is to confirm that the ACC would not support a system of specific government grant towards the general revenue costs of community care, and would endorse the line taken by the Secretary of State in the House of Commons earier this week."

It would be putting the clock back to return to the concept of central Government earmarking funds for particular purposes.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: What about capping?

Mr. Clarke: I hear arguments about capping, but there is agreement in the House on our policy of care in the community. There is a clear undertaking that when it is introduced, adequate funds will be made available. There is no problem about that. We are immersed in the details of local government finance, and as Secretary of State for Health, I will go as far as I need into local government finance and no further for the purpose of this debate. I am sure that you, Mr. Speaker, would rule me out of order if I embarked on a general debate on local government finance.

Capping is imposed not on councils that are in difficulty providing essential services but on those that have so mismanaged their affairs that they are incapable of delivering a decent service within the amount of expenditure incurred by reasonable councils elsewhere, and without prejudice to cases that may be proceeding before the courts at the present time.

Within the right level of resources, every local authority has the responsibility and duty to distribute its own resources, allocating them to the headings it thinks best. It should be accountable to its own electors for the standard of care that it then produces.

Mr. Rowe: The amendment in my name and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) is important. The Bill engendered considerable excitement because its intention appeared to be to give power to the consumer to an extent that has hitherto not been forthcoming. We have a long way to go before the consumer becomes sovereign in this difficult field, but there is no doubt that that is the intention of the Bill, and we welcomed it on that basis.

Having been given an assurance in Committee that consumers who had been given a right or an opportunity to manage part of their own budget in a way which enables them to purchase and control the purchase of services, and who have done that with tremendous skill and to their own great satisfaction as it restored to them a degree of independence, it was a shock to discover Ministers appearing to resile from that assurance. Apparently, local authorities providing mostly severely disabled people with a part of their care budget for them to control might be in danger of being ruled illegal for doing so. The disabled and others who have had the ability to control part of that budget should be able to continue to do so.

I received a letter from the Spinal Injuries Association which is typical of the concern that has been expressed. It states:

> "Government Ministers have on many occasions given their support to the many schemes already run by local authorities. A number of our members benefit from these schemes and they all work most successfully. The ability to arrange their own personal care assistance gives them independence, choice and control over their lives which would otherwise be unattainable due to the severity of their disability."

That is what community care is about and exactly what we should aim to achieve. I want to secure a categoric assurance from my right hon. and learned Friend that the existing schemes and future schemes that could be made to work will not be put at risk.

The case against such schemes is the difficulty in defining those cases in which such expenditure authority should be given to the consumer. It is said that we could end up with all sorts of people asking for cash in hand. How would we know that they would not spend that on

[Mr. Rowe]

drink? We have heard that argument and all the others ad nauseum since the 19th century. Such arguments are demeaning to the tiny handful of people for whom the schemes have operated and the limited number for whom they are likely to operate.

People who want to manage their care in such a way will attempt to do so in a meticulous manner. If they are put under normal accounting procedures and are expected to account, monthly or quarterly, for how they spend the money, I cannot believe that there is any danger of the money being wrongly applied. I cannot imagine that people would damage their own care programme by pursuing such procedures badly. I hope that Ministers will give us an assurance about this issue.

I am one of those hon. Members who feel strongly that ring fencing would be a serious mistake. I have experienced a major reorganisation of services—I took part in the reorganisation of social work in Scotland—and I know that, once one reorganises a major service, the professionals begin to defend their frontiers. They put their tanks on the lawn. If ring fencing is provided for one group of professionals, all the others who may still retain a desire to co-operate closely with those professionals will feel less inclined to do so, because they will feel that those professionals have secured their money.

Mr. Favell: Does my hon. Friend agree that the councils involved with social services are more important than the professionals? The directors of social services departments are concerned about having to argue their case with their fellow councillors and directors on local authorities. They believe that the Government would be easier meat. That is what this is all about.

Mr. Rowe: I am not sure whether that is exactly so. My right hon. and learned Friend has already said that the record on social services has shown that in most part of the country social services departments have held their own well against other claimants on local authority budgets.

If community care is to work properly, we have to ensure that the consumers of community care are provided with satisfactory housing and receive education which allows them to live in the community. They have to be sure that they can maintain the in-and-out relationship with the health service that many of them require. If we ring-fence too firmly the budget for community care, we shall put up shutters between professions and make the increasingly promising co-operation between the various services much harder to achieve.

Mr. Robin Cook: I begin by welcoming the Secretary of State's amendment. He will recall that there was some debate on the matter in Committee and that both sides of the Committee supported making particular provision for those who had been involved in drug or alcohol abuse. We are glad that, even at this late stage, the Secretary of State has been able to respond to that anxiety. However, the amendment makes it all the more confusing that the Secretary of State believes that there is an issue of principle in resisting the idea of ring fencing. Whether or not we disagree with the Lords amendment tonight, when the Bill leaves this place it will contain two specific pieces of ring fencing—grants for those who are mentally ill and grants for those involved in drug or alcohol abuse. What is at issue in this debate is extending the same protection of ring fencing to other client groups of community care such as the elderly, the mentally handicapped and the disabled.

The Secretary of State asked what is different about that part of local authority expenditure which would justify departing from general grants and providing specific ring-fenced grants. I can answer that question. As the Secretary of State explained to the House, the concept behind this part of the Bill is the transfer of resources from the Department of Social Security, which currently supports elderly, mentally handicapped or disabled people who live in residential care, to the local authorities which will have the responsibility for meeting the bills for those client groups.

The House should contemplate ring-fencing those grants as without ring-fencing there is no guarantee that the resources transferred from the DSS to local authorities will be spent on those client groups. Without ring-fencing, the money could be spent on education, highways or industrial development—all splendid, excellent purposes in themselves, but not the functions for which the resources will be transferred. Without ring-fencing, the real danger is that the paradox of the Bill will be that instead of promoting community care we shall diminish the expenditure of the DSS without producing a corresponding increase in local authority spending.

At the beginning of his speech, the Secretary of State said that resistance to the Government's position and support for ring-fencing was partly based on the obscurity of the issue. This is a bipartisan debate, so let me counsel the Secretary of State in a friendly spirit—*[Laughter.]* Perhaps he should wait until I have finished before he gets too excited. If I may counsel the Secretary of State as a friend, one of his less attractive features is to lecture those who disagree with him on the basis that they do not know what they are talking about. However, the Secretary of State stands absolutely alone among informed opinion on this issue.

Sir Roy Griffiths certainly knew what he was talking about, and he stands by his original proposal for ring-fencing. At the outset of its report, the Select Committee quotes Sir Roy Griffiths:

> "I have provided a purposeful, effective and economic four-wheeled vehicle, but the White Paper has redesigned it as a three-wheeler, leaving out the fourth wheel of ring-fenced funding."

There is no suggestion that Sir Roy Griffiths regarded ring-fencing as just another tree in the wood—to use the Secretary of State's analogy. Ring fencing was essential to the balance of Sir Roy Griffiths' package.

All the voluntary organisations that are concerned with the client groups want ring fencing. When preparing for this debate I received representations from the Spastics Society, Age Concern, the Royal National Institute for the Deaf, MENCAP, the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, the Carers National Association and RADAR—the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation—which specifically asked me to say:

> "RADAR will be deeply disappointed if the Government rejects the Lords amendment on ring fencing."

9.45 pm

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): Which local authorities have written to the hon. Gentleman about this? Has he personally received a representation from the Association of County Councils on this issue? Will he place on record

which Labour-controlled local authorities would not carry out their responsibilities for community care along the lines that he suggests?

Mr. Cook: I can happily answer the hon. Gentleman's first question about which local authorities have written to me on the issue—88. I have carried out a survey of local authorities.

Mr. Jack: There are 400.

Mr. Cook: There are not 400 social services authorities, if I may correct the hon. Gentleman. I hope that I can do so without falling into the Secretary of State's error of saying that he does not know what he is talking about. There are only 116 social services authorities, and 88 is a good response rate.

In an earlier speech during the debate on the guillotine motion, the Minister for Health unfairly chided the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) for lacking confidence in local authorities.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I have no confidence in Lancashire.

Mr. Cook: I had hoped to assist the hon. Lady and I am terribly sorry if I have succeeded in causing offence. I think that the hon. Lady served on a local authority at one time, but not in Lancaster.

Those of us who listen to what local authorities are saying about ring fencing do not lecture local authorities on what we think is in their good, but show greater confidence in them. I can give the hon. Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) the precise breakdown he seeks. Of the 88 local authority directors of social services who responded to me, 84—[HON. MEMBERS: "That is different."] The directors of social services certainly know what they are talking about and cannot be accused, as the Secretary of State accused his critics, of being involved in obscuring the issue and failing to understand what is at stake. They are the very people who will have to administer care in the community. I deprecate the way in which some Conservative Members jeered at the mention of the directors.

Of the directors of social services, 84 supported ring fencing and many said that it was essential. Only two local authority directors of social services were against ring fencing. Both of them came from Labour councils, one of which is so popular with the Government that it has just been poll tax-capped.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I have no quarrel with the Ministe, because I have no confidence in Lancashire local authority to spend the money on social services. It will blue it on anything it likes. My hon. Friend the Minister obviously has more confidence in the Lancashire authority than I have, but she does not live there; I do.

Mr. Cook: A sound rule that I am sure all hon. Members follow when canvassing is that, when promised a vote, one does not inquire too closely into the motivation for it. I have possibly gone too far against that rule on this occasion.

Mr. Hind: The hon. Gentleman made a good point when he took up my hon. Friends' comment on the social services directors. I take on board what the directors said, but what do the local authorities and the elected representatives think? I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman has gone to the experts, but what do the people whom they serve think? That is an entirely different matter.

Mr. Cook: The hon. Gentleman is right that there is a distinction here, but it is not as great as he suggests. Many of those directors made it clear that they spoke on behalf of their committee and their local authority. I am not aware of a single director who made representations to me which are in conflict with the position of his local authority and I should be surprised if there was one.

Mr. Hind: What about the Association of County Councils?

Mr. Cook: The ACC is out of step, but all the other official organisations of local authorities are in favour of ring fencing.

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Cook: I will give way to my hon. Friend, but this must be the last occasion.

Mrs. Wise: The Select Committee report says that the Association of County Councils stated:

> "The Association's view is that the major element of Government financial support to local government should be by means of a general grant mechanism. The Association also accepts that there is a role for specific grants in certain circumstances. One such clear role would be to recognise the additional costs of preparing for implementing the proposals in the White Paper . . . Community Care resources must be actually available to individual social services authorities. This implies the separate identification of resources for individual authorities".

Therefore, the ACC is not really out of step. It is asking for specific identification.

Mr. Cook: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for clarifying so clearly the ACC's position, although I did not expect that she would emerge as its spokesman.

The Secretary of State referred to the increase in social services expenditure during the past 10 years. That point was also made by the Minister for Health in the earlier debate. Both quoted a 37 per cent. increase in social services authorities' expenditure.

During the past few years, there has been an increase in social services expenditure. I am bound to tell Ministers on the Front Bench that their colleagues in Whitehall complain all the time about that increase in local authority expenditure. If local authority expenditure continues to increase, they will find themselves being capped, as 19 social services authorities have been capped by the Government. Other people along that ministerial chain in Whitehall have devised the poll tax with the particular objective of making local authority fund-raising as painful as possible, and so making an increase in local authority spending as unlikely as possible.

I warn the Secretary of State that if, during the next few years, the poll tax survives and local authority spending on social services increases by 37 per cent., Downing street will certainly regard the poll tax as having failed. Given that new element in local authority finance, severe and savage as it is, it is unlikely that that upward trend in local authorities' social services spending will continue. If the Secretary of State consults the survey of the Association of Directors of Social Services, he will find that even this year

[Mr. Cook]

one third of all social services departments are cutting services because of the financial squeeze caused by the poll tax.

I can forgive the Government for setting aside the views of Labour councils. I can well understand that they must be embarrassed at finding themselves in the company of Derbyshire, stoutly resisting the call for ring fencing, while simultaneously poll tax-capping their allies. But what about the Tory councils? With respect to the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind), I did not receive a single response from a director of social services from a Conservative-controlled area who was opposed to the principle of ring fencing. Every director in every Conservative-controlled social services authority from which I received a response said that he supported ring fencing. Even the flagships, Wandsworth and Westminster, have mutinied on this issue and stuck to their guns.

In case the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) seeks to intervene to prolong my speech yet again, I must point out that not just the directors but Wandsworth and Westminster social services committees concluded in favour of ring fencing. The chair of Westminster social services committee has been to see the Secretary of State to argue the case—*[Interruption.]* I am merely going by the minutes of the Westminster committee, which I very much hope has not been misled on that point.

The reason why all these councils, including the two favourite sons of the Government, favour ring fencing is not, as the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) said in an intervention before absenting himself, that those councils do not trust themselves; they all, Conservative and Labour, want ring fencing because they do not trust Ministers. In a bipartisan spirit, I must tell the Secretary of State that they are probably wise to distrust Ministers of both political persuasions because, as those councils know, if Governments can get away with burying the resources for community care beneath the mountain of Exchequer grant, no one will be able to see what is going into community care——

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: I will not give way again.

The whole point of a ring-fenced grant is to force Ministers out into the open so that everyone can see what they put on the table. Here I must disagree with the Minister for Health. She claimed that ring fencing would not, of itself, guarantee a single extra penny for community care. I am not so sure. I rather suspect that one reason why the Treasury is so anxious to resist ring fencing is that it knows that the moment it comes out in the open the more difficult it will be to resist the pressure to put a realistic sum of money into community care. If ring fencing makes it clear what local authorities are getting, it will also make clear where responsibility lies if those resources are inadequate, and that is precisely why Ministers would run a mile rather than accept the principle.

I have a nightmare—not one of the Secretary of State attempting to run a mile—that in some future year the Secretary of State for the Environment will announce to the House that, once again, because of the economic climate, it has unfortunately not been possible to increase public spending by as much as had been hoped. Once again it will be necessary to look to local authorities to make their contribution to economic recovery by accepting a reduced revenue support grant. On the same afternoon, over in Richmond terrace, the right hon. and learned Gentleman will pop up at a press conference announcing how delighted he is that the community care element in the revenue support grant has been expanded that year. Everyone will know that that will leave local authorities in an impossible position, once again having to allocate cuts across all the budgets with no prospect of expanding spending on community care or anything else.

Such an outcome would be unfair to local authorities. It would also be unfair to Parliament, which would be unable to pin the blame where it belonged. Most of all, it would be unfair to the people who need community care —to the mentally handicapped, whom the NHS is discharging into the community as fast as it can sell their hospitals; to the elderly, whose only contact with the outside world is often their home help for whom they now have to pay higher charges for reduced hours; and to the carers who look after these people, often providing 24-hour nursing with no training and little support and often as isolated as those whom they look after.

These are not people who can readily fight their corner. They are vulnerable people, not well organised and with no great political clout. It is fitting that Parliament should offer a special arrangement to protect them. That protection should be ring fencing. I urge the House to support the Lords amendment.

Mr. Thurnham: The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) did not want me to intervene when he was talking about Ministers coming into the open. He failed to come into the open himself. If some future Labour Government —perhaps part of the nightmare that he talked about— were to go in for ring fencing, how much money would be provided? Would it be enough to satisfy all the needs and would it be sufficient to provide the estimated £24 billion for voluntary unpaid care? That is the amount that Government would have to find to fund all the requirements.

10 pm

The right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) talked about spending on the disabled being unpopular. I respect his long experience in this field and we have to accept that in the past that was true, but surely it is no longer true. Now and in the future, the disabled should lobby and form action groups to press for spending. If care in the community means anything, it means that the disabled should press for such spending in their own communities.

The Government are giving responsibility to local authorities. The argument about ring fencing seeks to shirk those responsibilities and difficult decisions, but they can no longer be shut away so that someone else has to face them. Local authorities must face them now. We should not listen to the argument that somehow or other the Government can take care of such matters. Such matters must be managed in the community and local authorities will have to make difficult decisions. They will

have to make balanced judgments, decide on the level of community charge and how much to spend on the disabled and how much on roads.

There is no substance in the argument that money is being diverted from social spending to roads. In my constituency spending on roads has been cut and spending on social services has increased substantially. For certain cases it has doubled. Total social spending by local authorities has risen by 37 per cent. and Government spending as a whole has also risen. There is no way in which sufficient funds can be made available either by Government or by local authorities to pay for the massive amount of unpaid care.

Decisions must be made about priorities so that the people who are most in need of care are given that care. We have seen dreadful cases in the past in which people who were most in need were given the least care. It is the responsibility of local authorities to identify those who are most in need of care, to make the proper assessment and then to assess the priorities. No one is saying that that is easy, but local authorities have been given that responsibility. I did not fully agree with that recommendation in the Griffiths report, but we have decided to give responsibility to local authorities. They should go ahead and carry it out and not think that they can look to the Government to provide some ring-fenced amount to take care of the matter.

It has been estimated that unpaid care is worth £24 billion. Obviously that care cannot be quantified exactly, but it compares with about £6 billion of public funding. There is an enormous gap, and the local authorities must decide how to bridge it. I welcome the suggestion that specific grants should be made to voluntary groups which can organise to provide such care. I suspect that such groups could provide it much more efficiently.

One of the arguments underlying that suggestion is that local authorities do not use money efficiently. The network homes in my constituency cost some £22,000 per year per resident, whereas in a voluntary home nearby that cost is only £12,000 per resident and a higher standard of care is provided. That shows the difference in efficiency in providing care. That is one of the reasons why I do not think that ring fencing would make everything right. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has said, it is for local authorities to be responsible and accountable. We should remember that when we are voting.

Mr. Kennedy: The hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) will forgive me if I do not follow his line of argument. Indeed, I did not follow his line of argument when it was deployed. In common with the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe), I am not entirely sure what he wanted. That merely reflects the difficulty and confusion manifested by the Secretary of State for Health. I agreed with the point that the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe)—who served on the Committee that considered the Bill—made with deadly accuracy towards the end of the Secretary of State's speech. The hon. Gentleman said that, by conceding the need for ring fencing in the cases in his own amendments, the Secretary of State was conceding the principle, of ring fencing. That makes all the more nonsense of the artificial argument that we heard from the Secretary of State. We know that in its heart the Department of Health would probably like to concede the principle, but that the blocks have been put on elsewhere—elsewhere being Her Majesty's Treasury on the other side of Whitehall.

Towards the end of his speech, the Secretary of State touched on local government finance. He looked as unconvinced by his argument as those of us who will vote in the opposite Lobby to him later this evening. The Secretary of State did not appear to have much confidence in the case that he had to deploy. It reminded me of a description of an advocate who plugged away at the defence of his client when the client had changed his plea to guilty.

In the Parliament of 1983 to 1987, I had the opportunity to serve on the Select Committee on Social Services with the hon. Members for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) and for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price), from whom I am sure that we shall hear shortly. It has been said many times, and it was said from the Conservative Back Benches a few moments ago, that the Association of Directors of Social Services would be bound to say that. It is fair to record that any inquiries into the subject carried out by the Select Committee on an all-party basis found that not only those who sought to provide the service and had a vested professional interest supported proposals such as that for ring fencing.

It was clear that voluntary groups, as well as professional groups in the front line of delivering the care services and packages which might be involved, knew that unless the funds were earmarked to some degree, there could be no certainty that the decisions made and the political motivation at the centre would lead to the delivery of services where required, when required and in the form required. More than anything else, that was the motive behind the proposal for ring fencing which is gathering such a head of steam behind it. Those who seek to back up the position of the Department of Health would do well to remember that ring fencing is supported not only because of special pleading. It goes much wider and deeper than that.

The Secretary of State also mentioned the poll tax. In Scotland we have not yet had the delight of safety net arrangements, but in many parts of the country south of the border as the safety net is withdrawn there will be increased and intensified pressure on local authority budgets and, therefore, the spending commitments that local authorities can make. Their commitments will be adjusted to the level at which they can set the poll tax in their community.

Conservative Members should be under no illusion: any Conservative Member whose local authority is inevitably faced with such pressure will not be able to meet the requirements or aspirations in community care. Authorities will not be able to deal with the problems presented to them unless they have some degree of ring-fencing. There will be the bloodbath to try to make sense of the Budget and to keep the poll tax at a politically acceptable level. Yet at the same time local authorities will have to deliver a reasonable degree of service in the community. But that cannot be achieved.

The more voices we hear from the Conservative Benches raised against the position of the Department of Health, the better. I hope that the Department may yet change the proposal in the amendment and extend it. The Secretary of State says that he has conceded the principle.

[Mr. Kennedy]

If he can concede the principle, I cannot for the life of me understand why he cannot accept the logic of that by agreeing to the amendment.

Sir George Young: A large number of my hon. Friends wish to contribute to the debate, so I shall be brief.

I warmly welcome Government amendment (c) to the proposed Lords amendment. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State said, a number of us were concerned about the impact of the policy on hostels run by Turning Point and Alcohol Concern. We feared that they would simply close because the local authorities would not place the relevant contracts with them in April next year. Amendment (c) gives them the assurance and the protection for which they have asked, and I am grateful to Ministers for responding. However, the amendment somewhat undermines the Ministers' case against ring-fencing. My right hon. and learned Friend said that it was legitimate to ring-fence for services that local authorities were "inclined not to provide". The fear is that local authorities may be inclined not to provide some of the other services in the Bill unless that provision is also ring-fenced.

My right hon. and learned Friend said that, if we ring-fenced such provisions, we should have to ring fence education and provision for children. The crucial difference, however, is that there are statutory responsibilities in respect of education and children. It must be clearly stated that there are very few statutory responsibilities in the Bill. The Bill contains a large number of objectives for the standard of provision, for co-ordination, for co-operation and all the rest, but places few statutory duties on local authorities. The feeling is that, if adequate resources are not given to the local authorities, the services that we all seek will simply not be provided because they will be squeezed out by other responsibilities that the local authorities have no option but to deliver.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): Does my hon. Friend accept that the large number of statutory services that exist at present, including education services, have not prevented a wide range of other services from being provided? In each case, the local electors can determine whether they are happy with the level of service. I may even help my hon. Friend's argument, which is not my prime aim, if I point out that many of us would argue that, although adult education is a statutory service, that does not necessarily mean that it is provided.

Sir George Young: I hope later to consider my hon. Friend's valid points.

Initially, when we discussed the matter in Committee, I was wavering; in the end, I voted against the Government. The way in which one votes depends very much on the question that one asks. If one asks what is most likely to deliver effective care in the community, one ends up with the answer, "Ring fencing." If one asks what the conventional means of funding local authorities is, one comes up with the answer that it is not ring fencing. And if one is concerned that there may be some initial disappointment at the level of care that is delivered, one may want not to ring-fence but to put local authorities more in the firing line in future years.

We are discussing a Government policy. The White Paper was a Government White Paper and this is a Government Bill. We have said quite clearly that we are not satisfied with the standard of care in the community and that we wish to improve it. We wish to drive up the quality of care and ensure that it is effectively tailored to suit individual need. I do not see how one can make that statement and invest political capital in it and then say that, the moment the Bill has left the House, everything will rest on the slender basis of local accountability. I do not think that one can wash one's hands of the policy.

We have an obligation to fund the commitment that we are placing on local authorities by making it quite clear that the resources will follow through. It is all very well my right hon. and learned Friend saying that local authorities' social service departments have defended their corner and protected their client. What constitutes "defending one's clients" to one Department, the Department of the Environment and the Treasury will regard as overspending.

I wonder whether, as more local authorities are poll tax-capped, they will be able to go on defending their corner and protecting their clients. If we move towards poll tax capping, local authorities will say, what are our statutory responsibilities? What are the services that we have no option but to provide? They will focus on those services. They will say that they have no statutory responsibility to provide care in the community and that they do not have the resources for it.

10.15 pm

In Committee my right hon. and learned Friend made a few commitments. He said:

> "When they have the new revenue support grant, it will be increased by a visible transfer from social security of the amount they would have spent before."

We are moving, therefore, towards the era of visibility. If not ring-fenced, the sum will be identifiable. My right hon. and learned Friend also said that local authorities

> "will require an additional allocation of resources from central Government, well above what they have had in the past to discharge that responsibility."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee E*, 20 February 1990; c. 1116-18.]

I agree wholeheartedly. I wish that commitment to be made explicit by ring-fencing it. The suspicion is that, if it is not ring fenced the commitment given in Committee will not be honoured.

My right hon. and learned Friend's case is that we can take the horse to the water but we cannot make it drink. The case that I and others make is that if we put enough fresh water in front of the horse it will drink it. We want to ensure that resources are available to fund this exciting, innovative and radical policy that is broadly welcomed throughout the country. Without ring-fencing, there is a risk that local authorities will be unable to provide that policy with resources and that our expectations will therefore not be fulfilled. That is why I hope that the House will uphold the Lords amendment.

Mr. Ashley: I wish to make a brief contribution on an issue of great importance to the disabled. The Secretary of State made a thoughtful and good debating speech, but he did not persuade me. I am convinced of the need for ring-fencing these funds for community care. The Secretary of State's answer failed to deal with the basic point that severely disabled people are not politically popular. Given their unpopularity, money will not be allocated for their needs. That is why the money has to be ring-fenced.

The Minister for Health said earlier that to ring fence would be to undermine local government. The Secretary of State said that we should not second-guess local authorities. That is precisely what the Government have been doing time and again with their rate capping and poll tax capping. They have been second-guessing and undermining the role of local government. They cannot now hold up their hands in horror and say that local government should be entirely free; that is the exact opposite of their previous actions.

The hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) conceded that the disabled are politically unpopular but that they should campaign and lobby for funds. How preposterous. Most severely disabled people are too unwell and too preoccupied with grappling with their disabilities to lobby hon. Members. I have urged them to take part in campaigns, but elderly people and those who are severely disabled cannot fight. It is our job —I include the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East—to campaign for the disabled. One of the most effective ways of doing that is to press for funds to be allocated specifically for their needs.

When people speak of local government being responsible, they are talking nonsense. There are both bad and good local authorities. We are concerned with the bad local authorities—the iresponsible authorities and those that make bad decisions. A prime example was referred to on "Panorama" last Monday. A director of social services said that he is cutting social services resources for the elderly disabled and using them instead to combat child abuse. That may be a reasonable decision. We should all do what we can about child abuse, but the fact is that that local authority is thereby robbing elderly disabled people. That is an example of money not being allocated to community care for disabled people because the authority thought that it should go elsewhere.

The answer would be more funds from the Government. The evidence from the Minister's own inspector shows that six local authorities have spent nothing on community care. That is a devastating indictment of the Government's policy of failing to ring-fence. There is no doubt that that is a bogus policy. It would damage disabled people because, without ring-fencing, that money could be spent on all kinds of things such as children, housing tenants, or even fancy bypasses —something which is highly popular and can win votes for a local authority.

The proposal for ring-fencing money for community care for severely disabled people and for old people is important, valid and unanswerable. I hope that hon. Members who believe in campaigning for disabled people will go into the Lobby tonight and support their views and their contentions. If they do not, disabled people will suffer, and the House of Commons could not tolerate that.

Mr. Squire: This is an unusual event. Having heard my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), it is customary for me to find points on which to agree, but on this occasion I believe that he is wrong. He said that it would depend on the position from which one started. I make it clear that my position is largely as it has been ever since I entered the House in 1979. I strongly believe that local authorities should have maximum freedom to determine their priorities as they see them within a general budget, part of which will be supplied by central Government and part of which they will look to local ratepayers to provide. I shall often disagree with the way in which my local authority determines those priorities. For instance, I have spent years arguing the case for a greater allocation for adult education, and I suspect that I shall spend several more years arguing for greater allocations for recycling and other environmental issues. That is the nature of the beast. I want local authorities to be given the maximum opportunity.

If local authorities are to be able to take real decisions, such decisions must also include the right to make mistakes. If they cannot make mistakes they are not ultimately given the power to take decisions.

Care of the elderly is important, but so are mandatory education, housing the homeless, and a range of subjects that we rightly expect local authorities to deal with. In those instances, we have not so far said, "You are to have a specific grant for that revenue expenditure, which you must spend on that and on nothing else."

I can understand why Opposition Members support ring fencing if they are strongly committed to and identify with social services and care for the elderly. They do so for one of two reasons. They may fear that they may not get money either from central Government or from their colleagues within a particular local authority. I understand that, but I repeat that their argument is no different from the argument that, if education were ring-fenced at about 70 per cent. or more of a local authority's budget, it would significantly reduce that local authority's ability to take decisions.

Mr. Hind: My hon. Friend mentioned an important point that was made by the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), but there is a fundamental flaw. If whatever Government reduced the amount of money made available to local authorities, elderly people requiring residential care would be adversely affected. Equally, the same hard decisions would have to be made for groups with special needs, such as special needs education. A reduction in expenditure would hurt people whose needs are great. Therefore, if one extends the logic of the argument, every local authority budget should be ring-fenced. Surely it must be all or nothing.

Mr. Squire: My hon. Friend may have anticipated my final comments. I agree that this is, in effect, a half-and-half measure.

As ever, the hon. Member for Livingston made an amusing, pertinent and relatively brief speech. I was less than surprised as he reeled off the number of social service directors and committees who, given the opportunity, would like this growing share of their budget to be guaranteed. As a former chairman of a local government finance committee, it came as no great surprise to me. The pressures on leaders of local authorities, who are charged with balancing inevitably conflicting demands, are and always will be hard, regardless of the complexion of the Government or of the authority, but one does not hear them clamouring for the discretion of their authorities to be further reduced. The Association of County Councils opposes ring fencing, and I agree.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton beguilingly said—he almost persuaded me—that the Government had given an undertaking and that this was the only way that it could be carried out. You, Mr. Speaker, have sat in the Chair over the years and heard many undertakings given by Government, many

[Mr. Squire]

undertakings given in spheres that I have mentioned and others administered by local authorities. In practice, the Government will provide such sum as they deem reasonable; some local authorities will meet it, some will not and some will over-budget and spend more than the Government allocate.

My hon. Friend the Minister may not agree with my next comments, because I question whether Government can determine need, district by district, as accurately as they should so that the figure produced would be accepted by everyone in every city and town as the right figure. I have never believed that. Veterans of this Chamber will have heard me argue with Ministers when it has been suggested that the Government should be able to do that. If we use the best mechanisms that we have and the most up-to-date forecasts that can be produced, we in Westminster or Whitehall will not know better than people in their respective councils, counties or districts. I believed that when I became a Member, and I firmly believe it today.

The central issue is whether we wish to move further to a system of hypothecated grants or to retain broadly general funding. If one believes in more fixed grants and a system which makes local governments spend 70 per cent. on education and 10 per cent. on social services, as my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) said a moment ago, logically one should press for that across the spectrum and say, "That is how grants should be made." If one does not, one should, with respect to their Lordships, resist the Lords amendment.

10.30 pm

Mr. Hinchliffe: The central issue that we must address tonight is how we can expect local authorities properly to plan for the changes included in the legislation, without the guarantees that would be provided by ring fencing.

It is important to stress that the majority of local authorities that will face the task of implementing the legislation are in utter chaos as a result of the introduction of the poll tax, the threat of poll tax capping and the fact that they already cannot meet their statutory social services obligations. It is nonsense to suggest that local authorities have no idea of the budgets that they will have to implement these provisions. The standard spending assessments bear no relation to local authorities' requirements.

We must consider the adequacy of the present funding for community care. To ring-fence next to nothing still leaves a local authority with next to nothing. To ring-fence inadequate social services budgets will not enable local authorities to meet the needs that they are required to meet, especially as they will face increased demand.

Wakefield will have an enormous problem with its social services budget because the SSA for the current financial year is £4,268,000 below the budget. In the words of the director, it is "nowhere near enough" to meet daily needs. The Government talk about the great things being in store for those who will receive community care, but to achieve its SSA, the district council would have to cut one fifth of its existing budget. The director would have to make cuts, had he not had the support of the local authority to defend his corner, involving the loss of nearly 600 care staff who are the direct providers of statutory social services care, the closure of four homes for elderly people in Wakefield, the possible closure of two children's homes and the closure of a home for the mentally handicapped. As Mr. Lane said, Wakefield district council could not fulfill its statutory responsibilities. Yet the Government say that the figure is appropriate for my local authority's budget.

The council would have to put juvenile offenders in prison, and children with mental handicaps in hospital, and many children who require statutory supervision because they are at risk could not have a social worker allocated to their case. How on earth can anyone defend such an SSA? I should like to see the people who define these regulations and assessments beg for a place in a home for their elderly mother or relative who cannot cope. That is what is happening.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): The picture that my hon. Friend paints is horrific, but it is the norm in a key number of local authorities. More than 20 local authorities, including my own, are being poll tax-capped simply for providing care at statutory care level. They have been attacked by the Secretary of State for the Environment for doing so and are having to take millions of pounds off their current budgets for the provision of statutory social services care. Unless there is ring fencing, local authorities that are prepared to provide care up to the limitations of statutory provision will be penalised because, having provided care, another department will be constrained by another piece of legislation. Unless the Secretary of State resolves that, more local authorities will be poll tax-capped simply for meeting the requirements of legislation produced by the Secretaries of State for Health and for the Environment and for not cutting their budgets.

Mr. Hinchliffe: My hon. Friend is right. He has first-hand experience of poll tax capping in Wigan. I have never regarded Wigan as a particularly extravagant authority. The people of Yorkshire were shocked and amazed when Barnsley and Calderdale were included in the list. No one could suggest that those authorities are overspending or being over-generous with their provision.

In Wakefield, the projected figures for the needs of the area in the next financial year, including the costs of implementing the Children Act 1989 and this legislation, and the introduction of the NVQ scheme, will involve a difference of £30·5 million between the SSA which the Government provide and the actual budget. I honestly do not know where the cuts in provision will be made. My authority spends 20 per cent. below the average metropolitan authority. It is a low spender when compared with other authorities.

There is a need for stability in the funding of community care. Local authorities want to know where they are going and how much they have to play with when they are planning services. They do not want to have to guess about their provision at the last minute. It makes no sense to have an SSA that bears no relation to the needs and statutory responsibilities of local authorities.

I want to broaden the debate. As I stressed in Committee, we need a major shift in the direction of funding away from institutional care towards community care. We can guarantee that only by the provisions in this Lords amendment. We must ring-fence the provision that

allows us to consider the alternatives to traditional measures. According to the traditional provision, when granny needs care, she is shoved into a home.

Members of the Select Committee on Social Services recently visited Europe to consider the alternatives to our traditional provisions. We must get away from the tunnel vision in which our only response to meet the needs of the handicapped, the elderly and those with special needs is to put them into homes. To achieve that change we must have direction and planning of community care.

Under this Government, there has been a complete absence of planning and direction of community care. The Government have been prepared to abrogate their responsibility and to leave it to the market. The market has not provided what the service users want. Instead, entrepreneurs and business men provide what they believe they can make money from. I believe that a vast sum of money—up to £1 billion—has been thrown away on creating institutional provision which is not what people need.

We must divert that funding towards preventing people from entering institutions. We should not be actively encouraging them to do that through the open-ended financial support that is proposed. When the Minister of State responds, she may say that the Government have changed the scene by introducing assessment and case management. That is the point that the Secretary of State made earlier. It is all very well to say that we have assessment in case management, but a social worker assessing someone in need can make care recommendations only on the basis of the services that are currently available.

We should be investing in alternatives in the community that are designed to keep people out of homes. The Government have diverted funding away from preventive services and shoved them into the open-ended commitment to private old people's homes. The only option for the vast majority of people is a home, because there is no support for them to remain in the community.

We should completely change the direction of funding on community care. We need a new radical agenda for community care and I hope that that will be introduced by the next Labour Government very soon. The central commitment of that agenda will be to enable people to remain in their homes. It will invest in keeping people in the community instead of removing them from it. That will entail a complete redirection of public resources to the prevention of need in the community instead of actively encouraging institutional care.

Last week, the Minister of State attended a conference at which I too was present. Unfortunately, she did not hear a contribution in the morning from a lady called Rachel Hurst, a disabled person who is probably well known to many hon. Members of all parties because she is active in the British Council of Organisations of Disabled People. With respect to those hon. Members who also made speeches, I think that that lady made the most telling point of the entire day-long conference, when she said that the central issue was the

"need to change the priority of allocation of resources to independent living."

That is the challenge which the Government have ducked.

The change in direction can take place only if we have guaranteed resources to enable us to invest in alternatives to institutional living. In that context, Lords amendment No. 70 is absolutely essential.

10.45 pm

Sir David Price: I very much regret the fact that we are having this important debate in the terminal moments of the Bill's passage through Parliament. Those of us who serve on the Select Committee on Social Services produced a report on these matters for this House, not another place, before the Report stage, but it was never discussed because the appropriate new clause was not reached because of the guillotine. I hope that hon. Members have read our report, because I stand by it. I think that their Lordships did so, too, and I believe that it inspired their amendment No. 70.

The House will not be surprised to learn that I shall be speaking in favour of the amendment, because I stand by the report that the Select Committee prepared with great care. As the House knows, I am rather old-fashioned and I believe that it is a matter of honour that one should vote on the Floor of the House exactly as one has voted upstairs, which is what I shall do tonight. I do not apologise to the Government Front Bench for being a man of honour.

The issue is simple: should grants voted by Parliament to local authorities to help them to fulfil their community care function be specific, and therefore identifiable, and therefore earmarked, or should they be simply an enhanced element in the standard spending assessment? In his effort to persuade the House that this is the right route, my right hon. and learned Friend did not give us any information about how the SSAs are to be altered to take into account the enhanced role of care in the community.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Health will remember a happy little debate that we had when she was in a different Department, which ended with me voting against the Government on their support rate grant formulae. We went into four or five decimal places and I made a little fun of the arithmetic because it was incomprehensible. I believe that we are in danger of getting into the same position now. Frankly, I am not satisfied that the enhanced role that this House is agreed upon for care in the community will, in terms of resources, be taken care of in the SSAs. We have heard nothing on that tonight.

In a moment of total generosity—it is the Queen Mother's 90th birthday—I offer the David Price prize for comprehension to any hon. Member who, before the debate is over, can catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and explain in simple language how the SSA formula will be altered to accommodate care in the community. That offer stands. Indeed, I shall withdraw my opposition to the Government's objection to the Lords amendment if, when my hon. Friend the Minister replies to the debate, she can do what she was unable to do—I say that with all my normal generosity—a few years ago when I attacked the old rate support formulae. That is a fair offer, is it not? If they cannot do so, I invite the Government to rethink their position and to join those of us who are the vast majority of thinking people in these matters. After all, this is not a matter of deep principle; it is a matter of practice.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State went a little further tonight, and we welcome that. He is to include alcohol and drug abuse within the provisions. When he says, "The mentally ill are separate," hon. Members may well ask, "Why not the mentally handicapped?" What distinction is there? At what point does someone with Alzheimer's disease cease to be geriatric and become mental? I know that an elderly person with dementia has problems, but to distinguish whether that person falls into the category of the mentally ill or the geriatric is a difficult decision.

Mr. Rowe: If the Government ring-fence services to drug addicts and alcoholics, they will receive the money, but if the Government ring-fence the entire social service budget, how will those individuals who need to be protected within the local authority budget get the money?

Sir David Price: My hon. Friend is advocating an admirable reason for detailed ring fencing. I know that he will have read our report and will know that we offered the Government and the House five different options. At this late hour I shall not take the House through the report, but I assume that my hon. Friend, with his normal application to such matters, has studied it. After the debate, I should like to talk to him about which option he prefers. My hon. Friend has gone further than me by arguing for detailed ring fencing. If one is thinking in terms of the Cinderella services, a case can be made along those lines.

There is nothing new in the concept of care in the community—it has been with us since the beginning of settled communities. What is new is the higher profile attached to it by the Government, which is absolutely right. If such care is to receive a higher profile, however, the natural concomitant conclusion is surely that one must provide the resources to do so.

We discussed choice in the sixth report of the Select Committee. We quoted a number of local authorities who believe that, while that choice is a lovely idea, if they do not have the resources to provide it, what does it mean? We can all go to the Ritz, but if one does not have the money to buy tea there, what is the use of going? In those circumstances, one's choice is theoretical. The same is true of community care.

Resources for community care have always come from a variety of sources—and let us not forget the voluntary sector. That variety of sources will remain, but germane to our debate is that amount of central Government money that hitherto came from the Department of Heath. What will happen to that money? That is the core argument. One could consider the totality of current expenditure, but we are specifically concerned with the amount that comes from central Government.

In the circumstances, it is worth considering all the representations that the Select Committee received from the voluntary and professional organisations. The views of the Queen's Institute of Nursing, which represents district nurses and community nurses, are probably even more important than those of the Royal College of Nursing. That institute is clear about what it wants to see.

I am sorry that my right hon. and learned Friend is no longer present as it is important to note that the local authority associations are in favour of ring fencing. The Association of Metropolitan Authorities said:

"The Griffiths Report recommended ring-fenced funding for Community Care and the Association supported this proposal."

The Association of County Councils appears to have undergone a sea change since it gave evidence to the Select Committee. The hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) quoted the initial part of its evidence. It went on to say:

"Community Care resources must be actually available to individual social Services Authorities. This implies the separate indentification of resources for individual authorities and it implies the need for a suitable distribution mechanism."

I am astonished that the Treasury is not in favour of specific grant and ring fencing—I am delighted to see my right hon. Friend the Chancellor on the Front Bench—because, from the point of view of accountability, the money voted by Parliament for community care is spent on what we voted for. I should have thought that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, the Audit Commission and the Public Accounts Committee would agree that what we are suggesting—a specific, ring-fenced grant—would provide that accountability, which would not be achieved in the alchemy and mysticism of the SSA. The David Price prize for comprehension of SSA remains on the table until the House rises tonight. I hope that the Treasury will reply to my questions.

I believe that it would be correct to follow the advice of the Select Committee—if that does not sound too conceited coming from a member of it—the advice of their Lordships—everyone loves a peer—and the advice of every voluntary and official body in the country. I invite my right hon. Friends on the Front Bench to join the mass movement in favour of care in the community. I hope that, on reflection, they will remove their objections and that at 12 o'clock we shall conclude our discussions without a vote, all agreeing that their Lordships were right.

Mrs. Wise: Having listened to the speech of the hon. Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price), I can abandon quite a few of my remarks, because he has explained so clearly the thinking behind the Select Committee report. However, it is probably worth reminding the House that the Select Committee report was unanimous. It was not produced capriciously; the Select Committee has taken a vast amount of evidence. We are still taking evidence and people are still talking to us about ring fencing. No doubt the hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) would prefer that I make it clear that she was absent, but the rest of the Select Committee speak as one on the issue. That is significant, because I and my colleagues on the Select Committee do not agree on the generality of political matters, but on these issues we have been driven by the evidence before us which was so compelling.

Tonight, we have heard a great deal about freedom for local authorities when local authorities are under more pressure than ever before. My right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent (Mr. Ashley) referred to bad local authorities. However, with all due respect to him, that is not what we are discussing. We are acknowledging intolerable pressures on local authorities which are due in no small measure to the actions of the Government.

The Secretary of State spoke about making responsibilities for community care clearer, but we are not discussing making responsibilities clearer but putting extra responsibility on to the shoulders of local authorities and then being unwilling clearly to identify the funds which should accompany those responsibilities.

The Select Committee did not hesitate to say:

"we fear that local authority budgets for community care will be inadequate. One reason for this is the potential carry-forward of the current inadequate level of Social Security spending on residential care to local authorities' budgets for community care."

Presumably, later tonight, we shall have the opportunity to vote on the inadequacy of funding for residential care.

The Select Committee is in no doubt that the budget for community care will be inadequate. Much has been made of the Association of County Councils, and I am sorry that it gave contradictory evidence. However, I remind the House that the ACC told the Committee:

"It is unlikely that the resources eventually identified by Government as the care element within the present income support allowances will begin to meet the additional cost of implementing the White Paper proposals."

That is a strong quote. It is saying not that the money will not finish the job, but that it will not even begin to meet the requirements.

The Association of County Councils is not dominated by Labour members. Therefore, as—I almost said my hon. Friend—the hon. Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) made clear, there is a mass agreement that the resources allocated to community care in pursuance of the White Paper should be protected, adequate and clearly identifiable, but none of those criteria will apply. The Government will have a convenient mechanism to say to local authorities, "Here is the job." They will tell the public that they are transferring resources for it, and then allow those resources to be swallowed up in the intolerable pressures on local authorities at present.

It is not even that the money may be used for education or other worthy objectives. Local authorities may be forced by Government action to use the funds to reduce the poll tax. There will be no protection against that. If the Government are serious in wanting an advance in community care, they should heed the words of the Select Committee, on which their Members have a majority, and the Lords amendment, which they should support.

Mr. Jack: I have listened carefully throughout the debate to the remarks made by Opposition and Conservative Members, and I am singularly amazed that we seem to be beginning to think that all problems in community care can be dealt with simply by ring-fencing a budget. It is far more important to discuss the quality of service of community care that can be delivered to elderly, mentally ill and physically handicapped people. That has a great deal to do with the quality of the management of social services in this country, not simply the mechanism by which a line is drawn round a number on a piece of paper.

I served for some time on the Mersey regional health authority and I distinctly remember that we had a debate about how to protect an element of the budget that we wanted to develop for services in the community. The choice as to how we protected that was determined by that health authority. We said that we would protect a certain element of the budget by ring fencing, but it was Mersey regional health authority's choice that we should do that. I do not understand why it is illogical to suggest that a responsible local authority would do the same.

One of the most powerful points today was made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, when he said that under the provisions of the Bill local authorities will be required to draw up a community care plan which will be open to inspection. That means that it will also be open to discussion. I am sure that some Opposition Members will join in the vigorous local debates which will place about how the priorities for care plans will be determined. That is the most powerful way in which local authorities can be compelled to carry out the responsibilities in their districts. That is what choice, debate, accountability and local democracy is about. All that we hear from Opposition Members is that, if the budget is ring-fenced, all those problems will be sorted out.

[Mr. Jack]

We have heard about the directors of social services. Those good people argued powerfully for the provisions of the Bill. They argued powerfully against the health authorities that they should have the responsibility for delivering care in the community. Ultimately, supported by Sir Roy Griffiths, the Government agreed with that point of view. The directors of social services argued that because they thought that they were in the best position to deliver that service. We have heard today that they are so in tune with their local authorities that they have written in large numbers to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) committing themselves to the concept of ring fencing.

11 pm

The directors of social services may be wrong, and they will probably lose the intellectual argument, but have they completely lost their powers of advocacy with the local authorities? We are told that they can carry the local authorities with them on ring fencing, so why cannot they carry the local authorities with them when it comes to seting the priorities for care? It would be a bold local authority which would completely abrogate its responsibilities in that area by pillaging the community care budget for a range of alternatives. I suspect that the pressure from the community will be the other way, and that the social services budget could benefit from savings in other parts of local authority budgets.

Those who advocate ring fencing have missed another dynamic. Let us consider, for instance, the situation where a facility for the mentally ill was being developed, perhaps a day care centre, which needed an access road. If no money was available in the highways budget for that, ring fencing—under the rigid terms proposed by the Opposition—might prevent a small transfer of resources from the community care budget to the highways budget to build that access road and thus enhance community care.

I may have had a go from time to time at my local authority in Lancashire because of the way it carries on, but at least it makes a genuine effort within its limited resources to carry out its social service responsibilities. So far as I can see, however, the quality of its ability to deliver that care depends far more on the skill of the managers and their perceptions of the particular problems than on the ring fencing of the budget. Ring fencing will not add to the efficient delivery of the service.

There is a strange view that ring fencing will overcome certain problems. I could understand that if the debate had been about the sum total of the community care budget and our social services, but it is not—it is about the mechanism for administering it.

The fundamental question is whether we trust local authorities to deliver the services. I am staggered by the Opposition's argument that on such a major programme local authorities could not be trusted to fight for the needs of local people. This is a real chance for local authorities to rehabilitate their image and prove that they can be responsible and accountable in delivering those services. That will be achieved by pressure from the local communities, not by ring-fencing particular budgets.

We live in an age of exciting opportunities in community care, but they will not be realised by ring-fencing the budget.

Mrs. Rosie Barnes (Greenwich): I hope that I quote the Minister for Health correctly when I say that, speaking to the Select Committee on Social Services, she said:

> "Ring-fencing . . . leads to . . . conservative, reactionary, fossilised provision of services."

I would say that it would result in the sensitive, effective targeting of services. It certainly will not solve everything, but it would be a major step in the right direction. Without properly directed funding, community care may be no more than fine words.

While responsibility for care in the community is to be transferred to local authorities, proposed changes to income support and housing benefit for those in residential care homes and nursing homes are to be left to future legislation. According to the White Paper "Caring for People", local authorities may enter into contractual arrangements with independent providers and negotiate a price for a specific number of places, and the cost will be met by social services departments. Many places will be for the elderly; others will be for the mentally ill, the mentally handicapped and the physically disabled. Social services departments will have to estimate the likely demand for such places and assess the income of people who they have deemed will need such residential care. People receiving income support or housing benefit will have to hand over those benefits to social services departments, except for a small amount for their personal needs.

So far, so good: but no person in residential care should be better off than one cared for at home. That was an explicit intention of the Bill, and one with which I agree. However, having taken a person's income support and reimbursed the home up to the negotiated amount, the Government then say that the preferences of relatives and other carers should also be taken carefully into account. Unfortunately, that means that their financial cicumstances should be carefully taken into account.

The White Paper goes on to say:

> "If relatives and friends wish, and are able, to make a contribution towards the cost of care, an individual may decide to look for a place in a more expensive home."

Fair enough, but only as long as the basic provision is suitable and of a high basic standard.

Unless we have ring fencing, we run the risk of local authorities, under considerable financial pressure, choosing the cheapest homes available, and people will have to accept them because there is no alternative. Or, even worse, authorities will not be able to afford enough places, so many people needing residential care will have to remain at home by default because that will almost inevitably be the cheapest option.

Earlier, it was claimed that ring fencing would not be restrictive. I say that it would be: to restrict the money allocated for this purpose to the very people for whom it was intended is restrictive, but it is quite right. Without such ring fencing, community care and those in need of it would be in peril, and the provision of earmarked grants goes some way towards ensuring a minimum level of provision. That is all that we can expect.

It is not complicated to direct that the additional amount provided should be made specifically available for a certain purpose. I suspect that the amount of that money is at the root of the debate. If the amount can be concealed in the total grant, local authorities will carry the responsibility, not the Government.

There is no reason to encourage the perverse incentive to take up residential care rather than stay at home

because of a financial inducement. But tonight we may be encouraging an alternative perverse incentive—obliging people in need of residential care to stay at home because the care is not available due to lack of resources or to a failure to earmark the resources.

Another great danger of this part of the Bill—it becomes all the more apparent without ring fencing—is that the professionals will make all the assessments and decisions. The people on the receiving end will have no choice, because the money will dictate what is available.

It is not a case of all or nothing. The Government have made it clear that they favour ring fencing in certain circumstances: for the mentally ill and for those with drug or alcohol problems. Recently, and in quite a different area, I had cause to make representations to the Home Secretary on behalf of the police, because savings in one department were not allowed to be transferred to another department in the police service. Ring fencing applies when it suits, but it does not suit on this occasion. We must inquire into that in more detail.

We are talking about provision that is already inadequate and at risk. In my constituency there is a two-year wait for an occupational therapist from social services to visit for an initial assessment of what is needed. That is for people who are severely ill with illnesses such as multiple sclerosis or who are suffering from the severe effects of a stroke. That is a two-year wait only for assessment, not for the treatment to be made available.

A resource centre was built in Greenwich for the physically disabled. People in a specific area agreed to forgo their children's playground in the interests of that centre. Because of lack of money within social services, the centre never opened and after being vandalised and refurbished at considerable expense, it was handed over to the directorate of housing for use as a hostel for the homeless. I would prefer it to be used for something rather than left empty, but that is an example of the decisions presently being made at local authority level.

All too often it is the disabled and the elderly—those who are in need of community care—who are the bottom of the pile and suffering. We must speak out for those people and I hope that, in winding up, the Minister for Health will reconsider this vital matter.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): The Government Front Bench is rightly known as the Treasury Bench. The problem is not about good or bad local authorities, but that the Secretary of State for Health is himself ring-fenced. Other Ministers pour out legislation which imposes new statutory obligations—not discretionary duties—on local authorities. That is the nature of the problem. Even in the social services budget of many local authorities, an ever-increasing proportion—not just amount—has to be spent on meeting the new legal requirements of core cases. For example, the Children Bill has just gone through the House. As its requirements are mandatory on local authorities, in a sense they are ring-fenced. Those expenditures must be met. Another example is the national curriculum, the expense of which has been grossly underestimated by the Government.

We all know the phrase "taken into account". It does not mean "paid for". When new duties are imposed on local authorities we are assured that those duties will be taken into account the next time the standard spending assessment is calculated. It never means paid for. It always means a still greater claim on the resources of local authorities which is outwith the discretion and the priority judgments of the councillors who are elected to take decisions. Therefore, the Government constantly carry out ring fencing through the imposition of new statutory duties. It is that as much as anything which makes it necessary to ring-fence these functions of local government to protect it from the statutory obligations imposed by other Ministers.

The history of joint funding between the national health service and local government is certainly not a basis for confidence that ring fencing is unnecessary. In Devon, the area that is within my own knowledge, grant started at 100 per cent., then became 50 per cent. and then became zero, and the lot had to come out of the resources of the county council. That is the pattern that we have seen so often no matter which Government are in office. The case for ring fencing does not impute incompetence, lack of good will or unwillingness by local authorities to take difficult decisions. All those allegations have been made this evening by those who are opposed to ring fencing.

11.15 pm

It must be acknowledged that local authorities are overwhelmed with statutory duties, and these duties continue to pour out from this place. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister told me in a letter—as it is not marked private and confidential, it is a public document—that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, not my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health, is responsible for monitoring all additional burdens that are placed on local government by central Government. I do not believe that he carries out that responsibility. I do not believe that he is capable of doing so.

Does my right hon. Friend have interdiction over new legislation on the inspection of food? Of course he does not. Indeed, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is imposing new duties on local authorities that can be enforced by suing through the courts if there is garbage to be seen around. That is admirable environment protection, but the cost of it in rural areas, which spread out over a huge number of miles of road, could absorb the entire security budget unless there is ring fencing.

It is as much to protect my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health and his intentions from the actions of other members of the Government that we owe it to him to insist that Lords amendment No. 70 be upheld.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): I was not a member of the Committee that considered the Bill, but I have watched its passage with some interest. I am interested especially in the funding of community care.

About 18 months ago, my mother-in-law died of Alzheimer's disease. The disease took over when she was in her 50s, and initially she was protected by her family to the greatest extent possible. Anyone who goes through the experience of looking after someone who has the disease knows that it is a traumatic time. That applies to the household and the wider family.

My mother-in-law went into an admirable private home in a neighbouring constituency. My wife and I visited dozens of homes to try to find one that could adequately look after her. Psychiatric help in private nursing homes is rare, and I am sad to say that my

[Mr. Kevin Barron]

mother-in-law spent only a short time in the home. It was found that poor Nancy was disturbing others who had various forms of senile dementia and were not as active as she was. Consequently, she had to return home to be looked after by the family.

There were fortnightly periods of respite care when Nancy went to the local hospital. Those periods helped the family and, in a sense, many others. Nancy eventually went into long-term care within the area health authority, and died, sadly, nearly two years ago.

Before the events which I have outlined, I had discussed similar problems with my constituents, but I had never understood the true nature of them. I have a list in my office of other Nancys. They are at home and their families are still waiting for respite care for a couple of weeks. Those Nancys and their families are still waiting for long-term care within the area health authority.

The crisis had become embedded even before my personal experience. It is not the AHA's fault, because its resources are limited in this sector as they are in acute services. I do not know where acute services begin and end. It is not the fault of community psychiatric nurses, whose work load is far too high. It is not the fault of the social services. They do all that they can to help people who find themselves in circumstances similar to those experienced by my family. Some hon. Members have no knowledge of the true position.

About 12 months ago we hoped that some help would be forthcoming. Rotherham health authority was converting a maternity hospital in a neighbouring constituency into a home for the elderly which would have provided respite care for their families. However, the authority found earlier this year that it did not have sufficient resources to complete the conversion. The project will eventually be completed, but it will provide no relief for those who are now looking after elderly relatives. I have visited a number of homes where I found that some elderly people do not even recognise the members of the family who are looking after them. It was a joint project, funded by the health authority and Rotherham metropolitan borough council.

My brother is a councillor and sits on the social services committee. He understands the problems in his area and the implications of the lack of funding of community care. He knows that families desperately need care of that type.

The funding was withdrawn so that Rotherham would come within the original poll tax that was set for it. Today my authority lost its appeal in the High Court. It has been poll tax-capped to the tune of £7·9 million. That will lead to further cuts, both in my constituency and in other constituencies with similar problems.

Conservative Members say that the Lords amendment would lead to everything being ring-fenced, but we do not need to ring-fence education. We have not even begun to understand community care problems. The Bill as it stands provides us with an opportunity to do something about it. It is naive to say that the ring fencing of community care would lead to all other local authority expenditure being ring-fenced. The other place has produced a sensible amendment by saying that money should be ring fenced for community care. What does the standard spending assessment provide for people who are experiencing this terrible problem? I hope, therefore, that hon. Members will support the Lords amendment. It is the only way to tackle an urgent problem.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): The resources to be transferred to the local authorities are at present the resources of my ministerial master, and the conventions of the House in that regard led me to hesitate to participate in the debate. Having listened to Opposition Members' speeches, however, I feel it essential to say that I am astonished that they should be demanding the ring fencing of the transferred resources. I well remember, as a young chairman of social services serving on the London Boroughs Association, listening to that great doyen of London Labour politics, Sir Lou Sherman, talk of the rabbinical doctrine of non-specific grant and non-hypothecation. I remember just how precious was the principle that grant should not be ring-fenced as suggested in the Lords amendment.

To demand ring fencing shows a complete disregard for, and distrust of, local authorities. If I were cynical, I would say that the policy of ring fencing would allow local authorities to cease to spend the local resources that they spend on community care at present. It would allow them, perhaps, to transfer the cost of the home help service, or —the home care service, as it is in my county, and of meals on wheels—two services which represent community care at its best. If those costs were transferred, why should not local authorities transfer out of the local government budget the cost of social workers who work with the elderly?

I was amazed to hear the hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) suggest that local authorities might be pleased to use the money that is to be transferred to reduce their community charge.

Mrs. Wise: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Couchman: I shall not give way, because the debate is coming to an end.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) that we have constrained local authorities too much in recent years. My hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) spoke of the faith that we should be placing in local authorities by transferring these responsibilities to them. We should let them be the lead authorities, and we should allow them some freedom in the way in which they manage the services.

Mr. McCartney: Talk some sense.

Mr. Couchman: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would care to listen rather than talking through every speech that is made.

If we ring-fence this item, we may as well ring-fence every local government service. If we do that, we shall end up running local government from Whitehall, and we might just as well do away with all the social services authorities and with local authorities generally. The Government are entirely right to resist ring fencing, and I certainly have no difficulty in disagreeing with the Lords amendment.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: I am pleased to be able to participate in the debate, not least because the Lords amendment was piloted through the other place by Lord Allen of Abbeydale, who skilfully piloted my private Member's Bill through the House of Lords last year. If the

success that was achieved on that occasion is to be repeated, we must hope that the House will accept the amendment.

The Government's main objection to the Lords amendment is that it would affect the decision-making powers of local authorities and remove their discretion to act. That comes a bit rich from a Government who have attacked local government services over the past few years. They have stripped local authorities of many of their powers. They have centralised their decision-making powers and curbed their right to raise finance.

I have not heard howls of anguish from local authorities that ring fencing would curb their powers. On the contrary, most local authorities—and especially the departments that would be particularly affected by the provisions—welcome the idea of having a defined sum of money which they know will be available to spend on care in the community.

In an interesting speech, the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) said that local authorities should be given the responsibility to decide their own budgets, even if it involves making mistakes. We cannot talk about making mistakes in a vital service such as community care. Over the years, many mistakes have been made in the provision of community care, and they have affected people's lives. It is often a matter of life and death.

11.30 pm

It is not a matter of educating people; it is a matter of whether people live or die and whether the care that they are given will prolong their lives and enhance their quality of life. It is as important as that. That is why the case for ring fencing is unanswerable. We are talking about people's fundamental right to comfort and dignity.

Social services departments are under tremendous pressure. Day after day, statutory responsibilities are imposed on them, whether under the Children Act 1989 or the Education Reform Act 1988. All those responsibilities have resource implications. We must remember that, in the days of poll tax capping, local authorities will be put in the invidious position of having to make decisions and choices. We should not put them in that position. We should allow them to know exactly what resources are available to them at a given time.

Voluntary bodies that are responsible for the delivery of community care would welcome ring fencing. They know that, if they are properly to deliver care, they must know what resources are available at the beginning of each financial year. They must also know what resources are available to train volunteers to discharge their new responsibilities.

I suspect that the real reason why the Government do not want to ring-fence community care is because the sum would be in the open and we would all know what the Government propose to spend in a certain year. We would then be able to identify the cash that would be allocated. The Government's problem is that we would then know that the allocation would be totally inadequate.

It is not right that the Government should adopt a Pontius Pilate approach to local authorities and say, "Here is an amount of money for you. You spend it in the way you think desirable." It will not work like that. The case for ring fencing is unanswerable. The most trenchant and compelling case for ring fencing was made by Sir Roy Griffiths in his report. The Government refuse to accept that recommendation, because of the resource implications that it involves. If the Government and the Treasury are not prepared to accept that recommendation, I hope that hon. Members will support it.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): I hesitate to trespass on the limited time to discuss this matter, but I am especially concerned about it. I was a member of the Standing Committee and also a signatory to the Select Committee report. I am concerned about the lump sum that is to be transferred to local authorities which are having great difficulty in planning to implement the Bill without knowing what money they will have to do so.

In response to the Select Committee's second report, the Government specifically said:

> "It has always been the Government's intention to calculate and transfer to local authorities the amount of social security expenditure that would have been available as a contribution to the care costs".

That would suggest a straightforward calculation. In reply to my recent question, the Secretary of State said that the figure will not be available until the end of the public expenditure round. It is nothing to do with the public expenditure round; it should be possible to calculate the figure exactly and to give local authorities some idea of the sums that will be available.

Having listened to the ring-fencing arguments advanced in Committee and on the Floor of the House, I find them fairly evenly balanced. In favour of ring fencing is the argument that local social services committees will have adequate funds to carry out their responsibilities, and that, without it, funds allocated by central Government may be used for other purposes, which may or may not be less worthy than community care.

The argument against ring fencing is that, as my hon. Friend the Minister said, social services committees fight their corners pretty well and usually get a pretty good share of the local authority budget. If money is ring-fenced, when proposals are made by social service committees, local authorities may say, "You have had your lump sum; that is what the Government said you can have, and we are not willing to allocate further funds."

Another argument against ring fencing is that it restricts local authorities' initiatives. When proposing ring fencing for community care, one must specify precisely what is meant by community care, because otherwise it is meaningless. That must, by its nature, be restrictive.

People hold different views on the issue. In the past couple of days, I have spoken to two directors of social services who do not advocate ring fencing. They have many bright ideas and initiatives that they want to introduce under the flexibility that the Bill offers, but they fear that ring fencing may restrict what they can do.

A few days ago, I was talking to some housing association officials, who said, "I hope you will not support ring fencing," and proceeded to tell me about certain housing initiatives that they want to implement. They fear that ring fencing would have to be so specific that they would not be free to implement those proposals.

The hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) referred to some of the schemes that the Select Committee on Social Services saw abroad. They were interesting, and no doubt they will feature in our reports. Will they fall in the precise categories of ring-fenced community care that will be laid down if the Lords amendment is accepted? I give only one example. It was interesting to find that community care officers in Italy give old-age pensioners allotments. They

[Mr. Roger Sims]

think that it is rather a good idea, and therapeutic, for elderly gentlemen who live in flats in towns to be bussed out to their allotments. I think that we probably agree that it is quite a good idea, and it would certainly fall within our idea of community care, but would it be specified in the legislation?

The danger is that some good ideas may be advanced, and many people may say, "That is what we mean by community care," but they may not meet the requirements for ring fencing. I should have been happier if Ministers had been more forthcoming about the sums that will be available to local authorities and had assured us that they will be adequate. However, it can be argued that, within the philosophy enshrined in the Bill, there should be flexibility for local authorities in administering community care and, in the circumstances, I am willing to give Ministers the benefit of the doubt.

Mr. Tom Clarke: This interesting and, in some ways, compelling debate has reflected the opinion of many parts of the country. Hon. Members on both sides have given clear support to the House of Lords decision and the view of many important bodies and, in particular, of Sir Roy Griffiths that we shall not get these matters right unless we take on board the important principle of earmarking the inevitably limited resources available. I am sure that my hon. Friends will agree that the hon. Members for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) and for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) put the case clearly and strongly without any element of overstatement. What they said invited the support of the majority of the House.

The issues are so grave that the House, in the latter stages of considering the Bill, would do a grave disservice to the Griffiths report if, while we endorsed the principles and accepted that something should be done about the cares which the Audit Commission and Sir Roy Griffiths identified, we pulled back from the inevitable conclusion that the resources which are supposed to be made available for the most vulnerable people in our society were in some cases being spent on other purposes. That would be indefensible.

There is no challenge to a principle which the Government have said is sacred. They have already accepted that a clear case exists for earmarking funds for the mentally ill, and for drug abuse and alcoholism. We are arguing that the evidence is so overwhelming that there should be ring fencing for community care and that the House has an important responsibility to respond to that evidence, if only because it may be a long time before we have an opportunity to reconsider these matters.

Their Lordships reached the right conclusion. The Select Committee—its report has been quoted extensively by hon. Members on both sides—having examined these matters in great detail, was right to make the recommendation that it did. It is a matter for regret that when the Bill was last before the House, we did not have the opportunity to discuss the report. We have the opportunity now to debate and act on it, and we should do so.

The Secretary of State was not right in everything he said at the start of the debate, but as an ex-president of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, I readily concede one point—that local authorities have not always been keen or enthusiastic about earmarking funds in this way. Certainly when I was active in COSLA that was the position. We can understand the reasons for that. I plead with the Secretary of State and the House to consider seriously why local authorities have changed their minds, as they would admit, on such a fundamental issue. It is because they are so worried about the issues they face.

It is not simply a question of arguing for education or transport or whatever to be ring-fenced. Local authorities are dealing with an enormous problem. Principal among the many issues facing them is what is described as the demographic time bomb. Happily, many people are now living to a ripe old age, but that presents great problems for local authorities, for the Government, the House and the Treasury. Community care and social services are distinguished from other functions by the Government's decision, which the Secretary of State warmly endorsed today, that funding from the Department of Social Security should be switched to local government, which should then be responsible for making the resources available to clients. As a principle, that is almost without precedent. The Secretary of State cannot disregard such an important decision and such an important recommendation.

If we consider the way in which the funds have been administered so far, in the absence of earmarking, the House cannot have the confidence to say that all the money will be allocated in the way that we would wish. There is no evidence to believe that.

11.45 pm

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Does not the hon. Gentleman think it extremely strange that the Government are almost on their own in opposing ring fencing and are forcing additional responsibilities on local government without specifying the amount of resources that they are prepared to allocate for those very vulnerable people who cannot represent their own best interests?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman is right. I hope that I can say with some humility that I have attended seminars and conferences around the country and I cannot remember any occasion when the majority of those present did not agree with the view that the hon. Gentleman has just expressed.

When local authorities consider their responsibilities, they must distinguish between competing priorities. The House decided that the Children Act 1989 should be written into the statute book. That was a very important measure and it reflected the concern of the House about the grave issue of child abuse. However, in the absence of ring fencing, social service departments may have to choose between allocating money to that purpose or allocating it to the elderly, the disabled, the carers or the mentally handicapped. I do not believe that that decision should be left so vague in the light of our discussions and the advice of people such as Sir Roy Griffiths and the Select Committee.

We have also had debates about environmental health. Local authorities must make a choice and take a decision. The record in identifying where that money is going in social services is quite appalling. Under the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986, the Department of Health's inspectorate published a report in January which showed that, in one authority, at

least, some of the resources got lost. Given the limited resources available for those purposes, we do not believe that any money should simply get lost.

Towards the end of this all too brief debate, the House would be extremely foolish to disregard the carefully taken decision of another place. It would be foolish also to disregard the overwhelming view of local authorities and the almost unanimous view of those in social services. We have not got things right so far, and if on this occasion we ignore the advice of another place, I believe that chaos will prevail and we shall have no excuse.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This has been an important and lengthy debate on the crucial question of funding the policies of care in the community. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State made only too clear, those policies are popular and important. To implement them, we have been carrying out a major programme with local authorities, voluntary organisations and others who are concerned about care in the community so that we can talk through the practical realities. Although I understand why ring fencing has emerged as a major issue today, I wish that we could have spent a similar amount of time on some of the details of the change in culture, the work that must be undertaken, and the different ways of looking at care in the community. It is not merely a question of ring fencing.

My right hon. and learned Friend put the Government's view on ring fencing at the beginning of this debate. We believe that ring fencing serves to undermine local government accountability. Where large sums of money are involved—we are talking about hundreds of millions of pounds in the transfer of resources from social security to local authority spending—it is both wrong and inappropriate to ring-fence those resources, for the reasons that were so forcefully and clearly expressed by many of my hon. Friends, including my hon. Friends the Members for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe), for Fylde (Mr. Jack) and for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire). Many of my hon. Friends spoke ably from positions of authority.

However, we see a need for specific grants in areas where there has been an inadequacy of provision. The mental illness specific grant is a good example. A mere 3 per cent. of local government spending is directed towards mental illness. As my right hon. and learned Friend again made clear, that is an area in which the integration of services from the health authority and the local authority is of fundamental importance. By having that strategic specific grant and ensuring that the health authority must give approval for that grant, we can ensure that good working relationships are properly established. Mental illness spending contrasts with the 8 per cent. spending on mental handicap.

Similarly, we use specific grants for training. We target provision on training for the requirements of the Children Act 1989 and on the establishment of services for AIDS patients, all of which meets with the approval of the House. That is why my right hon. and learned Friend's amendment is so important. Specific grant should be available for those who are drug addicts of alcoholics. That point was made at length in Committee and at other stages of the Bill's passage. We have considered it carefully and have held meetings with many voluntary organisations and others involved.

That is a typical example of the way in which the Government have treated the proposals for care in the community. We have discussed and scrutinised. Where the force of the argument has made it clear that we should modify our proposals, we have been only too willing to do so. However, I am afraid that we are not convinced by the arguments on overall ring fencing—in spite of the important points made by many distinguished right hon. and hon. Members for whom I have the highest regard on this matter.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) referred to the areas where there are statutory requirements for the local authority to undertake tasks. It was his arguments in Committee, when he made precisely that point, that led us to accept many of the amendments that he sought. Many aspects of care in the community were to be the subject of guidance and were not to be written on the face of the Bill. It was my hon. Friend's concern about complaints, about the requirement to consult housing and health authorities, and his concern that that should be written on the face of the Bill rather than in guidance that won the day and convinced us.

However, the statutory requirements are nowhere near as inconsiderable as he has sought to suggest. Local authorities will be under a duty to prepare and publish plans for community care, and to consult carers' organisations and users—quite apart from the health and housing departments and the voluntary organisations. They are under a duty to assess for community care services; to exercise social services functions in accordance with directives given by the Secretary of State, and they are under the very important duty to establish a complaints procedure, because ensuring proper quality for the individuals who are subject to community care is a fundamental requirement.

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): Why are the Government so determined not to ring-fence, when the money for the disabled given to Gloucester was spent entirely on road improvements? That is why we suspect that councils will not channel the money in the right direction.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: If the hon. Gentleman had been present when my right hon. and learned Friend made his speech, he would have the answer to his question. Personal social services departments have increased their spending by 37 per cent. compared with other departments in local government. They have had no difficulty in fighting their corner and that is a strong argument for not promoting ring fencing.

Local authorities are under a statutory duty to provide services for those who need community care. HonMembers have properly raised the need for local authorities to have some sense of anticipation about what the likely sum of the resources will be. As my right hon. and learned Friend said, we are having further discussions with the Department of Social Security about that substantial sum which will go directly to local authorities. We are also having detailed discussions with local authority associations about what they anticipate the likely needs will be arising from the new proposals.

I accept what my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) said about the increasing areas of responsibility for local government, for example, educational provision arising from the Children Act 1989

[Mrs. Virginia Bottomley]

and provisions relating to legislation on food. As soon as we can, we shall make clear the precise nature of the sums involved.

We have been able to issue our draft guidance for consultation on plans, inspections, case management and the complaints procedure. They are all subject to consultation, and we look to learn from that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent spoke eloquently about the disadvantages of ring fencing and the House should note the important points that he raised. My hon. Friend represents an authority that has a particularly enlightened policy of care in the community. I have met some of the care managers of Kent and I was impressed by the way in which they made difficult decisions about the right way to provide for the frail and vulnerable.

My hon. Friend seeks to provide that some scheme of empowerment is available to the disabled. He will be aware that in Committee I shared the aspirations behind such a measure. I expressed reservations about whether it would be possible to introduce a workable proposal within the time. I visited a scheme in Hampshire to talk to the severely disabled, those with spinal injuries, who were, with a system of empowerment, able to live independent lives and have effective control over their own budgets. However, within the time it has not been possible to introduce a proposal to meet those aims. I urge my hon. Friend to withdraw the amendment and I agree to work with him to see whether it is possible to achieve a workable proposal at a later date.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) has particular knowledge and expertise about care in the community. In Bolton, one of the pilot projects that we set up to develop ideas for care in the community reached a successful conclusion. I greatly appreciate my hon. Friend's comments, because addressing the development of a mixed economy of care and the provision of choice and dignity to the individual is important. My hon. Friend is right in saying that voluntary homes provide more cost-effective care than local authority alternatives. Such are the challenges we must face.

The hon. Member for Greenwich (Mrs. Barnes) spoke about the nature of the incentive. She will understand that the current incentive is all towards placing the frail and the vulnerable in institutions. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security then finances the provision of that care, which presents no difficulty to the social services budget.

The challenge of care in the community is to work with the financial incentives to provide day care alternatives to residential care and, above all, to incorporate the needs and the interests of the users and the carers. Never before have proposals been brought forward which so clearly and forcefully recognise their particular needs and interests.

Mrs. Rosie Barnes: Does not the Minister agree that ring fencing will ensure those choices and that redistribution of funds? Most hon. Members would like the choice of residential care or care at home to be available. Such a choice cannot be made for the right reasons unless the money is available, and that involves ring fencing.

12 midnight

Mrs. Bottomley: It is quite clear that ring fencing is not productive to the innovative thought that we want to go into community care. The challenge for local authorities is to respond to the new framework for the next decade and beyond. It is an important opportunity to which we are committed, working with local authorities to ensure that they can undertake those important tasks. We have announced an important specific grant in a category where there has been concern. We have met that concern, but we have always said that adequate resources will be available for local authorities to undertake their important new tasks. I urge my hon. Friends to reject the Lords amendment and to support Government amendment (b).

Mr. Rowe: The Minister has pledged to work with me to find a workable solution to the problem that I posed. I shall hold her to that commitment, and on those terms I beg to ask leave to withdraw my amendment (a) to the Lords amendment.

Amendment to the Lords amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

It being eight hours after the commencement of proceedings on the Order [27 June] relating to the National Health Service and Community Care Bill (Allocation of Time) MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the said Order, to put forthwith the Question,* That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Mr. Kenneth Clarke.]*

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 312, Noes 238.

Division No. 268] **[12.1 am**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob

Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. David Lightbown.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Cleiland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Day, Stephen
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin

Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hayes, Jerry
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Price, Sir David
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wolfson, Mark
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and Mrs. Llin Golding.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 70 disagreed to.

Amendments made to the Bill in lieu thereof: (b), in clause 46, page 53, line 18, after 'incurred', insert '(a)'.

(c), in page 53, line 20, at end insert

'or

(b) in making payments, in accordance with directions given by the Secretary of State to voluntary organisations which provide care and services for persons who are, have been, or are likely to become dependent upon alcohol or drugs.'.—*[Mr. Kenneth Clarke.]*

Clause 49

LOCAL AUTHORITY PLANS FOR COMMUNITY CARE SERVICES

Lords amendment: No. 95, in page 54, line 7, at end insert—

"(ba) such voluntary organisations as appear to the authority to represent the interests of persons who use or are likely to use any community care services within the area of the authority or the interests of private carers who, within that area, provide a substantial amount of care on a regular basis to persons for whom, in the exercise of their functions under this Act or any of the enactments mentioned in section 2(2) of this Act, the local authority have a power or a duty to provide, or to secure the provision of, a service."

Read a Second time.

Amendment made to the Lords amendment, to leave out 'a substantial amount of care on a regular basis' and insert 'care'.—*[Mr. Michael Forsyth.]*

Lords amendment, as amended, agreed to.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *then proceeded to put forthwith the Questions on motions moved by a Minister of the Crown.*

Lords amendment: No. 71, before clause 40, to insert the following new clause—

"*Implementation of Part III*
Timetable for implementation

.—(1) This Part, other than this section and section 44 below, shall have effect subject to the making of an Order or Orders by the Secretary of State after consultation with such organisations representative of local authorities, users and carers as appear to him to be concerned.

(2) Section 44 below shall have effect from the date of Royal Assent.

(3) No Order shall be made in respect of any other provision of this Part under section 63(2) below except where the Secretary of State is satisfied that the resources available to local authorities are adequate to secure the proper carrying out of their duties in a manner conducive to the interests and welfare of any person for whom community care services may be provided or arranged.

(4) For the purposes of subsection (3) above, no Order shall be made unless the Secretary of State is satisfied that resources sufficient to the requirements of subsection (3) above are available in respect of the implementation by authorities of the functions subject to the Order in the first financial year in which they apply and that such resources are likely to be sufficient in the succeeding four financial years based on his estimate of the likely cost of those functions over those years."

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Mr Kenneth Clarke.]*

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 317, Noes 225.

Division No. 270] **[12.17 am**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. David Lightbown.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Robert N. Wareing.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 72, before clause 40 to insert the following new clause—

"*Start-up costs*

.—(1) The Secretary of State may, for up to five years from the date of any Order under this section, in relation to the functions covered by that Order and with the approval of the Treasury make grants out of money provided by Parliament towards any expenses incurred by local authorities in connection with the establishing of functions and activities arising under this Part, and in making any determination as to the adequacy or otherwise of resources under subsection (4) above the Secretary of State shall have regard to the desirability of making grants under this subsection.

(2) A grant made under subsection (5) above may be for capital or revenue expenditure."

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Mr. Kenneth Clarke.]*

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 310, Noes 219.

Division No. 271] **[12.30 am**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John

Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'ts)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*

Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and Mrs. Llin Golding.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Clause 40

PROVISION OF ACCOMMODATION AND WELFARE SERVICES: AGENCY ARRANGEMENTS

Lords amendment: No. 76, in page 46, line 48, at end insert—

"(1D) Before arrangements are made by virtue of this section with any person, that person shall disclose to the local authority making the arrangements any relevant criminal convictions.

(1E) On request by a local authority, a police officer shall disclose to the authority any relevant criminal convictions of any person with whom it is proposed to make arrangements by virtue of this section.

(1F) Relevant criminal convictions for the purposes of subsections (1D) and (1E) above shall be specified in regulations made by the Secretary of State.

(1G) Any person in respect of whom a disclosure is made under subsection (1E) above shall be informed of the disclosure."

Motion made and Question proposed, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment. *—[Mr. Kenneth Clarke.]*

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 303, Noes 217.

Division No. 272] **[12.42 am**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buckley, George J.
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul

Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.

Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert N. Wareing and Mrs. Llin Golding.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Clause 44

Local authority plans for community care services.

Lords amendment: No. 81, in page 50, line 12, at end insert—

"( ) The plan for the provision of community care services referred to in subsection (1) above shall, in the case of those local authorities which are housing authorities, include details on how those authorities propose to meet the housing needs of the persons in their areas who are in need of community care services."

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment:—*[Mr. Kenneth Clarke.]*

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 300, Noes 213.

Division No. 273] **[12.54 am**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal

Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

NOES

Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard

Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Allen Adams and
Mr. Robert N. Wareing.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *then proceeded to put forthwith the Question,* That this House doth agree with the Lords in the Lords amendments designated by him which had not been disposed of.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 104, 107, 108, 116, 135, 138 and 163 agreed to [Special Entry.]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *then proceeded to put forthwith the Question,* That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords amendments.

Lords amendments Nos. 73 to 75, 77 to 80, 82 to 94, 96 to 103, 105, 106, 109 to 115, 117 to 134, 136, 137, 139 to 162 and 164 to 182 agreed to.

Ordered,

That a Committee be appointed to draw up reasons to be assigned to the Lords for disagreeing to their amendments Nos. 71, 72, 76 and 81.—*[Mr. Kenneth Clarke.]*

Ordered,

That Mrs. Virginia Bottomley, Mr. Kenneth Clarke, Mr. Robin Cook, Mr. Greg Knight and Mr. Allen McKay be members of the Committee.—*[Mr. Kenneth Clarke.]*

Ordered,

That three be the quorum of the Committee.—*[Mr. Kenneth Clarke.]*

Ordered, That the Committee do withdraw immediately.—*[Mr. Kenneth Clarke.]*

AGRICULTURE

Ordered,

That the provisions of paragraph (2) of Standing Order No. 84 (Constitution of standing committees), paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 86 (Nomination of standing committees) and Standing Order No. 101 (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.) shall apply to the draft Code of Recommendations for the Welfare of Livestock —Sheep as if it was a statutory instrument; and that the said draft Code be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Vaccine-damaged Children

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

1.6 am

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): I thank the House for the opportunity to raise on the Adjournment the important subject of compensation for vaccine-damaged children.

I first became introduced to my constituent, Bernice, through her parents writing to me. Bernice was born in March 1973. She was vaccinated against whooping cough in June and August of that year and suffered convulsions and brain damage as a consequence. Her chance of a normal life was lost.

In 1978, the Royal Commission on civil liability and compensation for personal injury reported. It included a special passage on vaccine damage, such was the public interest at that time. In essence, it reported that all immunisation carried risk and that there was particular concern about the case of whooping cough vaccine. It considered the absence of a compensation system in this country and compared us to others. It declared its general view:

"We do not think it is right to try to distinguish one severely disabled child from another, and to produce a situation where two children have the same needs, but one is compensated and the other is not. We decided, therefore, that vaccine damaged children should be considered with other severely disabled children, irrespective of the cause of disablement."

In its conclusion, the report recommended in relation to vaccine-damaged children:

"We recommend that the Government or the local authority concerned should be strictly liable in tort for severe damage suffered by anyone (adult or child) as a result of vaccination which has been recommended in the interests of the community."

Following that report, the Vaccine Damage Payments Act 1979 was passed. According to the Department of Health, the Act provides for

"A single lump-sum payment to be made in those cases where the Secretary of State is satisfied that, on the balance of probabilities, severe mental and/or physical disablement was caused by vaccination against any of the diseases certified in the Act."

Payment is made for severe disablement only. This is defined as

"Loss of faculty to the extent of eighty per cent. or more assessed as for the Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit Scheme. Eighty per cent. is customarily recognised as the lower end of the spectrum of severe disablement. The amount of payment under the Vaccine Damage Payments Act was originally set at £10,000. It was subsequently increased to £20,000 for successful claims made after 18 June 1985".

Bernice's parents were successful in a claim in 1982 and were awarded £10,000 for her. Her parents wrote to me saying that the decision of the tribunal was that Bernice "is disabled as a result of vaccination to which the claim relates. . .The extent of the disability arising from vaccination to which the claim relates amounts to severe disablement". Bernice is now 17. She cannot dress, feed herself or go to the toilet. She has fits every day. Her walking is severely limited. She is hemiplegic, with lack of movement down the right side. Naturally, communication with her devoted family is desperately limited.

In urging me to take up the matter, Bernice's parents wrote:

"Over the years Bernice's condition has not improved, but we know that given the proper training, physiotherapy and speech therapy, she could have been a more independent person than she is today."

That is the personal, moving background behind a statistic.

Since the introduction of the Act, after an initial surge, the number of awards has gradually fallen. In 1979, 349 awards were made. By 1986, the figure was 15, by 1987 it was nine, by 1988 it was three, and by 1989 it was nil. In total, 849 awards have been made, but more than 2,500 have been rejected. The majority of rejections were because disablement was not found to be the result of vaccination, but some claims were not investigated because disability was not deemed sufficiently severe, and in a small number of cases vaccine damage was accepted by the tribunal, but the claim failed because of the 80 per cent. rule.

There are four main problems causing widespread concern. The first is the adequacy of compensation. It has long been held by the Association of Parents of Vaccine Damaged Children—I pay tribute to that organisation which helped me prepare tonight's debate for its concern over a number of years—that, because of widespread concern in Parliament at the time of the passage of the Act, the provisions of the Act would be interim. Much of that worry stems from the inadequacy of the capital figure.

The sum now available to be awarded—£20,000—is woefully small compared to the sums awarded by courts to victims of medical accidents. The awards to young people in exactly the same circumstances as my constituent Bernice are now reaching hundreds of thousands of pounds. The difference that that makes in terms of provision for a child is obvious. Not only are there capital needs to be satisfied, perhaps related to the physical needs of disablement such as changes in the construction of a house and the provision of security for children such as Bernice who are prone to fall regularly due to fits, but money also has to be found for holiday care, and sometimes to compensate for wage loss of parents devoting their lives to the care of a child.

The future also has to be considered. Bernice's father wrote:

"I am 67 years of age and my wife is 52 and our biggest concern is what will happen to her when we are gone, whilst if we were able to set up a trust fund for her welfare, it would lessen our fears."

There is no financial comparison between Bernice's position and that of a child left damaged by any other medical accident. We are therefore a world away from the Pearson commission's desire to see all treated equally, regardless of the cause of disability.

I do not wish to promote the cause of no-fault compensation. I merely ask my hon. Friend the Minister to bear in mind the huge disparity which has grown in recent years because of the size of awards being made in the courts and to ask whether the size of that disparity can be reduced.

Secondly, will the Minister review the 80 per cent. rule? As I have said, there have been cases where damage has been assessed by the tribunal to be caused by the vaccine, but no award has been made because the level of disability is less than 80 per cent. Surely it cannot be beyond our wit to devise a sliding scale of payments to compensate youngsters for the degree of disability they suffer. It is time for us to consider seriously, and to end, that anomaly.

Thirdly, some parents, dissatisfied with the scheme, have tried to take legal action to prove negligence. We

[Mr. Alistair Burt]

know that success in the courts in negligence cases opens the way to massive awards. The difficulties, however, of piloting such a route to adequate compensation have been well documented over the past 20 years. The cases of Kinnear, and particularly Loveday, stand out.

The Loveday case failed when a judge said that, on the balance of probabilities, the plaintiff's case did not satisfy him that whooping cough vaccine could cause permanent brain damage in young children. He said:

"It is possible that it does; the contrary cannot be proved."

Until March of this year, that judgment stood in the way of progress in cases of negligence because legal aid was being ruled out in similar cases and preventing them from getting under way. Now a judge has ruled that that case is no bar, and the way is open again for more claims. But to what end—more cost, heartbreak and time lost? Could we not end this struggle towards proving negligence with a more open and generous compensation system?

Will the Minister consider immunisation for all potential diseases, not just whooping cough? I am a firm supporter of immunisation. My father is a general practitioner and I welcome the success that has been achieved over the centuries since immunisation became widespread and the effect that it has had on preventive medicine in this country.

I support whooping cough vaccination. The right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley), to whom I pay tribute for his exceptional work on this subject and who was kind enough to drop me a note earlier today supporting this debate, extracted an answer from my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) in 1987, when he was given the figures for deaths resulting from whooping cough in recent years. During the period 1957-61, there were 200 deaths from whooping cough in this country; by 1982-86, the number had fallen to 29. It should never be forgotten that in years gone by whooping cough was a killer, and I am glad that those days are largely gone.

In my constituency, the notified cases of whooping cough in 1988 had fallen to as low as 13. Vaccination figures are high in my constituency and I pay tribute to my health authority for the hard work it does in ensuring such a high rate of immunisation. Also, the view of the director of public health in Bury, Dr. Christopher Hallett, is:

"My colleagues and I are now quite confident about recommending the whooping cough vaccine and anxious to protect as many vulnerable children as possible. With all the publicity about the so called side effects of whooping cough vaccine I cannot believe that there are any hidden cases of alleged vaccine damage in the community about which no one has informed me."

To his knowledge, there were only two cases in Bury of children damaged by whooping cough vaccine.

All that goes to prove the efficacy of immunisation and the fact that tragedies resulting from things going wrong are few. My personal experience and support for vaccination was shown when my children were immunised. My little girl, Hazel, was immunised first and reacted badly to her first injection, so we stopped the second injection. We had no hesitation in having our little boy immunised, despite Hazel's reaction. He successfully completed both injections and is now immunised. Therefore, I believe firmly in immunisation.

However, if we are to proceed with the programme and encourage more people towards it, a better security system should be found for those for whom something might go wrong. We are extending the targets.

In passing, I would say that, where doctors have contacted parents and they have refused vaccination for their children, they should be made to sign a form saying that the matter has been fully explained to them but that they have nevertheless refused to have their child vaccinated. That would assist parents to realise what a serious step they were taking in not allowing their child to be vaccinated. Each case should then be included in the doctor's quota towards his target.

If we are to extend immunisation to as many people as possible, some protection for parents who fear that something might go wrong would be welcome. That is why I wish to see a change in the system.

My solutions to the problems that I have illustrated are briefly these. We should discuss the possibility of a larger capital award. The disparity between the figures shows that a larger capital award is called for. Some parents of vaccine-damaged children argue for rather greater income payments when the child is small, preferring to build up their own capital sum in that way. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will consider that.

In addition, it may be worth asking drug companies to support a fund in some way. They gain many benefits from the immunisation programme. Their profits are large, although they are needed for research and development, and I do not criticise them for that. But they have funds that could be made available for a fund for the protection of vaccine-damaged children.

In essence, I would like the Minister to say tonight that he will review the area, that he agrees that problems exist and that he will look at them.

The closing words of my constituent's letter tell us much. He says:

"We are not asking for charity. What has happened to Bernice is the sole responsibility of the Government. If we had not been persuaded to have the vaccination, Bernice would have remained a normal, happy and healthy child. As it is she has had no past and very little future without help 24 hours per day."

There is not one hon. Member with happy, healthy, normal children who does not feel for any constituent who finds himself in the situation of Bernice's parents. Such cases are always sad.

I accept that the Government can only do so much, but in this case the concern about the adequacy of compensation and cover for vaccine-damaged children has been widespread for a number of years. The time has come to look again at the matter, and I hope that my hon. Friend will respond to the matters that I have outlined tonight by announcing some form of review.

Mr. Ken Hargreaves (Hyndburn) *rose*——

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I take it that the hon. Members have the consent of the hon. Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) and the Minister to take part in the debate.

1.22 am

Mr. Hargreaves: I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) on initiating this important debate and thank him for the opportunity to contribute briefly to it. I wish to comment on immunisation.

I welcome the steady increase in immunisation in the past few years, which has led to a marked decrease in the number of cases of childhood diseases which can cause deaths and more serious permanent injury. I welcome, too, the Government's efforts to increase the level of immunisation still further, but I share the concern expressed by my hon. Friend about the target system being too rigid and I fear that that could well result in fewer children being immunised than would otherwise be the case.

In some areas of my constituency, for example, doctors will achieve 90 per cent. with comparative ease. In other areas, despite possibly working harder and making greater efforts, they will achieve 75 per cent. because of the different type of people living in their area. In those circumstances, only the dedication and professionalism of the doctor will ensure that he works to immunise as many children as possible, knowing that he will not achieve his target. It is therefore essential that the effectiveness of targets is clearly monitored to ensure that they are set at realistic levels so that the Government's aims can be achieved. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will also give my hon. Friend the other assurances that he has sought.

1.24 am

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): I, too, thank my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) for the chance to contribute to this important debate. My interest in the subject was aroused by the case of Sally Anne Mills, a four-year-old girl from my constituency who contracted poliomyelitis as a result of vaccination, and who was recently told by a vaccine damage tribunal that she was only 60 per cent. disabled. The tribunal said that there was some measure of comparability between Sally's problems and conditions 26 and 27 in the Social Security Regulations 1982—amputations below the knee, which constitute no more than 60 per cent. disability.

Despite that equivalence, my constituent will receive no compensation or payment. It seems ridiculous not to grade payments according to disability or to give a lump sum payment on the basis of 80 per cent. Even if one accepts, as Lord Henley, a Social Security Minister told me, that these payments are not compensation but social security payments, it is wrong that someone with an 80 per cent. disability should get £20,000 for future requirements as a result of disability, while someone with a 60 per cent. disability receives nothing.

There is a strong case for making these payments by way of compensation. If the Government are—rightly—encouraging people to take up vaccination, and if it then goes wrong through no fault of the recipient, flexible compensation should be paid.

Lord Henley suggested to me that legal action on the grounds of negligence could lead to payments for people affected in this way. The Law Society tells me that no person affected by poliomyelitis has ever successfully prosecuted a case in the courts. There is often no negligence to prove, since doctors have acted perfectly reasonably and respectably—yet an unforeseeable accident has taken place.

If there are as few cases of medical accidents for which compensation should be paid as my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North has suggested, it would not cost the Government much to pay out the compensation forthwith, and on a far more generous scale.

1.27 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) on raising this important subject, and I offer my sympathy to my hon. Friends the Members for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) and for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) for the cases that they described.

Any child involved in vaccine damage represents a real human tragedy. There can be no circumstances more poignant than those of a child which is thought, rightly or wrongly, to have been damaged by a vaccine intended to give it protection against disease and not to subject it to a life-disabling condition. We have to try to deal with such cases as sympathetically as we can.

We must also set the issue in context and remember that the overwhelming result of the immunisation programme has been an enhancement of public health. The programme has been a phenomenal public health success that we should do nothing to inhibit or upset.

The World Health Organisation has set a target of 90 per cent. for children to be immunised against a raft of diseases, and that target is built into the GPs' contract, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn stressed.

I should like in passing to explain why the Government disagree with the approach outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn, who suggested that we should discount those who refuse immunisation. It is our objective, on public health grounds, to achieve a minimum of 90 per cent. immunisation. If that target is not achieved, for whatever reason, policy makers and NHS managers will have to deal with the shortfall. We should not seek to rig the targets so as to convince ourselves that we are achieving an objective when in fact we are not.

We all welcome the fact that as of February the immunisation programme against polio, diptheria and tetanus is now achieving an 88 per cent. take-up rate. The take-up rate for measles, mumps and rubella immunisation is 85 per cent., while the take-up rate for whooping cough is 80 per cent. That is not just the achievement of some target set by the World Health Organisation—there has been a definable improvement in public health standards which can be directly attributed to that immunisation programme.

The incidence of whooping cough has been dramatically reduced as a result of that programme. The incidence of measles is now at its lowest ever level and, with the exception of a couple of isolated cases, one of which was instanced by my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest, polio is now virtually extinct. On a personal note, that means a great deal to me because one of my aunts, who was also my godmother, was disabled by polio at the age of three and throughout her life suffered from the disability that polio causes. In a relatively short time, a

[Mr. Stephen Dorrell]

disease of which parents of young children used to live in fear has been eliminated. That is a substantial advance which we should do nothing to undermine.

Despite the undoubted public health benefits that the immunisation programme has made possible, there remains a fluctuating but continuing concern about the safety of the vaccines. Most strikingly, that concern welled up during the 1970s in connection with whooping cough vaccine. The figures are striking. In 1950 there were about 100,000 cases of whooping cough. By 1973, when there was 80 per cent. acceptance of whooping cough vaccine, the incidence of the disease had fallen to about 2,400 cases per annum. There was then a scare, acceptance of the vaccine fell from 80 to 30 per cent., and the incidence of the disease rose from 2,400 cases per year back to the 100,000 per year level that occurred in the early 1950s. There was thus a dramatic slide in what had been a public health success. I am pleased to say that that success is again with us.

Against that background, the Government of the day introduced the Vaccine Damage Payments Act 1979, on which my hon. Friends have concentrated in their speeches. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North made clear, that Act introduced a payment—originally of £10,000—to relieve the suffering caused by vaccination damage to a child early in life. That payment is made where a child suffers 80 per cent. disability, where the disability can be said to have been caused by a vaccine on the limited list defined in the Act.

The Act was intended to help relieve the suffering caused to families in which such tragedies occurred, but it also sought to rebuild confidence in the immunisation programme and to encourage vaccination rates to rise again. That is important, because we are now back to the levels of between 80 and 90 per cent. acceptance of the immunisation programme.

It is important to understand that the payments made under the Vaccine Damage Payments Act are not intended to be compensation in the sense that compensation is awarded if a successful claim for negligence is brought against a contractor. Payments made under the Act do not affect the individual's right to compensation if negligence can be proved. They are in the nature of ad hoc payments and are not intended to be compensation of the kind that would be awarded by a court if fault were proved.

That important distinction of principle should not be lost. That is why I do not accept the direct comparison which my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North sought to draw between the level of payment under the Act and the level of payment awarded by the courts where negligence has been proved. In a successful negligence action, it seems entirely legitimate that the person whose negligence caused suffering should be required to make a substantial payment which seeks to put the injured party, as far as that is possible financially, in the position that he would have occupied if the negligence had not occurred. That has never been the aim of payments made under the Act.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North said that he did not wish to reopen the principle of no-fault compensation. He then quoted the ambition of the Pearson committee—that we should seek to ensure that no injured child was in a better position than another injured child as a result of distinctions in compensation. Although that sounds an attractive ambition, it is not achievable because we cannot deal with a child who is disabled by illness. It is an approach which does not overcome the fundamental problem of causation. That has been emphasised by the Loveday judgment and the decisions which have flowed from it.

The technical details of the Vaccine Damage Payments Act 1979 are matters for the Department of Social Security, and I shall draw——

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at twenty-four minutes to Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 28 June 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

CLYDE PORT AUTHORITY BILL

Order for Third Reading read.

To be read the Third time on Monday 2 July at Seven o'clock.

ASSOCIATED BRITISH PORTS (NO. 2) BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question proposed [25 June],

That this House doth agree with the Lords in their amendment to clause 3, page 3, line 10, to leave out '85' and insert '85E', instead thereof:

Debate further adjourned till Thursday 5 July.

REDBRIDGE LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

Order for consideration of Lords amendment read.

To be considered on Thursday 5 July.

MEDWAY TUNNEL BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

As amended, considered; to be read the Third time.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (NO. 2) BILL *(By Order)*

Order for consideration, as amended, read.

To be considered on Thursday 5 July.

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL (NO. 2) BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question proposed [26 February],

That the Bill be now considered.

Debate further adjourned till Thursday 5 July.

SHARD BRIDGE BILL *(By Order)*

Read a Second time and referred to the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills.

GREAT YARMOUTH PORT AUTHORITY BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Tuesday 3 July.

Mr. Speaker: As the remaining eight private Bills set down for Second Reading have blocking motions, with the leave of the House I shall put them as a single group.

PORT OF TYNE BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

LONDON UNDERGROUND BILL *(By Order)*

HEATHROW EXPRESS RAILWAY BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

CATTEWATER RECLAMATION BILL *(By Order)*

VALE OF GLAMORGAN (BARRY HARBOUR) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday 5 July.

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT (PENALTY FARES) BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question proposed [10 May],

That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Debate further adjourned till Thursday 5 July.

SOUTHAMPTON RAPID TRANSIT BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday 5 July.

EXMOUTH DOCKS BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question proposed [29 March],

That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Debate further adjourned till Thursday 5 July.

Oral Answers to Questions

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Set-aside Scheme

1. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to review the workings of the set-aside scheme.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Curry): We have been reviewing the scheme in the light of the first two years of operation and we shall be announcing decisions when the third year of the scheme opens.

Mr. Hague: Does my hon. Friend agree that the set-aside scheme will need significant changes if it is to be made acceptable to farmers and the public? Will he consider bringing forward cutting dates and supporting an extension of the countryside premium scheme? Most important, will he ensure that any proposals to support the so-called grazed fallow do not allow the grazing of additional breeding stock on set-aside land, because that would undermine the business of existing traditional livestock producers?

Mr. Curry: The Government recognise the great importance of the uplands for livestock grazing. However, there are anomalies in the present scheme. For example, if a farmer who has set-aside and livestock suffers from drought and runs out of fodder, he cannot use set-aside land to feed his livestock. There is a case for some flexibility, which would also be in the interest of the environment. If we make changes or introduce flexibility, they will be limited and designed to protect the traditional activities on the uplands, which I and 25 of my hon. Friends represent.

Mr. Skinner: Notwithstanding the complex question of the hon. Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague), is not he really saying that he wants farmers to get more money to watch the grass grow?

Mr. Curry: Watching the grass grow is an environmentally friendly activity and, of course, many wild species breed in the grass, so there is a good case for watching it grow. The scheme does not pay farmers to do nothing because they have to maintain their normal farming activity over the major part of the farm, and the taxpayer gets an extremely good deal for not having to finance surplus production on land that is set aside.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

2. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many parents of schoolchildren in Cleveland have made representations to him about BSE.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Gummer): I have received representations about BSE from various organisations and individuals. I am sure that many parents of schoolchildren in Cleveland are unhappy that children compulsorily taught science and scientific values are now compulsorily being denied beef on entirely emotional grounds.

Mr. Holt: I thank my right hon. Friend for his answer. I should be surprised if any parents had written directly to the Ministry. There is no evidence from my postbag of any such representations from Cleveland parents. I have checked with my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) and he has not had any either. Yet despite that, the Labour-controlled county council imposed a ban on beef long after most of the other county councils that did, damaging farming interests in the north-east and giving comfort to our competitors on the continent.

Mr. Gummer: One should not judge the matter on the basis of whether this or that interest is damaged. One must judge it on the scientific basis of whether eating beef is safe. The chief medical officer said unequivocally that it is and the scientific advice given to the Government and the EC supported that statement. I find it odd that Cleveland county council considers that its local advice is better than the national advice.

Mr. Bell: I am sure that the Minister would not wish to mislead the House. Is he aware that good quality lean beef is still on the menu in Cleveland schools? What are not on the menu are products made from beef offal and mechanically recovered beef, and that is completely different. Is the Minister aware that Cleveland county council received advice from Professor Peter Blair of the department of environmental medicine, Newcastle university, and from Dr. Ted Holt at Middlesbrough general hospital, who specialises in BSE and scrapie? Therefore does the Minister accept that the subsequent decision was not alarmist but a sensible response to the representations of school governors, parents and teachers? Was not that a sensible approach when there was near panic on the continent of Europe?

Mr. Gummer: I should have thought that, of all hon. Members, the hon. Gentleman would be careful about taking the medical advice of an individual of one sort or other. He knows how careful one has to be. Therefore, I say quite clearly that the chief medical officer, an independent person, made it clear that, in all the areas that the hon. Gentleman is talking about, beef is safe to eat. The European Community's scientific advice is exactly the same, as is the advice given to the Government. Science cannot be taught, and we cannot expect it to be accepted in our schools, if local education committees refuse to accept scientific advice and proceed on an emotional basis.

Mr. Marland *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Is it about Cleveland?

Mr. Marland: It is, Mr. Speaker.

Is my right hon. Friend aware that, in seeking to reassure the schoolchildren of Cleveland and other British citizens about the purity and safety of British beef, he has been greatly frustrated in his task by a bogus professor and by Opposition Members who make completely unsubstantiated claims, unscientifically based, about the possible dangers, as they see it, of British beef?

Mr. Gummer: I think that my hon. Friend would want me to be clear that my first priority is to protect the health of the nation. I have absolutely no other priority. Great damage has been done by the creation of unnecessary anxiety. Part of that damage is that our ability to warn

people where warnings are necessary has been undermined, as we found, for example, on the contamination of seafood. Yes, we must stand firm on the fact that British beef is safe to eat for adults, children and even the most vulnerable. I hope that Cleveland will soon reverse its ban.

Dr. David Clark: Does the Minister appreciate that parents in Cleveland are often also pet owners? Does he realise that many of them, in the same way as pet owners elsewhere, are deeply concerned that four cats have been verified as having died of spongiform encephalopathy and that a further 20 are suspected of having done so? Will the Minister grapple with that problem and take decisive action by banning the use of cattle and sheep offal in all pet food?

Mr. Gummer: I think that hon. Members will agree that we are concerned about the interests of pet owners and pets. But I wonder why the hon. Gentleman has moved the question from the subject of schoolchildren in Cleveland. Is it because he does not agree with Cleveland county council's ban? The hon. Gentleman's figures are completely wrong. Twenty cats were tested and found not to have an encephalopathy. Four cats—and I announced the figures one by one, of course—were found to have one, but there is no evidence that any of them were connected with BSE.

Food Safety

3. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the National Federation of Women's Institutes to discuss food safety.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Maclean): Representatives of the National Federation of Women's Institutes were present at the first periodic meeting on 3 April 1990 between my right hon. Friend and consumer organisations. The next meeting is planned for 12 July. In addition, I had a meeting with the women's institutes on 16 January.

Mr. Jones: The Minister will shortly be receiving representations from the National Federation of Women's Institutes about the problem of bovine somatotropin, when he will be asked to use all his efforts to have the product banned in the European Community and not to grant a licence for its use. Will he take those points on board and respond to them?

Mr. Maclean: I read carefully the motion that was passed at the WI conference, and I have no hesitation in saying that there is no question of the British Government allowing any product, including BST, to be used in this country unless it fully satisfies licensing requirements. As the hon. Gentleman knows, there is currently a moratorium on BST imposed by the European Community, which we are content to go along with.

Mr. Riddick: When my hon. Friend next meets that august body of ladies, will he explain that one of the most likely consequences of the BST threat will be an increase of beef imports from countries in South America and Africa, where regulations against diseases such as foot and mouth and tuberculosis are far less stringent than here? Does not that represent the real threat to food safety in this country? Does my hon. Friend agree that Labour Front-Bench spokesmen who have done so much to stir up fears about BST ought to be thoroughly ashamed of themselves?

Mr. Maclean: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the high standard of foodstuffs in this country, especially beef. I can reassure him that we do not allow into this country any food that poses a health risk, so the concerns that he expresses about beef from other parts of the world should not materialise. He is also right to condemn the official Opposition, just as they were condemned by every party in the House when my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food delivered his statement late on Thursday 7 June, after returning from negotiations in Brussels. They were rightly condemned because they were seeking to create a new myth that, somehow or other, the British housewife is less well protected than the foreign housewife—and that is just not true.

Dr. David Clark: When the Minister meets WI representatives, will he discuss with them the authoritative study by the Audit Commission showing that almost one in eight food premises in England and Wales presented a significant or imminent health risk? Given that it has been deliberate Government policy to reduce support for environmental health officers and that we are now more than 400 officers short, will the Minister announce a reversal of that policy and an increase in the number of trained inspectors and environmental health officers?

Mr. Maclean: If the WI does not put that item on the agenda, I should certainly like to do so. I warmly welcome the Audit Commission's findings on food safety enforcement, and if environmental health officers discover in their survey a certain number of premises that do not come up to standard, they will have the Government's full backing in taking action against them. That is why the Food Safety Bill was passed in another place yesterday. It provides an extra £30 million for enforcement and gives new powers to environmental health officers to take action against the unacceptable minority. We have some of the finest food in the world here and we will not let a minority of filthy, scruffy takeaways or downmarket restaurants or shops destroy the reputation of the majority of our excellent eating establishments.

Food Exports

4. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what contribution the food industry has made to Britain's export performance in the current year.

Mr. Curry: In the year to March 1990, United Kingdom exports of food and drink amounted to nearly £5·7 billion, about 6 per cent. of the total value of our visible exports.

Mr. Taylor: My hon. Friend gives slightly more encouraging figures than has been the trend in recent years. As he is widely acknowledged as a gourmet, he will know that British raw materials for food are about the best in the world. What are the Government doing to encourage people abroad to benefit in the same way from British food? Given that the food and drink industry is the largest employer and the largest industry in the European Community, and that many of the largest companies are

multinational, we must ensure that our products are available throughout the Community on a wider basis after 1992.

Mr. Curry: I agree with my hon. Friend. As he will know, we have just appointed Mr. Paul Judge as the new chairman of Food From Britain, which is our major promotional arm, and which has been endowed with £3·5 million. The Government will contribute £1 for every £3 raised by business to promote British food. This is an important issue, and we intend to ensure that British food is widely available on the continent because of its excellence.

Dr. Godman: Fish and shellfish form part of our exports. As regards the export of farmed Scottish salmon, what action is the Minister taking to persuade the European Commission to institute anti-dumping measures against Norwegian farmed salmon producers? Was not that one of the recommendations in yesterday's Agriculture Select Committee report on "Fish Farming in the UK"? What action are the Government taking to persuade the Commission to sort out that dumping problem?

Mr. Curry: The Government have actively promoted the anti-dumping case on behalf of farmed salmon producers in the United Kingdom. I have spoken directly to the Norwegian Minister responsible for trade about the issue. I understand that in recent months there has been some relief, in the sense that the Norwegians have taken certain measures, and that prices of farmed salmon have begun to recover. This is a most important issue, and we shall continue to press the case with the Commission until we are certain that competition is fair throughout the Community.

Mr. Gregory: Will my hon. Friend hold discussions with his colleagues in the Department of Trade and Industry to ensure that the food industry has the backing of our offices abroad as far as possible, especially because of the difficulties that some food industries have encountered with counterfeiting, so that we may increase exports by the food industry and that great British companies, in particular, confectionary companies, do not continue to suffer in this way—and Kit Kat can be exported without the problem of counterfeit Kit Kit?

Mr. Curry: I shall certainly undertake to discuss that matter with my friends from the Department of Trade and Industry. My hon. Friend will know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State recently visited several countries in eastern Europe with the specific purpose of promoting, among other things, British food exports and exports of British food-producing machinery to those countries.

Scotch Whisky

5. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he plans to meet the representatives of the Scotch whisky industry; and what subjects he expects to be raised.

Mr. Curry: I shall discuss anything that the industry wants, provided that it is within my competence.

Mr. Canavan: Will the Minister discuss the concern of the Scottish Consumer Council about the introduction of the 25 ml measure to replace the existing choice of measures, normally a quarter or a fifth of a gill in Scotland and a sixth of a gill in England? As that would mean a slight increase in the normal measure served in English pubs, but a decrease of about 12 per cent. in the average measure in a Scottish pub, will the Government intervene to ensure the retention of a choice of measures, or at the very least, to ensure that the Scottish punter gets the benefit of at least a 12 per cent. cut in price for the metric short measure?

Mr. Curry: This appears to be yet another example of the Scots getting more per capita than the English. I shall certainly mention it to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland. Of course, we want to ensure that consumers throughout the United Kingdom have the benefit of the excellent product that is made in Scotland.

Mr. Bill Walker: When my hon. Friend discusses with the Scotch whisky industry its future, will he draw attention to its splendid record in the export market and to the fact that the quality of its products—worth £1,000 million of exports every year—has been protected by the Scotch Whisky Act 1988? Can my hon. Friend say what stage we have reached with the implementation of that Act and the subsequent orders?

Mr. Curry: As my hon. Friend will know, because he has taken a strong interest in the matter—indeed, he promoted the Scotch Whisky Bill—the Scotch Whisky Order 1990, which protects minimum strength and defines Scotch, was passed by the House last month, and the spirits Drinks Order, which adds the final touch to the process, is to complete its passage today. That gives the Government an excellent record in protecting and promoting Scotch whisky.

Mr. Allen: When the Minister meets representatives of the industry, will he discuss with them the difficulties of small independent brewers who, following the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report, expected—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Whisky is not brewed, is it?

Mr. Allen: The small independent brewers expected to introduce guest beers into some of the larger breweries' pubs. Will the Minister meet——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is rather wide of the question, which is about whisky, not beer. I hope that he will finish his remarks quickly.

Mr. Allen: The small independent brewers also wish to retail Scotch. Will the Minister meet his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and ensure that those small independent brewers can sell Scotch whisky and their own beers over the counter in pubs throughout the land?

Mr. Curry: The hon. Gentleman is clearly used to drinking his Scotch with a beer chaser, even if he had some difficulty in accommodating whisky in his question. I also represent a constituency that has an outstandingly small brewery, which brews the beer "Old Peculier" in particular, and I shall of course ensure that I do my best to protect the interests of the small artisanal beer producer.

Consumer Panel

6. **Mr. Morley:** to ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when his consumer panel last met; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Maclean: The last meeting of the consumer panel was on 2 May 1990. We discussed a wide range of issues, including water quality, food labelling, BSE, food irradiation and hygiene training for food handlers. A copy of the minutes of the meeting is in the Library of the House.

Mr. Morley: Does the Minister agree with the recent Consumers Association report, which says that the public are losing confidence in the Ministry's assertions about all the recent food scares? The Consumers Association says that the "bland assurances" that the public have received have failed to reassure them on a whole range of issues and that what is needed is an independent food agency. Does the Minister agree with our view that we need a food standard agency, independent of both the industry and the Government, which can give the public and the consumer the assurances that they need?

Mr. Maclean: Despite the best attempts of the official Opposition to rubbish British beef, more than 80 per cent. of our consumers are still buying it because they are content to believe the assurances of the British Government, the independent experts who advise us and the chief medical officer. The hon. Gentleman asks for a source of independent advice. What does he think the Food Advisory Committee, the Advisory Committee on Pesticides, the Veterinary Products Committee, the Tyrrell committee and the Southwood committee are there for? The hon. Gentleman asks for independent advice, but when we get such advice and act on it, the Labour party goes out and tries to rubbish the self-same advice that it claims it would like to believe.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: When my hon. Friend next meets the consumer panel, will he impress on its members the remarkable contribution that is made to our economy by the agricultural sector of the food industry? Will he express his regret that the efforts of the farmers of Britain should be undermined and maligned at every possible opportunity by the Opposition, when they should be praised for their productivity, dedication and effectiveness?

Mr. Maclean: I think that the official Opposition will regret some of the wilder statements that they have made about British beef and other food issues in the past few months. British consumers realise, as my right hon. Friend said on the day when he was made Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, that farmers' interests and consumers' interests are one. If the consumer is satisfied with the quality of our food, that is in the interests of our farmers who produce such excellent food.

Mr. Geraint Howells: After months of adverse publicity, does the Minister agree that it would be advantageous for consumers and producers in Britain if hon. Members or official agriculture spokesmen from every political party in the House were to issue a joint statement saying that British beef and British foodstuffs are healthier than any others in the world?

Mr. Maclean: I wholeheartedly endorse what the hon. Gentleman has said. It is notable that throughout this issue he has followed the scientific advice and accepted the facts as given to him and he has been supported by the Welsh nationalists, by the various Irish parties and by all other parties present in the House late on Thursday 7 June. The hon. Gentleman's remarks are very welcome and I support his initiative.

Food Research

7. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much he plans to spend from his Department's funds on food research in the current year.

Mr. Gummer: My Department plans to spend more than £20 million on food research in 1990-91, of which more than £15 million is earmarked for safety, hygiene, applied nutrition and consumer protection.

Mr Arnold: Can my right hon. Friend assure the House that that considerable sum is being invested in food research which responds to public concern about food safety and which also highlights the high standards of our food processors and packagers? Will he give examples of the different forms of research being carried out?

Mr. Gummer: As we are concerned with more than 800 different projects at the moment, my hon. Friend will understand if I do not go through them all in detail. We are trying not only to respond to the public disquiet about this and that, but to ensure that there is no public disquiet about things which might arise. When I visited the food research laboratories in Norwich recently, I was interested to see a wide range of research, all of which will help to ensure that British food continues to be the safest in the world.

Mr. Ron Brown: Is the Minister aware that on the east coast, and especially on the east coast of Scotland, sprats are caught by Scandinavian fishermen, taken to Scandinavia for canning and brought back here labelled as sardines? Surely the British consumer has the right to know what the product is and where it comes from. Will the Minister have a word with his counterparts in the Scandinavian countries to ensure that at least the labelling is correct so that consumers know what they are buying?

Mr. Gummer: I am not sure that in this case the labelling would have a direct effect on the safety of the sprats or sardines when eaten, but if there is a problem in terms of misleading the consumer I shall be happy to take it up at once because it is a fundamental principle of the Ministry that we ensure that the consumer has full information so that he can make his own decisions and not have them forced on him by others who think that they know best.

Mrs. Peacock: Will my right hon. Friend tell the House and many worried people in Britain whether any of the money that he proposes to spend will go to Professor Lacey and his research?

Mr. Gummer: When we choose the recipients of money for research, we do so on the advice of their peers—their scientific equals. One of the difficulties with some people who seek to do research is that they are not over-eager to provide information about their research to their scientific equals or to the committees set up to judge them.

Live Exports

9. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the animal welfare implications of the trade in live exports.

Mr. Gummer: There are detailed controls to ensure that animals leave this country rested, fed and watered, and inspected. We shall seek to maintain proper welfare safeguards under the proposed Community measures on transport of animals.

Mr. Taylor: I am sure that the Secretary of State is aware that there is a lobby today on this issue and that there is great concern that the new EC rules will remove measures that the House has seen fit to pass to protect animals being transported in terms of where they go and the conditions in which they are transported. Horses are not exported live at present, but they could be in the future.

Will the Secretary of State take every possible step and fight every inch of the way to defend the existing Government protections which apply to animals in Britain and which far exceed the protections in other parts of the EC? If necessary, will he invoke article 36 which allows us to prevent free trade on issues of public morality so that we can protect those animals?

Mr. Gummer: I have already said, some months ago, that I want to increase European Community standards on animal welfare across the board. I notice that today's lobby is led by Compassion in World Farming. I cannot manage matters outside the Community, but we have to solve the problem of animal welfare not only in Britain but throughout the Community. Some of the proposals that have been put forward could harm the welfare of animals in the rest of Europe by raising standards here but not throughout Europe. It is a European matter and I am determined to take the lead in that regard.

The Government will fight all the way along the line for the present system of minimum value for the export of live horses. Other animals are subject to EC rules, so those rules must be of the highest standard. There is no possibility of using article 36. I am advised quite clearly that it would not apply.

Dame Janet Fookes: I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement about the export of horses, but can I persuade him to accept the view of the British Veterinary Association that animals should be slaughtered as close to the point of production as possible? Will he seek to put that view to his allies in the European Community?

Mr. Gummer: Our purpose is to raise standards throughout the European Community. The problem with the transport of live animals is that many other countries in the European Community do not share the view of the British Veterinary Association. My job is to get the best answer that we can and then to improve on it. My hon. Friend has my wholehearted support in her efforts to bring pressure on my allies in the European Community. On the matter of animal welfare, the number of my allies could do with some augmentation.

Mr. Tony Banks: I appreciate that the Secretary of State is a voracious carnivore and likely to eat anything with legs other than a table, but is he aware that, despite his assurances to the House, a great deal of suffering is still caused to animals moved out of Britain for slaughter? Would not it be better, and meet the demands of the great majority of people in Britain, if no live animals were allowed to leave our shores for slaughter on the continent?

Mr. Gummer: The fact is that that would be illegal, and this country stands by the law. Under European Community regulations, there has to be the movement of live animals. My job is to improve those regulations. The hon. Gentleman blames the European Community, but at least in the European Community we have a chance to raise standards for all animals in Europe, or perhaps the hon. Gentleman takes such an insular view that he cares only about British animals.

Sir Richard Body: Does my right hon. Friend agree that since, on grounds of animal welfare, we ended the system of rearing calves in veal crates, there has been a massive increase in the number of calves exported to France, Belgium and the Netherlands? About 1,000 calves per day are now exported to those countries. What proportion of those calves does my right hon. Friend believe are being reared in the very crates that we sought to abolish in Britain?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend puts his finger exactly on the point. If we do not raise standards throughout Europe, we shall make changes at home, for estimable reasons, only to find that the situation is worse in the rest of the continent. For that reason, three days ago I took the lead in the European Community Council to press for higher standards which would eliminate the very practices to which my hon. Friend refers. We now have a new programme which will make major changes in the rearing of calves and also the way in which pigs are cared for. I hope that that will be a further earnest of our determination to improve animal welfare throughout the Community.

Toxic Algae

10. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether his Department has carried out research into links between the recent toxic algae outbreak on the east coast and pollution.

Mr. Curry: The evidence is that blooms of toxic algae are naturally occurring and are triggered primarily by combinations of calm water and good sunlight.

Mr. Morgan: I accept the Minister's answer, but does he agree that the emergence of a 300-mile toxic algal scum slick shows that using the North sea as an international flush lavatory is not doing the quality of the water any good? Does he further agree that we need an international agreement to stop these long sea outfalls? In the light of the comments made yesterday by the Minister of Sport about the effluent tendency, does he agree that the main body of people in this country with a tendency towards effluent are Ministers?

Mr. Curry: The hon. Gentleman is getting his science mixed up. There is no link between the production of these blooms and pollution. They were first noticed in 1814, which was mainly a pre-industrial society. The most recent manifestation was on the west coast of Scotland. It is difficult to get further than that from population centres or intensive agriculture. That supports the evidence that it is

naturally occurring. In only five years since 1968 has some warning not had to be posted, so the relationship between that phenomenon and what the hon. Gentleman is suggesting is impossible to prove.

Sir Hugh Rossi: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Ministry must accept that there is a nexus between nutrients and growth? Does he agree that nitrates and phosphates are fed on greedily by algae? Although they must have benign warm conditions in which to flourish, if their source of food were reduced or cut off they would not grow to the extent that they are growing at present.

Mr. Curry: My hon. Friend is perfectly correct, but nitrates and phosphates occur naturally in the water, as they did at the beginning of the 19th century when the phenomenon was first noticed. There is no link between the discharge of sewage into the North sea, which we have undertaken to stop, and these blooms.

Mr. Morley: The House cannot accept that at all. We know very well that phosphates increase algal bloom. I urge the Minister to listen carefully to the comments of the Chairman of the Select Committee on the Environment. Will he confirm that the Ministry's scientists have said that one of the reasons why the outbreak was so long and intense was that there was a constant source of nutrients in the sea off the east coast, the main source of which is raw sewage dumping and raw sewage outfalls?

Mr. Curry: That is simply not the case. The blooms appeared because currents brought the seeds to the surface, where they were in warm water and sunlight. That has occurred around Britain's coast, most recently in the west of Scotland, where there are no population centres or major intensive farming which would supplement the water with nutrients, so the link simply has not been established.

Sausages

11. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what effect the EEC directive on minced meat will have on the future of the British sausage.

Mr. Maclean: The Government will fight to ensure that future Community measures will have no adverse effect on the British sausage.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: Does my hon. Friend agree that, as currently drafted, the EC proposals endanger the future of the British sausage after 1990? Does he agree that it is a safe, succulent, satisfying snack and with mash it is almost superlative? The British public enjoy £500 million worth of sausages each year. The proposals will do nothing to improve food hygiene and are likely to increase the cost of this most estimable product to the British consumer. If we have no objection to other countries' salami and bratwurst, why can they not leave our toad in the hole alone?

Mr. Maclean: My hon. Friend has made a number of valid points. Many of us in the House have moved straight from the baby's bottle to the British banger. The proposed draft directives will have no effect on hygiene requirements for the existing British sausage. People in the House and outside who want to eat raw minced beef or steak tartare can choose to do so, but the millions of people in Britain who want to eat cooked British sausages do not need unnecessary EC rules.

Mr. Wigley: Does the Minister accept that the logic of the rules may not be to improve hygiene, but to achieve unfair competition and commercial advantage at the expense of manufacturers in this country, which could lead to the loss of valuable jobs in many areas, including my constituency? Will the Minister ensure that he stands up and fights for the future of those jobs?

Mr. Maclean: I will certainly do that. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will take to task the Opposition agriculture spokesman who said that he would refuse to eat British beef sausages, when there is absolutely nothing wrong with them. We all understand the necessity for tougher rules on minced beef which might be eaten raw, but there is no need for the rules about cooked sausages.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 June.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today, including one with the Governor of Hong Kong.

Mr. Couchman: Does my right hon. Friend agree that properly enforced tough controls on dangerous dogs and their owners offer far greater security and reassurance to the public, and particularly to children, than a bureaucratic dog registration scheme of the kind currently obsessing the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the upshot of which would be that responsible owners would register and irresponsible owners would not?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend. It is not the identification of the owner which has been the problem, but to make certain that owners control their dogs properly. Yesterday further significant proposals were announced to toughen the law. Our proposals will strengthen the powers for dangerous dogs to be seized and, if necessary, destroyed. They will create new powers to allow courts to have dogs muzzled. We are also looking at the possibility of banning certain dog breeds all together.

Mr. Kinnock: Since the Prime Minister has publicly admitted that she was, in her own words,

"aware of the . . . terms and conditions of the arrangements reached with British Aerospace"

in relation to the sale of Rover, will she confirm that her knowledge of those arrangements included details of the £44 million sweeteners of which Parliament was never to be told?

The Prime Minister: As I indicated on 14 December 1989

"I was kept aware throughout of the progress of the negotiations with British Aerospace and . . . of the basic terms and conditions of the agreements reached".—[*Official Report*, 14 December 1989; Vol. 163, c. 770.]

Our priority at the time was to safeguard the interests of the company, the employees and the taxpayer. That objective was secured and billions of pounds of future state aids and taxpayers' money was thus saved.

Mr. Kinnock: On 30 November last year I asked the Prime Minister twice if she knew of all the arrangements about the sweeteners. She dodged the question then, and she is trying to dodge it now. Will she give a straight answer to a straight question? When she says that she knew of the arrangements, did her knowledge include, or did it not include, knowledge of the sweeteners of which this Parliament, the European Community and the British people were never to be told?

The Prime Minister *rose*——

Hon. Members: Yes or no?

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: I answered the question on 14 December 1989. I was kept aware throughout of the progress of the negotiations at British Aerospace under the basic terms and conditions of the agreements reached. [HON. MEMBERS: "Yes or no?"] Our main objective was to secure the privatisation of this company which was utterly bankrupt and broke and on which the taxpayers—[HON. MEMBERS: "Yes or no?"]—had already spent £3·5 billion in aids and a further £1·6 billion in contingent liabilities. We successfully privatised the company and it is profitable, but that means nothing to the right hon. Gentleman. [HON. MEMBERS: "Yes or no?"] The right hon. Gentleman would probably have preferred to have the company nationalised so that taxpayers could continue to be fleeced.

Mr. Kinnock: What does mean something to me, and should mean something to the Prime Minister, is the integrity of the right hon. Lady herself. Did she know, or did she not know, that £44 million of illegal sweeteners was part of the deal?

Hon. Members: Answer!

The Prime Minister: I answered the hon. Gentleman in the reply that I gave on 14 December 1989. May I say how very much the Opposition have changed their tune—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister has been asked a series of questions and she wishes to reply.

The Prime Minister: The Opposition have changed their tune from the line which they took on 14 July 1988 when——

Hon. Members: Yes or no?

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is intolerable that when the Prime Minister has been asked a qustion she is not given an opportunity to reply. [HON. MEMBERS: "She will not answer."] Order. I call the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: On 14 July 1988 my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, as he then was, informed the House of the results of the negotiations and what had taken place. The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), replying to my right hon. and learned Friend——

Hon. Members: Answer—yes or no?

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Allen: She has had three chances.

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is the House of Commons and we listen to the answers given to questions.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Member for Dagenham, replying to my right hon. and learned Friend and referring to my right hon. and learned Friend's latest visit to the Commission as going cap in hand to Brussels to beg for concessions said, if the House is quiet enough or interested enough to hear——

Mr. Allen *rose*——

The Prime Minister: The hon. Member for Dagenham said——

Mr. Allen: She has taken seven minutes.

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman continues to shout, of course it will take time.

The Prime Minister: When my right hon. and learned Friend the then Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster was announcing the result, the hon. Member for Dagenham said of the Commission:

> "How is it that an unelected official can tell the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry that his terms are non-negotiable?"—[*Official Report*, 14 July 1988; Vol. 137, c. 613.]

That is what the hon. Gentleman said, but the Opposition have changed their tune.

Mr. Jessel: On the occasion of the most welcome visit of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association delegates from India, led by the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, will my right hon. Friend confirm the Government's policy as being to continue to uphold Britain's excellent relations with India?

The Prime Minister: Yes. I was not aware of that visit, but we have excellent relations with India. We give it priority with our aid, and have recently agreed to help it each year to enable it to keep its rain forests.

Mr. Ashdown: Now that we know that nuclear power is twice as expensive for the consumer as any other form of power, and that it is less cost effective than energy conservation in protecting the environment, why does the Prime Minister insist that every electricity consumer should pay a special nuclear tax amounting to £25 on the average electricity bill to meet the cost of her obsession and her Government's bungling over nuclear power? Have not Sizewell B and the right hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Parkinson) already cost the nation too much, and should not the right hon. Lady pull the plug on both of them?

The Prime Minister: I will take the question on Sizewell B first. Sizewell B will cost more than originally expected because the original order was for four nuclear power stations of a particular design. However, now that only one is definitely to be built—Sizewell B—all the original design and development costs will have to be added to the cost of that one station, instead of being spread over four. It is not unusual for the costs to increase. If we had four nuclear power stations, the cost of Sizewell B would not be great.

In the right hon. Gentleman's second question, he said that nuclear power cost more. We know the costs for the disposal of the fission products of nuclear power. When

that is compared with the cost of obtaining electricity from coal or oil, the problem is that we do not know the costs of dumping carbon dioxide in outer space, which could be much worse in the long run than those of nuclear power. The right hon. Gentleman may remember that France has a good record on reducing carbon dioxide emissions because the majority of her electricity is generated from nuclear power.

Lebanon

Q2. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Prime Minister whether she will make a statement on diplomatic contacts designed to achieve the release of British citizens held captive by Iranian-backed terrorist groups in Lebanon.

The Prime Minister: The plight of the British citizens held hostage is constantly in the minds of all of us. We have raised the matter with a wide range of Governments and organisations which might have influence on the hostage holders. We shall continue to use every contact and follow up every lead that we believe might bring results.

Mr. Latham: Will my right hon. Friend press the Iranian Government to abide by normal decent standards of international behaviour and bring about the release of those entirely innocent people in Lebanon forthwith? Will she also press that Government to do something about the absolutely abominable human rights situation in Iran?

The Prime Minister: Our position on hostages is well known. We take precisely the view that my hon. Friend has just expressed. Any nation that has any information, or any influence on those who are holding hostages, should do all in its power to secure their release, as that is the only norm of civilised behaviour. We ask Iran to do that as well. My hon. Friend knows that our ambassador in Lebanon is actively following up every lead.

With regard to human rights in Iran, we welcome the decision by the Iranian Government to invite the United Nations special representative on human rights to pay a second visit to Iran. We hope that he will be given full facilities to investigate thoroughly all aspects of human rights there, and any breaches of those rights by the Iranian Government.

Mr. Brazier *rose—[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I believe that the hon. Gentleman has recently returned from the Lebanon.

Mr. Brazier: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, while we must have the greatest sympathy for the hostages and their families, we must never do anything to undermine her strong stand against international terrorism? We must remember at all times that these groups are backed on the one hand by Iranians who have condemned a British citizen to death and on the other by the Syrians who continue to shelter the principal suspects of the Lockerbie bombing.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. As he knows, we broke off diplomatic relations with Syria because of its part in helping to place the bomb on the El Al aircraft. Diplomatic relations could not possibly continue in those circumstances. We do not think it right to restore those diplomatic relations yet, but we plead with Iran and Syria to do all in their power in the modern world to secure the release of hostages. That is the only way for civilised nations, which expect to be welcomed into diplomatic international circles, to behave.

Engagements

Q3. **Mr. Marland:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Marland: As my right hon. Friend knows, Gloucestershire county council is run by the soggy hand of the Liberal Alliance and has spent millions of pounds over an already excessive budget, which is causing great anxiety to many of my constituents. In her review of the working of the community charge, will my right hon. Friend seek to ensure that some mechanism is introduced to curb such profligacy?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is quite right about Gloucestershire. This year it has increased its expenditure by twice the rate of inflation. In our review of the community charge we are certainly bearing in mind that chargepayers want to be protected against the excessive spending of such councils. We shall bring forward proposals before the House rises.

Q4. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Haynes *rose——*

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Haynes *rose—[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us give the hon. Gentleman a fair chance.

Mr. Haynes: Mr. Speaker, Sir. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear"] Is the Prime Minister aware that the crime figures presented today are appalling? Is she also aware that the morale of the police force in the various constabularies across the country is at its lowest ebb? Is she also aware of the fiddle that has been going on about Aerospace? How does she expect British citizens to behave themselves when the Government go on like that? Is she aware that the Government sanction——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the House has now been made aware of two questions—that is enough.

The Prime Minister: In so far as I was able to hear the hon. Gentleman, yes, the crime figures out today are extremely disappointing, although we must remember that violent crime in this country occurs on a very much lesser scale than in some other countries. The overall figures show that 25 per cent. of all crime is car related, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary intends to have talks with car producers to see if we can reduce that figure.

I do not accept that the morale of the police is low. They have had a very good deal on pay—so good that everyone else wants to emulate them—and they have had full support from the Government in their most important work.

With regard to British Aerospace as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry explained in his statement on 30 November 1989, the relative items of which the hon. Gentleman was speaking were included

"in the estimates and reports to Parliament. Full details were made available to the Comptroller and Auditor General"—[*Official Report*, 30 November 1989; Vol. 162, c. 859.]

Finally may I point out what the Commission says in its report——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Did you know?

The Prime Minister: The Commission said that the price of £150 million represented a reasonable purchase price, given all of the circumstances of the sale.

Mr. Haynes: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I want to make it clear to you——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will take points of order later.

European Council (Dublin)

3.35 pm

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I will make a statement on the European Council in Dublin on 25-26 June, which I attended with my right hon. Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary.

The text of the Council's conclusions have been placed in the Library of the House. I will go through the main points in order.

Completion of the single market represents the biggest and most far-reaching change under way in western Europe. Useful progress has been made under the Irish presidency in the transport and energy sectors, on public procurement and on company taxation. In Dublin, we set priorities for the next six months. They include items of particular importance for the United Kingdom; financial services, insurance, further liberalisation of transport and public procurement.

But it is not just a matter of taking decisions. They need to be implemented. The Commission circulated to the Council a chart showing Britain right at the forefront of member states when it comes to implementation. It will in future make regular reports to the European Council on this.

The members of the Council also called on Germany to reconsider its discriminatory tax on lorries, about which the Commission is taking the German Government to the European Court.

The Council continued its discussion on political union. It was agreed that an intergovernmental conference will begin in December. Our determination to see national institutions and national identities fully respected is clearly understood and increasingly shared. The debate is more and more about how to make existing Community institutions more effective. We shall continue to argue that the Community should be involved only where particular objectives cannot be achieved by national action.

In that context, I drew attention to the unnecessary, indeed harmful, proposals put forward by the Commission on part-time and temporary work. If implemented, they would only lead to loss of jobs.

We had a brief discussion on economic and monetary union. We confirmed that an intergovernmental conference on that will begin in December, in parallel with the conference on political union. I commended the excellent proposals put forward by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. We shall ensure that they are fully considered before, and at, the intergovernmental conference. I reminded my colleagues of the strong opposition expressed by this House to economic and monetary union on the basis proposed in the Delors report.

The Council agreed a useful declaration on the environment, and further steps to combat drug addiction and trafficking. Our proposals for a European drugs intelligence unit and for a conference of eastern and western European countries on drugs issues were endorsed.

The Council underlined the very great importance which the Community attaches to a successful outcome to the Uruguay round of the trade negotiations and our intention to make a full contribution to that. That will be discussed further at the economic summit in Houston.

We had a thorough discussion on assistance to the Soviet Union. Britain has constantly been at the forefront in supporting Mr. Gorbachev and his policies of greater democracy and reform. We are very ready to consider various forms of assistance, provided it is clearly linked to economic restructuring, so that we know it will actually be effective. The Council agreed that a thorough analysis should be undertaken of the size of the problem and how the Community and other western countries can help. This will be conducted by the Commission, together with experts from the new European bank for reconstruction and development, the World bank and the IMF, the OECD and others. When that is complete, we can see what needs to be done, and then we can take decisions.

Foreign Ministers discussed a number of foreign policy issues and agreed statements dealing with the middle east, South Africa, Cyprus, nuclear non-proliferation, anti-semitism and the Iranian earthquake.

The Council called on all parties in South Africa to refrain from violence and advocacy of violence, which of course covers the ANC's continued support for armed struggle, of which we strongly disapprove. The principle of a gradual relaxation of sanctions, for which we have been pressing for months, was accepted and is reflected in the statement. But the Council was unable to agree to make a start now. We shall look at this again under the Italian presidency, in the light of further progress in South Africa. In practice, several countries have already begun to lift various measures. I am sure that that will continue.

Finally, the Council agreed a statement utterly condemning terrorism and expressing sympathy for the victims of the terrorist bombing of the Carlton club. I am sure that the House will be grateful for the sympathy and support shown by our partners.

It was a useful Council—no dramatic decisions, but steady progress in several important areas. That is how it should be.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): I welcome the statements made by the Council of Ministers on the environment, terrorism, drugs and organised crime, and nuclear non-proliferation. The whole House will particularly share the revulsion expressed by the Heads of Government at recent manifestations of anti-semitism and racism. All in this Parliament will agree that the crimes of desecration and race hatred deserve strong condemnation and severe punishment.

All Opposition Members welcome the Council's further unanimous endorsement of the social charter. We all support the extension of the mandate of Mr. Delors as President of the Commission and we all derive satisfaction from the fact that it was our Prime Minister who seconded the nomination of notre frère Jacques.

We welcome the decision of the meeting to provide both short-term credits and long-term support for structural reform in the Soviet Union, and we congratulate the Prime Minister on reversing her short-sighted attitudes on that matter.

Will the Prime Minister take this opportunity to state exactly where her Government stand on European monetary union? Is she aware that last Tuesday the deputy Prime Minister described the Chancellor's proposals for a hard ecu as being "perfectly capable" of leading to a single European currency? The Governor of the Bank of England has described the Chancellor's proposals as a "very useful step" to a single European currency. The

[Mr. Neil Kinnock]

Chancellor and the Foreign Secretary obviously feel the same. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister says that it must not come in her lifetime and yet, on Tuesday in Dublin, she signed up to specific commitments in a specific timetable. How long does the Prime Minister hope to keep up this two-faced performance, especially when it confuses her hon. Friends and does not even impress the neighbours?

In Dublin, the Council of Ministers, in the words of the communiqué,

"agreed to intensify the process . . . of European Union"

in economic, monetary and political terms, and to secure

"ratification by the end of 1992."

The Prime Minister signed up for all of that, but still she says it is others who are coming into step with us. Is the Prime Minister really trying to tell us that all along she has secretly been in favour of integration on that scale, or is the truth that at last the modern realities of the Community are beginning to impress themselves, even on the lady of Bruges?

Does the Prime Minister accept that it is obvious that, in this European Community of nations, distinctions of national identity and national institutions are of great and enduring value? Does she also realise that the influence of Britain is not advanced, and its interests are not served, by her tinpot, tin drum nationalism?

The Prime Minister: I shall try to answer some of the points raised by the right hon. Gentleman. I noticed what he said about the programme for social action. From what he said, it seems that he thinks it is quite right that the Commission should interfere with rules related to part-time work and overnight work in the United Kingdom, and that he would give the Commission that and such other piffling little powers in the name of subsidiarity. It is for us to decide those things. They come under the doctrine of subsidiarity, which the Commission is always talking about and never honouring.

With regard to giving help to the USSR, I remind the right hon. Gentleman, as I reminded colleagues at Dublin, that there is already in this country a line of credit of £800 million under the Export Credits Guarantee Department which has not yet been drawn upon. Therefore, we do not need any lectures from anyone about making loans available to the Soviet Union. I think that the Soviets are wise to consider before drawing them down. They know full well that what they spend the money on needs to have an effect on their whole future and their capital future. If they spent the money on consumer goods, it would tie a great big debt around their neck and not do them any long-term good. On this matter they are rather wiser than the right hon. Gentleman.

The right hon. Gentleman asked about the single currency. He should read paragraph 26 of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's speech. *[Interruption.]* I am about to read it out. Speaking about his proposals, my right hon. Friend said:

> "They are practical, they are progressive, they offer choice, not prescription. They evolve naturally from stage 1 and have the potential to evolve further. In time the ecu would be more widely used. It would become a common currency for Europe. In the very long term, if peoples and governments so choose it could develop into a single currency, but that is a decision we should not take now for we cannot yet foresee what the size and circumstances of the new Europe would be."

I do not think that it could develop into a single currency without altering the European monetary fund, which my right hon. Friend also described in detail in his speech.

The right hon. Gentleman then suggested that we had signed up for something merely because we signed a procedural motion at an intergovernmental conference. Perhaps he does not realise that that decision can be taken by a plain, straightforward, simple majority, but that any conclusions reached by the conference must be straightforward unanimity. There is no possibility of not having one because the majority wanted one. We shall reserve our detailed arguments for the intergovernmental conference.

The right hon. Gentleman says that we signed up to economic and monetary union. We signed up to that before we joined, because it was part of the terms agreed in 1972 before we joined the Community, and it was still incorporated in those terms after the Prime Minister at the time, now the noble Lord Callaghan of Cardiff, had completed his renegotiation.

Several Hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Speaker: Order. As the House is aware, there is a business statement after this and also a statement on British Aerospace. We then have a debate on the scrutiny of European legislation for which the House has been waiting for a long time. I propose to allow questions to the Prime Minister to continue until 4.20, and then we must move to the other statements.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that she will not be deterred from her thoroughly sensible proposals for a common currency for Europe and a European monetary fund? They hold out far more promise for the future than a single centralised European bank which would be impossible to operate in the European monetary system. In view of the likely failure of the Uruguay round, can my right hon. Friend say whether there were any firm proposals at Dublin for developing an alternative world trade organisation or expanding the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development into an Atlantic-wide free trade and investment area?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. I agree that the proposals that have been put forward by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer are substantial and right, in that they still leave choice in people's hands as to whether they should go for a common currency or continue to deal only in their own. Those proposals are much more substantial than stage 2 of Delors and quite different.

Many people would have difficulty with locked currencies, as we all had difficulty with Bretton Woods, and many would have difficulty going to Delors stage 3. Not only this Parliament but others could not do it without enormous subventions from other members of the Community. We would not be prepared to do that. The Chancellor's proposal is much more substantial than the present stage 2, and we say that it is the next stage on which everyone could agree. It is not for us to say what may happen in 10 or 20 years because we do not know the circumstances that will pertain then. It would be an effective second stage.

My right hon. Friend mentioned the Uruguay round. As he knows, the agriculture problems present difficulties. Some other Members of the Community are much more

rigid on those than we would be, and we have made proposals for determining the different level of subsidy in the United States, the Community and Japan through some kind of producer subsidy equivalent. I agree that that will be the most difficult part of the Uruguay round. There is a tendency in some respects for members of the Community to be more protectionist than we are—for example, Germany, with its stance on lorries and its discriminatory taxes. We have not prepared an alternative mode of negotiation. We must strain to make the Uruguay round successful and to increase world trade.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I listened carefully to the Prime Minister's answer a moment ago on economic and monetary union. We all know that the Chancellor of the Exchequer said that his system left open the option of moving towards a single European currency, but that runs counter to the implication of the Prime Minister's comments after the Dublin summit and to her specific answer to my question last week. Therefore, will she how answer unequivocally the question which she has so far dodged: will Britain join a single European currency under her leadership—yes, no or maybe?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman cannot have listened to the paragraph of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's speech that I read out, which says clearly that that is not a decision that we should take now. It could not have come from the structure of the European monetary fund set out in my right hon. Friend's speech. If the right hon. Gentleman has read that, he will know full well that the ecu would be issued as a currency only against other currencies placed with that board. That would ensure that it was non-inflationary. It could not be done under that structure. Why do we not get on with things on which we can all agree? It would give those who wish to use a common currency the right to do so. Why does the right hon. Gentleman arrogate to himself decisions that are for future generations in the House to take?

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): I thank my right hon. Friend for her statement today and for her robust and strong position at the Dublin summit which not only represented and safeguarded Britain's genuine interests but took us further along the road to European monetary union and the formation of political union in whatever form the member states may decide. Does she agree that it is highly likely that the market place pressures will, in reality, produce a common and/or single currency in due course because the market pressures will be great both from institutions and companies, and from consumers, as the ecu develops?

The Prime Minister: Our proposals would lead to a common currency which people could choose to use more or less as they wished, or they could continue to use their own currency. I do not believe that that formula could develop into a single currency. The Delors formula for a single currency involves a board of 12 bank governors with powers over monetary policy and some powers over budgetary policy. Once we surrendered all our powers over monetary and budgetary policy, we would not have a great deal of sovereignty left, and I do not believe that that would be acceptable to the House. Those who advocate a single currency would do well to remember that, because they would be voting to diminish fundamentally the powers of the House—powers which it is for us to uphold.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): What did the discussion on international terrorism add up to in practice? Did it deal with the vexed problem of extradition?

The Prime Minister: We did not go further on extradition. As I think the right hon. Gentleman will be aware, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Ireland are studying the cases of extradition which have been heard recently to see whether they add up to what we thought the law on extradition meant. There was some discussion during one meal and particularly at a press conference. It is important that we have extradition so that people can stand trial in the country where the crime was committed. Just as it is important that no one who is innocent should be found guilty, it is equally important that those who are guilty should be found guilty, properly and duly in the courts of law.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): My right hon. Friend is to be congratulated on the immense progress that she has made in continuing to stand up for democracy and accountability, not only in this Parliament but in Europe. The simple questions that arise are: who is to control our economy, and are we to retain the authority of the House on vital public expenditure and taxation matters? Will she accept the congratulations of Conservative Members on her achievement in maintaining the authority of this place?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that the argument about accountability makes more and more headway every time that we raise it. Many people are very concerned that the Delors stages 2 and 3 do not properly address that question. As others look more carefully into stages 2 and 3, they have very different objectives from that of the deutschmark. It is clear that the objective of some of them is not to maintain the value of the currency and protect it from inflation but to put growth before that, which could possibly undermine the value of a currency. Those differences are coming out more and more. I described what my hon. Friend put forward. The rest of our colleagues were very interested, and I believe that his proposal will be studied very carefully.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): In a previous answer the Prime Minister said that she believes that the commitment to economic and monetary union stems from 1972. Does she agree that the then Government took us into the EEC without public mandate, and that she headed a Government who, without public mandate, signed the Single European Act, which for the first time made it possible for the laws of this country to be determined against the wishes of the public, Parliament or the Government? As to political union, has not the Prime Minister now agreed to what she calls a procedural motion without resolution of the House? How does she reconcile such conduct with the defence of the British constitution and parliamentary democracy in the United Kingdom?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the Single European Act extended the qualified majority—it did not invent it—for the purpose of achieving the internal market under article 100A, and specifically delineated areas that would still require unanimous voting. We feel sometimes that those areas are being undermined by

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decisions of the Commission. I do not believe that they have yet been to the courts. It is vital that, in the areas where the unanimous vote is retained, it is clearly upheld.

As for economic and monetary union, it was referred to —as the hon. Gentleman knows that it was in 1972—in the preamble to the Single European Act. In one of the crossheadings, it was defined as economic and monetary co-operation. That is still how I prefer to define it. I believe that that is the right definition.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): What are the prospects of convincing our European partners that, if we are to help eastern Europe to create a free market economy, it is better to encourage the private sector to invest in eastern Europe rather than squander taxpayers' money on centralist schemes of dubious economic benefit?

The Prime Minister: I wholly agree with my hon. Friend. It is much better for the private sector to invest. It would send in good management to show how the private sector operates, which is very much needed. All the people from eastern Europe who come to see us—yesterday I saw Mr. de Maizire from East Germany, and we have also had visitors from Hungary and Czechoslovakia—are anxious to pursue privatisation. They know full well that it will produce a much more prosperous standard of living for their people than the totally centrally controlled nationalisation under which they have lived to this day.

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): The Prime Minister confirmed in her statement that she has committed the Government to intergovernmental conferences in December on economic, monetary and political union. Will the Prime Minister confirm that she has committed herself to a process that will inevitably lead to a federal Europe, a single currency and a central bank, and to the eventual diminution of the sovereignty of this nation? If she accepts that, would it not be better to tell the British public the truth now rather than to disguise it until after the next general election?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is giving a false impression. At any time in one of the main councils of the Community, a vote could be put to the 12 present on whether there should be an intergovernmental conference. That vote is decided by a simple majority: seven votes to five would get an intergovernmental conference. That is normal procedure. It was quite clear that there were few people around the table against an intergovernmental conference, and there is no reason why we should not be prepared to go into one about political union, because we have many proposals to put forward about the Commission's accountability for the moneys that it uses, and many other proposals to make the Commission and the other institutions work much better. We wanted a conference so that we could put our proposals forward.

It has been made clear at all times that this House would not accept a single European currency on the Delors plan because that would mean yielding up monetary and fiscal sovereignty; so we would not agree to Delors stage 3, and we have not agreed to stage 2. We were in favour of Delors stage 1, because we were already set on that course before he came out with stages 2 and 3.

Mr. Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge): Have discussions been held about the location of the European environmental agency? Is my right hon. Friend aware that I am enthusiastic that it should be in Cambridge, which is a suitable place, and I hope that the Government are pressing for that.

The Prime Minister: There were discussions about the sites of European institutions. As my hon. Friend is aware, whenever we discuss that, the question whether the Parliament should continue to meet in Strasbourg, Brussels and Luxembourg comes up. Those are some of the liveliest debates that we ever have in the Community. Countries which have institutions within their borders wish to keep precisely what they have and do not want change. Unless they are assured of that, they will not agree about where the environmental institution and the trade-mark centre should go. So we got no further. That has happened several times. The matter has been put to the next presidency—which will be Italian. Having got the European bank for reconstruction and development, there is no possibility of our getting the centre for environmental studies.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): Is it not clear, whatever else happened in Dublin, that the Prime Minister has not been able to stem, let alone halt, the Gadarene rush towards economic, monetary and political union in Europe; and that once the intergovernmental conferences take place there is a great danger that this country will be sucked into major decisions against our interests and, as I understand it, against the wishes of the Prime Minister? As we will probably stand alone and say that we disagree with the rest of the EC at the end of that process, will she now make clear to the country—this terribly ill-informed country, with ill-informed media—the dangers and difficulties to the British economy, to jobs and industry and to the Westminster Parliament of being locked into permanently fixed exchange rates in the sort of system that Delors has wished upon us?

The Prime Minister: I must congratulate the right hon. Gentleman; he is beginning to sound more and more like me. I have made that speech several times, and consistently. I am against locked currencies. We have lived with locked currencies and they collapsed. I am against a single currency, and I do not believe that we shall be sucked in—for one good reason: if we were to come to this Parliament with a single currency which deprived the House of its customary authority, I do not believe that it would go through the House. I thoroughly agree with the right hon. Gentleman and with his conclusion.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Did the Prime Minister have the opportunity to raise the question of interim relief, decided by the European Court this week? Has not that matter taken on a new urgency in view of the information from the Home Office this morning that the agents for the German state lottery are taking action in the United Kingdom courts in relation to the fact that the distribution of German lottery tickets, is in contravention of the European Court under the Lotteries and Amusements Act 1976? Would it not be a bit ridiculous if people in Britain were forced to subsidise the German health service by buying German lottery tickets, when lottery tickets are illegal under a law passed unanimously by the House?

The Prime Minister: We did not raise that particular matter. As my hon. Friend knows, we have dealt with it at Question Time, pointing out that our courts had been given the power to override our law in favour of Community law, although to what extent they did so was still a matter for the decision of our courts. We did not go into the matter further at the Council. I understand that the matter that my hon. Friend has raised is at present before the courts, and they will therefore decide it in the first instance.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): On the declaration on the middle east, the whole House will welcome the Government's affirmation of the untenability of the status quo in the occupied territories and the Government's explicit reference to the obligations on all state parties to the Geneva convention to show respect for that convention. We also welcome the further call for action to ensure that protection. Does the Prime Minister agree that that statement breaks new ground and will give cause for hope that Britain and its European partners are prepared to act to protect the basic human rights of Palestinians on the west bank and in Gaza pending the resumption of a meaningful peace process?

The Prime Minister: I very much agree with the hon. Gentleman's underlying view. It is worrying that we have no negotiations going and seem to have little prospect of negotiations. It is vital that we get negotiations going that respect Israel's right to exist and also respect and uphold the decision of the Palestine Liberation Organisation to recognise article 242, to recognise Israel's right to exist and also to disapprove of violence as a means of pursuing its objectives. I know that there is some ambivalence on that last point, particularly with regard to activities in the occupied territories.

I share the hon. Gentleman's view that it is important for us, both in the Community and with the United States, which can perhaps bring more pressure to bear on Israel than any other country, to try to get negotiations going in spite of all the difficulties. Otherwise we may lose some of the advances that have been made. We disapprove of terrorism or violence, by the PLO or any other organisation, and that makes it more important that, where there are legitimate grievances, they should be addressed by negotiations.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on her evolutionary approach to a European common currency. As the European monetary fund is to be responsible for monetary policy, in the sense that it will determine interest rates, will my right hon. Friend tell us to whom the European monetary fund will be responsible?

The Prime Minister: It will be responsible for interest rates only on the ecu, which is currency board issued. Our interest rates and our own currency are, and will continue to be, matters for us. The fund would be responsible for the deposits made with it and the amounts that it lent out for common currency. We shall still be responsible for our own.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent): Is the Prime Minister aware that her insistence on the restructuring, of the Soviet Union economy sounds reasonable but could be very dangerous? The Soviet leaders are already aware of the need for restructuring, and any imposition of sudden changes on their crumbling economy could put it in a state of chaos and collapse. By all means let us give economic aid and expertise, but the best people to decide the pace of change in the Soviet Union are Soviet leaders, not western leaders.

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman will realise that the very difficult circumstances which the Soviet Union faces now are a result of 70 years of central power and control, of the nationalisation of practically every decision and of no responsibility or initiative among its people. That is what has virtually brought about the collapse of the standard of living about which the right hon. Gentleman speaks.

The right hon. Gentleman will recall that when we set out to help Poland and Hungary—and now others—we insisted that the International Monetary Fund had a look at their economies and that they took advice to change their economic direction and to have more privatisation and more private enterprise against a proper framework of regulation and law. We did not give the aid until we were certain that that change had been approved, and therefore had some chance of getting under way. The change does not have to be totally complete—that would not be possible or reasonable—but those countries must have got the main change under way.

There are one or two joint ventures and we have some. They do not always work because the raw materials and the semi-fabricated goods which should come to the factory which is part of a joint venture—often from the Soviet side—do not arrive. I think that the best venture in the Soviet Union is probably McDonald's beefburgers, because it has its own farms, its own lorries and the biggest queue. I am sure that it is right to get an economic structural change going.

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): I am confident that my right hon. Friend will welcome the progress towards improved co-operation to suppress serious crime and international terrorism. Does she agree that the most important way to achieve that is to improve the intelligence arrangements and gathering systems? Can she comment on whether the German Government are willing to amend their constitution to allow their citizens to be subject to extradition to other EC countries to stand trial there?

The Prime Minister: We did not discuss that particular point. However, we did discuss the importance of intelligence among all European countries—even across the European divide—in tracking down criminals, especially those peddling drugs. I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that to get intelligence in time—and to take action on it—is one of the most important factors.

Mr Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): While suporting the vigorous programme of aid and assistance by the EEC to newly democratic eastern European countries, does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be inappropriate—indeed wasteful—to pour a large amount of aid into the Soviet Union until it has not only formed a market economy but has taken a greater stride towards a truly pluralist democracy and shown more sensitivity to the needs of its national minorities in, for example, the Baltic states?

The Prime Minister: The Soviet Union must sort out the powers that belong to central Government and the powers that belong to the separate republics, bearing in

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mind the fact that some of the separate republics are very large and that they are now taking powers unto themselves because they are varied and they dislike some of the decisions of the central authority.

It is important that we get the change with regard to aid. It has been suggested that we put up quite a lot of loan money for the Soviet Union to buy consumer goods to put on the shelves. In my view, that would do no one any good, least of all the Soviet Union. The sum mentioned was $15 billion, which would be equivalent to about $2·5 billion coming to Britain. The idea that that would solve all the problems is ridiculous. It would make them worse, because people would buy the goods quickly. The Soviet people would then be left with a large amount of debt hanging round their necks. Their last position would be worse than their first.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Is the Prime Minister aware that, while there is widespread feeling that harmonisation between fully self-governing countries is desirable in western Europe, eastern Europe and more generally, there is absolutely no electoral mandate for economic, monetary and political union, which is to be discussed further at the special meeting later this year? There is little public understanding of it, no public support for it and, above all, we have no authority from the voters to move in a direction which would take away power not from the House but from the people who send us here. Sovereignty belongs not to the House of Commons but to those who put us here and can remove us, and the continued operation of the Crown prerogative, which is the only power that the Prime Minister has to agree to any of those things has already rendered the House virtually impotent in defence of the rights of those who sent us here.

In the light of what is happening worldwide—in Quebec and elsewhere—is the right hon. Lady not aware that there is no longer that passion for increasingly large super-power units, whether in Moscow, Brussels or anywhere else, and it is time that she stopped beating the nationalist drum and taking us further into an impasse which, when the people discover it, will lead to great public anger which could undermine confidence in parliamentary democracy?

The Prime Minister: I hardly thought the day would come when I would agree with a good deal of what the right hon. Gentleman says—and I am sure that he is as surprised as I am—but I do not agree with all of it, which perhaps is the saving grace. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman agrees with increased co-operation between democracies for defence, security, trade and many matters. Co-operation is freely given by nation states, each answerable to its own Parliament—with 12 nation states sitting round the table we are each answerable to our own Parliament.

I agree with step-by-step, steady, increasing co-operation in those matters on which it is wise to co-operate. I do not agree with giving up our sovereignty and going into anything like a federation of European states. I agree with the right hon. Gentleman that it is evident across eastern Europe that, whereas people thought that they could suppress national identity by a political creed, they have discovered that they cannot suppress it. I would go further and say that one should not suppress it. We can co-operate as nations because we wish to co-operate, and that is the way we shall do it.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I welcome the Prime Minister's robust statement on aid to the Soviet Union. We are talking about taxpayers' money and any money that is allocated must have strings attached in terms of economic reconstruction. However, if she has trouble selling the principle of a two-tier currency system, let me put a suggestion to her. She should give Members of Parliament two options: they can be paid in ecu, or they can be paid in sterling. I am sure that many of my hon. Friends who have been pro-European since the early 1970s would opt for ecu, but I am sure that the anti-European backwoodsmen would have to consider their position very rapidly.

The Prime Minister: I rather agree with the hon. Gentleman on his last point, but at the moment the ecu is not a currency; it is a measure of the value of a basket of currencies. Under the European monetary fund and the system proposed by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, it could issue as a hard ecu only against other European currencies so we would not get inflation. It might be as well to allow people that choice. The hon. Gentleman has made his judgment as to how they would use it, but there is no reason why they should not make that choice.

I am very grateful for what the hon. Gentleman said about aid to the Soviet Union. We were faced with a sudden proposition, a demand for about $15 billion-worth of aid without any papers whatsoever before us, and I was bound to say that that is not the way we do business.

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): As a member of the small but diminishing band that has consistently opposed sanctions for the best part of 25 years, may I congratulate the Prime Minister on her success in persuading some of her colleagues to abandon that bandwagon, on which the four horsemen of the apocalypse are teamed with the World Council of Churches and Mr. Mandela.

On the more fundamental point of political union, may I test the proposition that my right hon. Friend advanced —that European political institutions will be given power and sovereignty only when national political institutions cannot do the job? She will be aware that a Committee of Parliament pointed out that national political institutions simply no longer could deal with air traffic control. Was that discussed in Dublin and, if so, with what result?

The Prime Minister: Air traffic control was not discussed, but we obviously need maximum co-operation right across Europe. It would be difficult if there were one system right across Europe, because a few people going on strike could place the rest of the system in difficulty. We need much more co-operation between air traffic controllers. As my hon. Friend knows, we are installing the latest computers for our system.

With regard to sanctions, the countries are coming our way, and not only in the communiqué. Italy has lifted her ban on investment in South Africa—a very well-judged decision—Spain has set up a new cargo airline for delivering goods to South Africa, and Denmark has returned her ambassador to South Africa. Although they are not formally agreeing to disband some of the few remaining sanctions, they are nevertheless having increasing contact with South Africa, which is the right

decision. It helps President de Klerk and all those in South Africa to look forward to a higher standard of living in a full non-racial democracy.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I am sorry that it has not been possible to call all hon. Members. Today, I have given some precedence to those who were not called on 1 May and on 12 June.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): No, you have not.

Mr. Speaker: I have not been able to get them all in, but I shall keep a list and see what I can do next time.

Business of the House

4.22 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the business for next week.

MONDAY 2 JULY—Estimates day (1st Allotted Day, 2nd part). There will be a debate on assistance to eastern Europe. Details of the estimates concerned and the relevant Select Committee report will be given in the *Official Report*.

Ways and Means resolution relating to the Finance Bill.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

TUESDAY 3 JULY—Opposition day (17th Allotted Day). Until about seven o'clock there will be a debate entitled "Crisis in our Schools". Afterwards there will be a debate on Housing. Both debates arise on Opposition motions.

Motion on the Education (Student Loans) Regulations.

WEDNESDAY 4 JULY—There will be a debate on the Arts and Heritage on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

THURSDAY 5 JULY—Motion on the Northern Ireland Act 1974 (Interim Period Extension) Order.

FRIDAY 6 JULY—Private Members' Bills.

MONDAY 9 JULY—Consideration of any Lords amendments which may be received to the Social Security Bill.

Relevant document, Monday 2 July: Third Report from the Foreign Affairs Committee of Session 1989-90 on FCO/ODA Expenditure 1990-91 (House of Commons Paper No. 233).

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): May I warmly thank the Leader of the House for providing time for a debate on the arts and heritage—a debate for which we have been asking for some time? I express my gratitude to the Leader of the House for announcing that the debate will take place.

Will the Leader of the House reconsider the position of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill? It is obvious that there will be insufficient time to consider it in this Session unless it is drastically altered. I concede that discussion of it to date has shown that there may be room for major changes, but, given the shortage of time and the pressure for major change, would it not be far more sensible to withdraw the Bill, have it rewritten and introduced again in the next Session, when there would be a large measure of agreement not only about its contents but about its rate of progress through the House?

A number of local authorities had lawfully to fix their poll taxes in April. They have subsequently been poll tax-capped by the Government and will retrospectively have to make major changes to their budgets and therefore to their expenditure and their ability to deliver services to many hundreds of thousands of people. Why have we still not had any indication of when the Government intend to bring those poll tax capping orders to the House for debate? I emphasise to the Leader of the House that the Opposition believe that it is very important that adequate time be given to debate orders that affect 20 local authorities.

I thank the Leader of the House for trying to find proper accommodation for Mr. Nelson Mandela to

[Dr. John Cunningham]

address hon. Members when he comes here next week. I know that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has tried, but I would like to ask him to try again, to secure suitable accommodation for Mr. Mandela's address. When I was in the United States, I saw Mr. Mandela address the Senate and the House of Representatives jointly on the floor of the Congress. I am not suggesting that Mr. Mandela should be invited into this Chamber—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"]—but will the Leader of the House consider whether Mr. Mandela should be invited to address us in the Royal Gallery of the House of Lords? That would be an appropriate and fitting setting for an historic occasion at which many hon. Members on both sides of the House—this is not a party political point—and other people in Parliament would wish to be present. Will the Leader of the House consider that again?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's welcome for my announcement of the debate on Wednesday, in which my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts will have a chance to give an account of his substantial achievements.

I listened yet again to what the hon. Gentleman said about the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill. It is currently making progress in Standing Committee. It received a Second Reading with a substantial Government majority, and I believe that it should continue to make progress in Committee.

The hon. Gentleman was right to observe that I made no announcement about the charge-capping orders today. As I have said more than once, the question of a debate on the orders is best left to discussion through the usual channels.

I appreciate what the hon. Gentleman said about the endeavour to find a suitable place in which Mr. Nelson Mandela may be invited to address hon. Members of both Houses. However, I am afraid that I cannot accept his suggestions. As he knows, there is a great difference between the traditional availability of invitations to speak in the Royal Gallery, which are seldom extended, and invitations to speak to both Houses of Congress in the Senate. A comparison between the two is not appropriate.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask hon. Members to confine themselves to one question about the business for next week. I would like to call on the next statement at 4.50 pm.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I want to raise a matter that is important to Londoners. Miss Constance Scrafield, who was prosecuted for allegedly galloping in Richmond park, brought a petition to me on her horse this week asking for new regulations about cantering in royal parks in London. May we have a debate on that subject so that people are not persecuted for allegedly galloping?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have not received many representations on that point, but I shall give it the attention that it properly deserves.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): One of the functions of this House is to monitor public expenditure. As a report of the Energy Select Committee published yesterday gave one of the most damning indictments of Ministers for a long time on the costs of nuclear power, may we have a debate in Government time on that important issue? Sir William Wallace, who sought freedom from oppression for his people against alien oppression, spoke in Westminster Hall. Would not that be an appropriate place for a speech by Mr. Nelson Mandela?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman is entitled to make his view known on the second point, but I am not prepared to agree with him. On the Energy Select Committee report, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy has already replied clearly and vigorously to the comments made in that report, and that should be sufficient for the time being.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): In the light of the response of my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food earlier on the export of live animals, the failure of the unelected European Commission to observe the wishes and recommendations of the Members of the European Parliament expressed in their submissions to the Council of Ministers and the strong feelings of the RSPCA, the British Veterinary Association and the all-party animal welfare group of the House on the export of live animals, will my right hon. and learned Friend find time for a debate in the House so that we can send a clear message to the Council of Ministers reflecting the feeling in the House?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am not sure that I can offer the prospect of an early debate on the matter. As my hon. Friend knows, unilateral action on the matter would not necessarily be compatible with the European Communities treaties. Certainly it will be one of our objectives to ensure the introduction in all member states of measures which would achieve higher standards of care than those which currently prevail.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): Has the Leader of the House seen all-party early-day motion No. 1096?

[That this House notes that the drug Erythropoietin, EPO, that can greatly improve the lives of kidney patients may be denied to some of them because of financial pressures in the area in which they happen to live; and calls upon the Government to make a thorough assessment of the benefits of the drug and, if appropriate, to ensure that it is equally available to all kidney patients who would benefit from its use.]

Will he find time for an early debate on the denial of Government funds for the use of the drug?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The assessment of the benefits of EPO is a matter for the clinicians involved. The current way forward is for each region to assess patients' requirements for the drug and make appropriate plans to ensure that those needs are met. Our reforms of the national health service will make it easier for treatment to be made available in that way.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): During the debate on Northern Ireland on Thursday, will the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland give the House an update on his talks with political parties and in Dublin about future political initiatives in the Province?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand my hon. Friend's interest in that matter. The debate next Thursday will be extensive in terms of time. It would not be proper for me to anticipate what my right hon. Friend will say.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): My question is also on Thursday's business. Will there be a full answer on the letter that the Prime Minister received on 10 June from Mr. Colin Wallace which contained a document which may well have been a smear? The document was typed by Mr. Christopher Whitehead, currently head of public relations for the prison service. It linked Charles Haughey with the IRA. May we have a full explanation of that letter of 10 June?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot possibly answer that question. The fact that the hon. Gentleman has raised the matter on the Floor of the House today will undoubtedly be taken into account by those of my hon. Friends who speak in the debate.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): My right hon. and learned Friend will know that on Monday night we had just three hours to debate the forthcoming police housing allowances and that many hon. Members failed to catch Mr. Speaker's eye. Many topics were discussed. Surely that demonstrates the need for a debate on the subject as soon as possible and, in particular, on some of the other topics raised, including the amalgamation of the police forces and the introduction of a national detective force. Those issues should be debated in the House because important decisions will soon be made that will affect every citizen in the country. It is important that we should debate the matter before the recess.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I know that the House debated the regulations on Monday night, and the debate ended in a substantial majority in support of the Government's proposals. However, that is no reason for me not to accept the proposition that I should recommend my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary to consider those topics.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): The Lord President will know that I would welcome a statement next Thursday about setting up a Northern Ireland Select Committee. However, in view of the speculation that the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland intends to make a definitive statement during the renewal debate, would it not be wiser to circulate a detailed document to the leaders of the parties with which he has been in consultation so that there could be a considered response rather than off-the-cuff remarks in such a debate?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The question of a Northern Ireland Select Committee is under consideration by the Select Committee on Procedure, and it can be raised in the course of next week's debate. It would not be right for me to try to inhibit the way in which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland approaches the important matters that he is discussing.

Mr. Speaker: I call Mr. Winnick.

Hon. Members: He is called every week.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Will the Leader of the House give further serious consideration to where Mr. Mandela will speak when he visits the House next week? Does he recognise that, when Mr. Mandela has visited Parliaments in Europe and elsewhere, he has been given every possible facility and hospitality, and that the Grand Committee Room is not an appropriate venue, whereas the Royal Gallery is? Why on earth are the Government adopting an attitude that must be regarded as a snub to one of the most distinguished and heroic figures in southern Africa, who has spent more than 25 years in prison for fighting for the liberation of his country?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not mean to say anything that does not accord proper respect to Mr. Nelson Mandela, his achievements or his aspirations, but the fact must be faced that many Heads of State and Governments would have sought to address both Houses in the Royal Gallery, and only a small number of such people have ever been invited to speak there.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I say to the whole House —and not to any hon. Member in particular—that those who are called last at business questions one week are always called first the next week?

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): I refer the Lord President to his answer to me last week in relation to the Government's proposed changes in private Bill procedure. He was kind enough to say that he has published a consultation document—I am not entirely sure whether it was a Green Paper, a White Paper, a pink paper or a peach paper. Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that three private Bills of a political nature are before the House at the moment—the Associated British Ports Bill, the Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority Bill and the Clyde Port Authority Bill? Would it not be appropriate, given the Government's intention to change the law in relation to private Bills and how they are operated in the House, to have an early debate on the subject so that the entire House can comment on those proposals?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The whole House is invited to comment on the proposals: that is precisely why the consultation document has been published. I shall look forward to reading representations and observations from any hon. Member who wishes to let me have them.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): May I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 1152, on the destruction of the ozone layer?

[That this House, in view of the overwhelming scientific evidence of increasing ozone depletion and the unforeseeable consequences for the health of the planet and all life on it, urges the Government, at the environmental conference in London from 27th-29th June on the 1987 Montreal Protocol, to support a total phase-out of all ozone destroying compounds in the immediate future.]

Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman assure the House that there will be a statement next week by the Secretary of State for the Environment, so that hon. Members can find out what he has been doing, and whether he has been pressing for the rapid phasing out of all substances that damage the ozone layer, especially in view of the scientific evidence that has been produced to show greater destruction and damage than was previously thought to exist? The Government's phasing-out date—the year 2000—simply is not adequate. We need more action, and a report from the Secretary of State to demonstrate that he has undertaken some action.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I expect that the House will appreciate that the Government are indeed committed to the ultimate phasing out of ozone-depleting substances at the fastest possible speed that can be agreed globally.

[Sir Geoffrey Howe]

During the renegotiation of the Montreal protocol at the second meeting, the European Community made proposals for the control of CFCs that are tougher than those of any other country. I shall draw my right hon. Friend's attention to the suggestion that he should make a statement on the outcome of those proceedings, but obviously I cannot commit him.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Has the Leader of the House seen early-day motion 1200?

[That this House expresses its deep disquiet that 29 surviving former Labour Lambeth councillors, who have already been disqualified for five years and who have already paid over £300,000 in surcharge and costs, have again been surcharged for £212,726 and are sought to be disqualified for a further five years; deplores an unprecedented double penalty imposed for the same conduct which was penalised five years ago; and calls for the immediate remission of these further penalties and a reform of the Law which discriminates against councillors as compared with other public representatives and infringes the civil liberties of those who seek election.]

It has been tabled today and it concerns Lambeth councillors and the second surcharge and disqualification from office imposed on them. Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that there should be a report or a debate on this matter because Lambeth councillors have already been surcharged £300,000 and been subject to a five-year ban from public office? For the same offence, those councillors have been penalised another five years and subject to another £213,000 surcharge. That treatment must be contrasted with the way in which Lady Porter and her gang at the Tory Westminster council got away with the £5 million land deal fiddle, and with the £44 million of sweeteners from the Government in the Rover sale. Surely, if such treatment applies to one group of people, it should apply to another. The surcharge and the ban from public office placed on the Lambeth councillors should be lifted.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman does not find it easy to understand that there are due processes of law for consideration of all those matters. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry will be answering questions this afternoon about the response to the ruling of the European Commission in relation to Rover.

As for the Lambeth councillors, the surcharge and disqualification of councillors are matters for the auditor and the courts. I cannot make any comment in that particular case. The matter must be resolved through the courts, not through debate in this House.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): May we have an early debate on the latest example of the savaging of the national health service in Leicestershire—the closure of five wards, including children's wards, in the Leicester royal infirmary and the imminent redundancy of 167 people employed at the hospital announced by the management to the unions of that hospital yesterday? Is the Leader of the House aware that all hon. Members representing Leicestershire are deeply disturbed at the effect that the cuts in the health service are having and are likely to have on the health of our people? This matter should be debated in the House.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have the impression that the topic has been drawn to my attention in a number of different ways on more than one occasion by hon. Members on both sides of the House. My response is the same as my previous ones: there has been a general increase in real terms in the resources available to the relevant Leicestershire health authority.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): I draw to the attention of the Leader of the House early-day motion 1196 on the loss of the MV Derbyshire.

[That this House calls on the Secretary of State for Transport, using powers vested in him by the Merchant Shipping Act 1970, to re-open the Wreck Commissioner's inquiry into the loss in 1980 of MV 'Derbyshire' to hear vital new scientific research on why that British-built, British-classed and British-flagged vessel sank without trace; notes that the research now with the Royal Institution of Naval Architects was carried out by the late Professor Richard Bishop, Vice Chancellor Brunel University and his partners, Professor Geraint Price and Pendari Temarel; further notes that their research indicates that the stresses in the hull of the 'Derbyshire' were grossly underestimated; believes this has important implications for the safety of other vessels still at sea; and notes the Wreck Commissioner's report into the loss of the 'Derbyshire' said last year that if the stresses in the hull of the ship had been underestimated, that could lead to different conclusions about the structural integrity of the ship.]

Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that the new scientific evidence has been brought forward? Is he aware that there is widespread concern in the public domain about the fact that, 10 years ago, the families affected were treated shoddily? The Government have made no attempt to consider the new evidence recently produced.

Will the Leader of the House bring to the attention of the Secretary of State for Transport the need for a debate as soon as possible on the MV Derbyshire so that the House can hear the new available evidence?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand that the court of formal investigation into the loss of the MV Derbyshire reported as long ago as January 1989 and that no fresh evidence has been presented to the Department of Transport since then. My right hon. Friend will study the research material to which the hon. Gentleman referred once that becomes available to him. In the light of his examination, he will decide what steps may be appropriate.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): I am most grateful, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak in this place. You will recall that, last week, you said that those who were not called would be given the first opportunity to put questions to the Leader of the House today. Apparently, I am the last one on the Opposition Benches to put a question to the Leader of the House, and I accept that as some sort of compliment.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Please get on with the question —and good luck next week.

Mr. Brown: I may be short in stature, but I am not short in principle, I hope.

Will the Leader of the House arrange for a special debate next week on GEC-Ferranti of Edinburgh? Many of the employees are worried because they are losing their jobs. Such job losses may occur repeatedly throughout Britain, but it is important that we have a debate on this issue bearing in mind the fact that the favoured son of the

Tory party, Lord Weinstock, has taken over Ferranti. Will the Government be quiet, or will they speak up to allow the Opposition to have a go at them? The issue at stake is 550 jobs—550 families. The people of Scotland are concerned. If this place means anything and enables us to challenge issues, the Government should allow the debate to take place. I suspect, however, that the Leader of the House will make some excuse for not having a debate.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As the hon. Gentleman knows, decisions of that nature are commercial ones for the company or companies concerned. No doubt my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is aware of the issue to which he has drawn attention, but I cannot offer the prospect of a debate on it.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that important discussions are taking place in the Department of Trade and Industry on a new regime connected with export credits? Is he aware that that is of considerable interest to a number of industrial firms in my constituency? Will my right hon. and learned Friend assure the House that, before any final decision is taken on such important, critical matters, it will have an opportunity to debate them?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand the continuing importance of export credit guarantee schemes. I cannot offer the certain prospect of a debate on the matter, but if my hon. Friend seeks to represent the views of the firms in his constituency I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will take them into account.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): Bearing in mind today's remaining business, can my right hon. and learned Friend say whether he has had any suggestion from the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) that he will seek an opportunity to come to the House to apologise for the appalling, unfounded statements he has made to the effect that the Government illegally assisted British Aerospace through changes in the taxation system that would have been wholly outside the law of the land?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have received no such representation.

British Aerospace

4.46 pm

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and President of the Board of Trade (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement on the decision reached yesterday by the European Commission following its review of the arrangements reached with British Aerospace regarding the sale of the Government shareholding in Rover Group.

The Government believe that, in the circumstances at the time, the additional concessions granted to British Aerospace were a necessary part of our agreement so that the privatisation of Rover Group could proceed. That deal brought considerable benefits: it freed the taxpayer from the contingent liability of the Varley-Marshall-Joseph assurances—that liability then amounted to £1·6 billion and was set to rise substantially over the corporate plan period. It ensured that Rover Group's needs would not in future require special Government aid, which had amounted to £3·5 billion while under public ownership. It safeguarded over 190,000 jobs, mostly in the west midlands, and it made a desirable contribution towards restructuring within the European motor industry.

Under BAe's ownership, the corporate plan is being fully implemented. Rover has already committed more than £500 million of new capital investment. The new model range is highly successful and the company has returned to profitability.

The Commission's principal decisions are as follows: that

"£150 million represented a reasonable purchase price for the company";

that the Government should provide an undertaking that any arrangement between BAe and the Inland Revenue will not allow Rover Group to use more than the £500 million of trading tax losses specified in the sale agreement with BAe, and that those losses will remain within Rover Group—I am, of course, very happy to give an undertaking that the terms of the sale contract will be adhered to; that BAe should automatically be required to pay financial penalties if there is any change in control of Rover Group or its principal subsidiaries before July 1993—we shall be exploring precisely what this means with the Commission; that the grant of £1·5 million towards Rover Group's costs incurred in the acquisition, and the £9·5 million contribution towards BAe's costs in buying out the minority shareholders, should be repaid; and that the benefit to British Aerospace of deferring payment of the £150 million consideration for Rover Group should similarly be repaid.

In relation to this deferment, the Commission has concluded the BAe should be required to pay an amount of £33·4 million, calculated as the estimated gross interest saving to the company. Fairness suggests that any such benefit, and therefore any repayment, should be assessed net of tax, thus reflecting the true value of the deferment to the company. We estimate that the equivalent post-tax benefit would be some £22 million, a difference of £11·4 million.

If the Commission's decision is on the basis of the gross interest saving, the net cost to BAe will depend on whether tax relief is available in respect of the repayment under normal United Kingdom tax law. The availability of tax

[Mr. Nicholas Ridley]

relief on the £33·4 million will need to be settled in due course between British Aerospace and the appropriate tax authorities, and perhaps ultimately in the courts.

The Commission also notes that expenditure of aid agreed in 1987 for restructuring of the Leyland Daf commercial vehicle operation has been slower than anticipated, and it suggests the possibility that up to £40 million of that may eventually need to be repaid. It acknowledges, however, that that figure is speculative and that the final outturn of expenditure will not be known until next year.

As the Commission's efforts to bring all state aids within the Community under control are beneficial for the development of the single market, the Government believe that it is important to support them. We have thus always acknowledged its ultimate right to reach its own judgment on the status of those additional arrangements in the context of the 1988 decision. We also accept that any benefit received by a company which the Commission properly decides is a state aid incompatible with the treaty should be repaid.

Equity suggests that the repayment should represent the net value of the benefit received by the company and not contain any unintended element of penalty. We are therefore concerned that the Commission has decided on £33·4 million in respect of the interest when the estimated benefit to British Aerospace is some £22 million, handing down a decision in gross terms without regard to whether or not the repayment will be allowable against tax under normal United Kingdom law.

We shall, accordingly, wish to give careful consideration to that aspect of the decsion and to any representations by BAe. Subject, however, to that, the Government, having carefully studied the arguments and to demonstrate our support for Community policy on state aids, have decided to accept the Commission's decision on repayment. We shall be discussing with the Commission and British Aerospace other detailed matters raised in the Commission decision. I am advised that British Aerospace will consider its position in the light of this statement and after studying the Commission decision in detail.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): Given that the Minister said in his final few words that the Government will accept the Commission's general verdict to repay, will he now confirm that the Government wrongly gave away millions of pounds of taxpayers' money by deferring payment of the Rover purchase price, and that Parliament should have been but was never properly told?

Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that £9·5 million of British Aerospace's costs in acquiring Rover were wrongly paid by the Government and that the House was deliberately kept in the dark? Will he confirm that £1·5 million of Rover's costs for being acquired were wrongly paid by the Government and that Ministers delivered as a matter of policy not just to deceive the European Commission but to deceive Parliament as well? Will he also confirm that, far from the matter being closed, the European Commission has demanded a full report into tax concessions and tax allowances that might have resulted from a series of private meetings involving the Department of Trade and Industry, the Inland Revenue and British Aerospace? Will he now tell the House his estimate of the full value of those concessions?

Will the right hon. Gentleman now confirm not only that money was illegally paid but that, as the correspondence give to the House demonstrates, Ministers entered into an elaborate web of deception, even to the extent of a detailed discussion of the risks of being found out?

Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that Ministers actually considered how omissions in the national accounts might or might not be spotted, at least by some hon. Members, that they actually considered presenting late payments of cash just as if they had been made earlier and that there was within Government an ascending order of risk that secret concessions might be picked up by the European Commission?

In those circumstances, how can the right hon. Gentleman come to the House today and justify such abuses as what he calls necessary behaviour? Is he seriously telling us that, in other sales of public assets to private companies, the Government would offer similar hidden subsidies and mislead yet again?

Will the right hon. Gentleman now say what responsibility the Prime Minister, who says that she was consulted on the details of the deal, is prepared to shoulder for the errors of judgment and the deception? As for the Government's responsibility to Parliament, will the right hon. Gentleman say why, after nearly two years, after a critical National Audit Office report and after this damning new judgment from the European Commission, there has been as yet no full explanation of events, no apology, no admission of responsibility, no statement of who is to accept the blame and no new rules proposed to prevent similar abuses during the sale of public assets to private companies in future?

Does not this sorry and shameful tale of incompetence and deception—incompetence even in deception—now followed by this humiliating public rebuke in the front of the whole of Europe emphasise that the short-term obsession with privatisation at any price and at any cost overrode all considerations of the public interest, up to and including the good name and integrity of government?

Mr. Ridley: I answered the hon. Gentleman's first questions in my statement. He went on to suggest that the Government had misled Parliament. I repeat that each of those items was properly reported. The deferment of the consideration and the payment of the £1·5 million to Rover Group were reported in a revised summer supplementary estimate laid before Parliament on 14 July 1988, the day of the announcement. The payment of £9·5 million to BAe was reported in the 1989 Industry Act report. All the facts were made available to the National Audit Office at the outset of its investigations. So the hon. Gentleman is wrong about that.

The Government have agreed to accept the Commission's findings and to implement them. Is the Labour party now prepared to accept the Commission's findings and to stop making such charges as that the Government undervalued the Rover Group? As the Commission said:

> "£150 million represents a reasonable purchase price for the company."

So may we have a withdrawal of that accusation from the Labour party?

Secondly, the hon. Gentleman has written three times to me and once to the Prime Minister, and many times he has been to the media, and accused the Government of

separate tax concessions, hidden tax deals, fiddles on the tax side and secret meetings. That is not true. I want from him an apology and I want him to undertake to withdraw those allegations. He should either put up or shut up.

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): Now that the Commission has given its decision, may we hope that both sides of the House will recognise the high value to this country of the Rover and British Aerospace enterprises? Will my right hon. Friend make available in the Library of the House in its entirety the correspondence that he has received from the Commission? May I ask him, not as Chairman of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry but as a Back Bencher, to give the House an assurance that there was never any intention by Her Majesty's Government to deceive Parliament?

Mr. Ridley: I agree with my hon. Friend about the great value to the country and taxpayer of Rover Group passing into the private sector and being owned by British Aerospace. Indeed, from what the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) said, it seems that he regrets that bitterly and wishes that it was still losing money in the public sector.

I have not yet formally received the full decision letter from the Commission. I have no doubt that it will appear in the newspaper columns even before I receive it, so it will become a public document. I have already answered the question about the presentation of these matters to Parliament, which should end that matter.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Will the right hon. Gentleman say whether, prior to approving the British Aerospace-Rover deal, the Prime Minister and the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry were advised that some aspect of it were likely to be regarded as unlawful?

Mr. Ridley: My predecessor, Lord Young, obviously received legal advice from the Department. He alone must be responsible for the advice that he received. I have not seen his legal advice.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): Does my right hon. Friend accept that, in relation to some parts of the European Commission's findings, one could argue that a state company, if it wants to sell something, must first ensure that it owns it, and an element of purchasing the minority shareholding should not be construed as a form of state aid? Notwithstanding that, will my right hon. Friend reflect that the working people of the west midlands, so many of whose jobs depend on this business, have looked forward to, and worked to establish, a prosperous and profitable company? Had that business not been privatised—the negotiations were certainly tricky—with a British solution, we might be here now discussing a European Commission directive to prevent the state further subsidising a state business?

Hon. Members: Come on, Tricky Nick.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ridley: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend's last point, because if the company had still been in public ownership, there is no doubt that there would have been a state aid ruling that we should desist from pumping taxpayers' money into it. I would have been pleased to see it, but that is what we would have had. This is a different matter.

I think that my hon. Friend's first point is logically right. The owner of a company should be able to become a 100 per cent. shareholder. I cannot contest that the Commission has come to a different conclusion, which the Government have decided to accept.

Mr. David Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Is the Secretary of State aware that, while he may be relieved that sticky fingers were rapped yesterday only to the tune of £40 million, most car workers in Coventry and the west midlands are still unsure whether, in the past few months, there has been Government incompetence or corruption? In any event, the case still stinks to high heaven. Some £3·5 billion of public, taxpayers' money has been put into, first, British Leyland and then Rover. Once that car company reached a position of stability, the people whose money was put into it should have had the return; the money should not have been given away to British Aerospace. That is what this is all about—we are talking about not just £40 million, but the fact that a public asset was given away to the Secretary of State's mates.

Mr. Ridley: Car workers in the west midlands and the hon. Gentleman's constituency will be only too grateful that they have good, secure jobs in an expanding, successful company, and are not at risk from a state aid directive stopping us pumping money into a bankrupt nationalised enterprise.

Sir Hal Miller (Bromsgrove): Will my right hon. Friend confirm the facts of the case, which are that Rover was successfully sold to a British company when there were no other applicants and the Opposition had objected to a previous suggestion that Ford and General Motors might take over responsibility for the company; the taxpayer was relieved of the burden of guarantees to £1·4 billion and of the necessity of undertaking an investment programme of £1 billion, which would now, no doubt, have had to be repaid; there was then a considerable risk that the two new models would not be the successes that they were; and there was a heavy, overhanging liability for the redundancy payments for the work force? Therefore, we should all be pleased that the matter is a success, instead of indulging in conspiracy theories, muckraking and the denigration of a successful British company and successful British workers.

Mr. Ridley: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. I remind the House of the words of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) on 4 May 1988, when he was the shadow Secretary of State for Trade and Industry:

> "If we are really concerned about the future of the Rover Group and volume car manufacturing in this country under British ownership and control . . . we need the commitment of an owner who is willing to make the long-term investment that is required. We need an appreciation by the owner of the long-term importance of the industry to the British economy. We need pride of ownership."—[*Official Report*, 5 May 1988; Vol. 132, c. 941.]

We have achieved that as a result of the BAe deal, but the Labour party is now carping, criticising and wishing it had never happened.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Is not the crucial and central point of the decision that has been handed down that the Government behaved illegally? In so far as

[Mr. Alan Williams]

they did so, why on earth has the Secretary of State come here today without having checked on the legal advice given to his predecessor? While we accept that he is not allowed to see advice given to a previous Government, surely if he is coming to answer questions in the House on illegal conduct by Her Majesty's Government, he should at least have checked the records to find out how the decision was arrived at.

Mr. Ridley: No such question arises. The Government have decided to accept the Commission's report for the reasons that I have given. There is no point in the right hon. Member trying to prove something of that sort. We ultimately made our decision in the way that I have described.

Mr. Paul Channon (Southend, West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that what really matters in this case is that we have a prosperous, efficient, car industry in this country in which people have good jobs? Does he agree that, in the past, the Opposition have sabotaged any effort made to try to put the company on a profitable footing? Does he also agree that the British taxpayer has poured billions of pounds into that company and was liable to pour in even more billions of pounds, and the solution that he and his predecessors adopted not only saved the taxpayer a great deal of money, but provided a prosperous car industry for this country in future?

Mr. Ridley: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right and I applaud his part in the final outcome when he had the job that I now hold. This is what the whole House said that it wanted in May 1988, but now that we have actually got it, the Opposition appear to have changed their mind and want to go back to the old bad days.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Will the Secretary of State stop attempting to defend and whitewash the Government's actions in their attempts to deceive the House, the European Commission and the general public by hiding the sweeteners given to British Aerospace—efforts of which the Prime Minister was aware? Instead, will he thank and support the vigilance of the Comptroller and Auditor General in unearthing this deception? Will he take his responsibility for the setting up of the slush fund and resign, along with the Prime Minister?

Mr. Ridley: I assure the hon. Gentleman that to the last of my days I shall continue to defend the Government and attack the rabble on the Opposition Benches. In answer to the hon. Gentleman's second point, we made a full report to the Comptroller and Auditor General, which he passed on to the Public Accounts Committee. The House was fully informed because, from that process, publication was made—I am not saying by whom—which was the right way to carry out the procedure.

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that most sensible people in the House and outside will observe that, after months of study by the Commission, there has been no criticism whatever of the price at which this company was sold to British Aerospace? Synthetic opposition is voiced by Labour Members simply because they cannot bear to see that the company has been successfully privatised and is prospering. Jobs are very much safer and productivity has improved. It has become a highly profitable British-owned motor car firm, and we should be proud of that.

Mr. Ridley: The force of my hon. Friend's arguments has driven the Leader of the Opposition from the Chamber because he could not take any more. Opposition Members are looking as glum as can be, and the Leader of the Opposition, who should be leading from the front, is not about. My hon. Friend is right. Political point scoring is more important to the Labour party than the successful future of the Rover group.

Mr. Stan Crowther (Rotherham): It would be in everybody's interest for the Government to drop their policy of subterfuge and cover-up. How can the Secretary of State pretend that all the facts were made known at the time, when it is perfectly obvious that, if they had been fully reported to the House and the Commission there would have been no need for the second Commission inquiry or the second inquiry by the Select Committee on Trade and Industry which hopes to report shortly? How can he pretend that the facts were made known, when it is perfectly obvious that they were hidden?

Mr. Ridley: I resent the use of the word subterfuge. On behalf of the Government I have accepted the Commission's report. I have not heard the Opposition or the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) say that they accept it. The scandalous charges that he has been making should now be withdrawn.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): The Commission has quite clearly found that British Aerospace received no special tax treatment and that Rover Group was not overvalued. In view of that, will my right hon. Friend once again invite the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East to withdraw his wild and irresponsible remarks? If the hon. Gentleman is not big enough to do that, will my right hon. Friend put that crazy correspondence in the Library so that the House can judge the credibility of the Opposition's attack?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend is right. I repeat the invitation to the hon. Gentleman to withdraw his allegations. I have already put in the Library all the correspondence with the Inland Revenue and the House has seen it. I shall certainly place in the Library my correspondence with the hon. Gentleman, and the House can judge him as well.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): The Opposition are simply trying to hold the Government accountable. For once it would be nice for the Secretary of State to come to the House and accept responsibility for a Cabinet decision. Does he agree that the Commission, rather than the British Government, has had to defend the British taxpayer? According to the Secretary of State's own figures, £33·4 million, £9·5 million and £1·5 million have to be repaid. That is a total of £44·4 million. He says that the Government will implement the Commission's decision. When and how will they collect the money, and when will they stop wriggling on this specific matter?

Mr. Ridley: I am in the House accepting responsibility on behalf of the Government. We are discharging our obligation to tell the House what the Commission has decided and what the Government have decided to do in response. If the hon. Gentleman thinks that the taxpayer

is protected by this decision of the Commission, without paying any heed to the £3.5 billion of taxpayers' money which went down the drain before this deal was ever done, he has another think coming.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): Does my right hon. Friend accept that two critical aspects of the matter have been ignored by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East? First, two years ago under a different Commissioner, it was not at all clear that the deferment of the purchase price, which is by far the largest element in the extra package, would be categorised as state aid. Secondly, at the heart of the matter is the fact that in early July two years ago it was by no means certain that the British Aerospace board was united in wanting to take on this huge loss-making operation with staggering liabilities. Without the extra £30 million package British Aerospace would not have bought Rover and it would not now be British and as successful as it has become.

Mr. Ridley: I have accepted the Commission's decision about the nature of the benefit that arose from deferring the interest on the £150 million for 20 months. However, I question whether it is right that the benefit to British Aerospace of that deferment, which was about £22 million, should result in that company being asked to repay £33 million. That seems to be a point which we can legitimately raise. My hon. Friend is right when he says that there was considerable reluctance on the part of British Aerospace to proceed at all. The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) said in the House that he thought that it was a rotten deal for British Aerospace shareholders, and many City commentators suggested at the time that the shares should be marked down.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Can the Secretary of State give the House a categorical assurance that neither these nor similar arrangements applied in any other privatisation deal?

Mr. Ridley: I cannot quite understand how the hon. Gentleman is saying that there is something here which is different in relation to any other privatisation. I think that each case has to be taken on its merits and I am very happy to defend this privatisation as one of the most successful launches of a new motor company that we have seen for a long time.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that one of the most important considerations in the Government's mind must have been the preservation of the sales network of Rover Group dealers in the United Kingdom and abroad? Is he aware that, when the Trade and Industry Committee looked at the collapse of the Rootes motor group, which was rescued by Chrysler, the evidence given by the dealers to the Committee was that the whole sales network was collapsing hour by hour because of the uncertainty? Does he agree that there was a severe risk to the whole future of the Rover group if the quickest possible reasonable sale had not been consummated?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend is entirely right about that. It is crucial to the on-going success of a motor company for the dealer network to remain intact and loyal. The continued uncertainty, much of which was caused by the Opposition making a tremendous fuss about any possible purchaser for Rover Group, had made the dealer network rather jittery. That was the reason for the urgency in July 1988.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The Attorney-General has been sitting stony-faced throughout the statement. Will the Secretary of State confer with him and obtain confirmation that the Prime Minister and Lord Young were told that this deal was unlawful?

Mr. Ridley: I would never dream of accusing the hon. Gentleman of being stony-faced. My right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General is the soul of delightful company and wit—when he is not taking his responsibilities very seriously, as of course he is now. He is completely satisfied with my statement and what I have told the House, and I have nothing further to add about the legal advice received by my predecessor.

Mr. Tim Janman (Thurrock): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that Commissioner Millan, a former Labour Member, voted against the Commission's recommendation on the basis that he wanted its action to be even harsher? Does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be outrageous if he did that in an attempt to gain party political advantage? Does he further agree that Commissioner Millan may well have been put up to it by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East?

Mr. Ridley: I hope that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East will respond to that point. We have had a remarkable silence from him about his rather unsavoury part in these affairs and I hope that he will respond to my hon. Friend. I think that it is true that the only Commissioner who voted against the recommendation in the hope of achieving a tougher settlement against British Aerospace was Commissioner Millan.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Is it not true that many people believe that the Secretary of State has got off extremely lightly with a helpful report from the former Tory Minister Leon Brittan, who was himself severely criticised by a Select Committee for his duplicity? Will the Secretary of State now confirm clearly that he, Lord Young and the Prime Minister received information that the rip-off of hundreds of millions of pounds from the taxpayer was illegal?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman's last statement is absolutely untrue. I must rebut that entirely. The hon. Gentleman is quite wrong in his first point as well.

Mr. Charles Wardle (Bexhill and Battle): Is not the kernel of the matter the fact that the amount now demanded by the Commissioners confirms their judgment that the assets sold were not undervalued?

Mr. Ridley: Yes, that is an important point. It is not just that the Commissioners felt that they could not reopen the decision of Commissioner Sutherland; it was on the merits of the case as set out in their letter that they came to the conclusion that the valuation which my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Young accepted with British Aerospace at the time was correct. We are still looking for a withdrawal from the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East of his statement only eight days ago in the House to my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Industry that there was a gross undervaluation. It is time that he withdrew that.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): If there was no deception, why does the letter that I have here, signed by Lord Young, show a deception in relation to repayment and notional interest rates saved? Is it fair that a company valued by Nikki Securities of Japan at £1,000 million today should have been sold for only £150 million a couple of years ago?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman puts his own interpretation on things. I prefer to believe what the Commission said. It is probably more impartial and has more sense than the hon. Gentleman. I am happy to see what the Commission says about valuation and I, too, am prepared to accept that.

Several Hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Speaker: Order. In view of the importance of the next debate, in which some hon. Members who are now rising are anxious to participate, I shall call three more Conservative Members and the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman and then we must move on.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his relaxed demeanour in the face of this synthetic little storm in a Dunfermline teacup. It is now obvious that the Government took the right decision to stand by Rover and obtain a good deal for the British taxpayer and preserve jobs, and are also probably right reluctantly to abide by the Commission's ruling. But on that point does my right hon. Friend share my cynical view that the so-called level playing field in European competition rulings is full of political lumps, and that he might not have been asked to repay £40 million if Renault had not been asked to repay £1·2 billion some months ago, which it has not yet done?

Mr. Ridley: I agree with my hon. Friend about the Dunfermline teacup. We were promised a firebrand, an effective Opposition spokesman, in the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East, but I am afraid that he has proved a great disappointment. We wish that he could sometimes put some good points for us to answer. In fact, he sits on his bottom and does nothing most of the time.

On the serious point made by my hon. Friend, it is a little disturbing that there have been rumours in the newspapers of the matter being treated by the Commission as some sort of political punishment which is negotiable. My concept of state aid is that it should be a precise calculation and that that alone should be what it asks to be repaid.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Further to the question asked by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), have not some people forgotten that at the time people said that the Varley-Marshall guarantees of more than £1·6 billion were an enormous albatross round the neck of Rover? Indeed, the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) asked the House whether it was true that institutional shareholders had already been telephoning to express their objections. People forget such things now. Will not most reasonable taxpayers come to the conclusion that they have had a good deal? The Government have offloaded a loss-making, ramshackle organisation which was sending £1·6 billion down the pan and now have a profitable British company.

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend is right, but it does not seem to matter how successful the Government's economic and industrial strategy is, Opposition Members simply want to find party political points to make against us.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): May I bring my right hon. Friend's mind back to the role of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown)? Is not it right that the Commission has clearly reported that there was no special tax treatment for British Aerospace and that there was no undervaluation of Rover for British Aerospace? In the circumstances, when we continually ask the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East to withdraw the allegations that have now been proved to be false, why does the hon. Gentleman not do so? Would my right hon. Friend care to speculate on his motives?

Mr. Ridley: I endorse every word of my hon. Friend's question. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East may wish to——

Mr. Gordon Brown: Answer the question. What has the Commission said about the tax concession?

Mr. Ridley: No, my hon. Friend asked me to speculate on the hon. Gentleman's motives for not coming forward and making a clean breast of the fact that he has got it wrong. I could do that, but, although I have not found the hon. Gentleman very damaging these past two months, I have developed a certain affection for him, so I will not press the point.

Mr. Doug Henderson (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): Of the many questions which still remain unanswered, will the Secretary of State give a clear answer to two? First, will he confirm that the European Commission has demanded further written information on the tax concessions given to British Aerospace? Secondly, when the Secretary of State puts correspondence in the Library, will he include with it the legal advice that was given to Lord Young and the Prime Minister?

Mr. Ridley: I am afraid that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East has not responded to the question posed by my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay). He seems to be completely unable to speak.

I am delighted to answer the two questions put by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson). He has my assurance that all documents on the matter that are not normally kept confidential will be placed in the Library. Documents between the British Government and the Commission are treated as documents between two Governments and are not normally released, but the hon. Gentleman will have no difficulty in obtaining any information that he wants. I can give him an assurance that we have no difficulty whatever in answering the points about the tax treatments, which are mainly, I think, due to the Commission's failure to understand how the system works.

Points of Order

5.29 pm

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montomery): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that I called both hon. Members. What is the point of order? I call Mr. Nellist first.

Mr. Nellist: Given the specific questions asked by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) and by my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) and my hon. Friends the Members for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) and for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), and as the Attorney-General is still present in the Chamber, will you, Mr. Speaker, confirm that if the right hon. and learned Gentleman were to approach you now to be allowed to make a statement about the legal advice given to Lord Young, you would allow him to make one?

Mr. Speaker: I have received no notification that the Attorney-General wishes to do that.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, I may inadvertently have misled the House, and if so I want to correct myself. At one stage during Question Time, I alluded to a rather nefarious contract negotiated by Middlesbrough council. I suggested that a Middlesbrough councillor was on the board of the new company concerned. I was mistaken. It was a Cleveland county councillor.

Mr. Speaker: I am not sure whether that is a point of order for me.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. There is a rule, regarding the tabling of questions, that matters relating to internal Government administration are not answerable. Will you, Mr. Speaker, confirm that legal advice given by the Attorney-General to a Minister on an important issue of public policy, such as the sale of British Leyland, does not fall into that category, and that questions about that aspect put to the Attorney-General and to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry are answerable?

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I recollect that, when the then Mr. Sam Silkin was Attorney-General, he not only refused to tell the Trade and Industry Committee what advice he had given but refused to attend the Committee to give it legal advice, saying that it was the established custom of the House to refuse both such requests.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop), who is an expert on such matters, has given the House an answer to the question of the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer).

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Attorney-General is still in the Chamber, and you were asked to approach him with a view to allowing the right hon. and learned Gentleman to make a statement. The point was made by several right hon. and hon. Members that the Attorney-General should come clean. It is clear that he knows more, and he should be given the option of making a statement now on the legal advice that he tendered to the Prime Minister, Lord Young or anyone else as to the illegality of the Rover deal.

Mr. Speaker: The whole House knows that that is not a matter for me. Furthermore, there is ahead of us an important debate for which the whole House has been waiting for a long time. I shall take one more point of order.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No. I am not taking another point of order from the hon. Member.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you confirm that, in respect of the Property Services Agency and Crown Suppliers Bill, the Solicitor-General was required to attend the Committee to give it advice relating to internal workings and to explain the advice that had been given to Ministers?

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps that matter would more appropriately be the subject of a question from the hon. Member for a future Question Time.

European Legislation

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

[Relevant documents: Fourth Report from the Select Committee on Procedure, Session 1988-89, on the Scrutiny of European Legislation (HC 622, Vols. I and II) and the Government response (Cm. 1081); First Special Report from the Select Committee on European Legislation Session 1989-90, on the Scrutiny of European Legislation (HC 512)]

Mr. Speaker: A large number of right hon. and hon. Members wish to participate in this debate. I hope that it will be possible to accommodate them all, so I ask for brief contributions.

5.32 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): The Order Paper identifies as relevant to the debate the fourth report from the Select Committee on Procedure, and the Government's response to it. Both are important and constructive contributions to a continuing debate about how to improve the input of national Parliaments—in this case the House—to the formulation of European Community legislation as adopted by the Council of Ministers.

The Council, composed of Ministers drawn from national Governments, is of course the principal law-making body of the Community, so it is important that those Ministers should be fully sensitised to the views and interests of national Parliaments. Hence our belief that the House should be given the best means reasonably possible to achieve that. The Government's response to the Procedure committee's report is meant in that spirit.

This afternoon's report by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on the outcome of the Dublin European council emphasised the degree to which the EC is embarked upon a period of dynamic change. It involves the strengthening of Community institutions, the evolution of some form of European monetary union—stage 1 of which begins this Sunday, 1 July—and the completion of the single market by the end of 1992. The Community has to cope, too, with a challenging series of external issues, ranging from the unification of Germany, to the successful completion of the Uruguay round.

Taken together, these simultaneous challenges amount to what my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has called the labours of Hercules. So we are quite naturally committed as well to a more effective, more democratic Community whose institutions are well adjusted to cope with the challenges of change.

Against that backdrop, we welcome the opportunity that the Procedure Committee report offered to review the participation of the House, through its relationship with Ministers, in the law-making process of the Community. We have witnessed during recent months a growing interest in the role of national Parliaments in that process, linked to the more general debate about possible institutional reform, which will now carry through to the intergovernmental conferences that will begin in Rome in December.

In stressing the role of national Parliaments vis-a-vis the Council, I do not underestimate the real and growing significance of the European Parliament. But we should view the two Parliaments as complements, not competitors, in the process of enhancing democratic accountability within the Community. The European Parliament has a valuable part to play in suggesting amendments to the Council. Our proposals for institutional reform also suggest that it should play an enhanced role in holding the Commission to account, in overseeing its administration of agreed Community policy and helping to ensure proper financial accountability.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): My right hon. and learned Friend speaks of the enhanced role that he sees for the European Parliament, yet one of the most vital roles that this Parliament has to play in scrutinising legislation depends on Ministers giving accurate information to right hon. and hon. Members. On 23 April 1986, my right hon. and learned Friend told the House that he derided as "children with fantasies"—I think was the phrase he used—those who feared the European Parliament, the European Court, and other European institutions taking increased powers. All the ridicule that flowed from my right hon. and learned Friend on that occasion has proved to be totally and utterly wrong. When it comes to the question of scrutiny, it is vital that the House is given accurate information from the Dispatch Box.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The essential and most accurate information that is the foundation of comprehension here is given in a written answer in today's *Hansard* by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General, which sets out clearly the extent to which, for example, the issues arising from the case reported last week flow directly from the European Communities Act 1972, which itself implements article 5 of the treaty in that respect, which was not significantly altered by the Single European Act. All those matters flow from the decision by Parliament at that time and from the development of European Community law as part of the directly applicable law in this country.

The systems for national parliamentary scrutiny of draft EC law that we already have in this House and in another place are often cited as models from which other national Parliaments can learn. My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) is right to want them improved still further, and this debate is designed to achieve just that.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): May I emphasise that many of us who are pro-European Community believe that national Parliaments are of premier concern rather than the growth of the European Parliament, and that the best way of ensuring that the views of national Parliaments are communicated to the European Parliament would be some form of second chamber, such as exists in Germany and Sweden? It is a long tradition in Europe that the individual constituent's interests are reflected in a second chamber. National Parliaments could have direct representation in the European Parliament in that way.

Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the current process does not mark the end of his thinking and that he will consider in the intergovernmental conferences to come a major institutional switch of the kind that I described?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: That is a broader question, which I have no doubt that my hon. Friend can develop in his own speech, if he is lucky enough to catch the Chair's eye. I must today deal with the procedures of this House.

On anyone's analysis it is important that this House should be as well equipped as possible to focus on new issues of concern to the United Kingdom as they arise in the Community, so that the Government can take proper account of the views of the House in negotiations leading up to legislative decisions by the Council of Ministers. That is the essence of what we have come to call parliamentary scrutiny.

It does not of course mean—this is common ground on both sides of the House—that the United Kingdom's views will necessarily prevail in those deliberations. The widespread use of majority voting inevitably means that the United Kingdom will sometimes find itself in the minority, but the best way to influence the course of negotiations, and so secure the best result for the United Kingdom, is to have clear objectives from an early stage. Parliamentary scrutiny of the intentions and objectives of the Ministers concerned makes a crucial contribution to that process.

The present procedures were designed by a Committee under the chairmanship of our former colleague as Member for Northwich, the late Sir John Foster, in 1973. Although they were reviewed in 1978 by the Select Committee on Procedure, they have remained largely unchanged since our accession to the Community. However, with the adoption of the Single European Act in 1986, and the subsequent enactment by Parliament of the European Communities (Amendment) Act 1986, it was clearly timely for the Procedure Committee to examine the options for bringing the scrutiny process up to date.

The Government, indeed the whole House, are therefore most grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) and his Committee for this timely, thorough and well judged report. I shall draw attention to three or four of its key findings.

First, and perhaps surprisingly, the report notes in paragraphs 11 and 12 that neither the volume of European documents coming before the House, nor the number recommended for debate, has risen significantly in recent years. That puts in perspective any suggestion that we are being overwhelmed by a rising tide of documents from Brussels.

Secondly, the report found in paragraph 15 that the adoption, before completion of the scrutiny process, of proposals designated as legally or politically important was comparatively unusual. In 1988-89 there were no such occasions, and there have been only two so far this Session, both of which involved urgent measures for aid to Poland and Hungary. So debates are normally being held in time to influence the United Kingdom's negotiating objectives at the relevant meeting of the Council of Ministers.

Thirdly, the report contains the following important conclusion in paragraph 116:

"The notion that the House of Commons lags behind other EEC Parliaments in the effectveness of its scrutiny machinery was not corroborated in any of the evidence we received and, indeed, was contradicted by a number of authoritative witnesses."

That is encouraging. Several other member states have been examining our system with a view to strengthening their own procedures. But of course we must not be complacent in this respect.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I concur with the conclusion of the Committee, based on the evidence presented to it, but the conclusion could be read in an entirely different way—one which suggests that throughout the Community there is no effective scrutiny of this legislation in any member state.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It can be read to support the proposition with which I started: that there is growing interest throughout the Community in the establishment of more effective scrutiny of this kind. The House has what is widely regarded by other Parliaments as an exemplary system, but I do not think that we should regard our system with such complacency—hence this debate and this report.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East) *rose*——

Sir Geoffrey Howe: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I should like to make a little headway.

Finally, the report notes:

"We have been struck by the unanimity of the evidence submitted to us about the continuing need for a body to perform the sifting functions of the Scrutiny Committee."

So, again, on behalf of the Government, and the whole House, I gladly record our view that the Scrutiny Committee, under the chairmanship of the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), performs that essential task thoroughly, effectively and conscientiously.

The Government therefore welcome the fact that the report of the Procedure Committee seeks to build on and improve the existing system, rather than trying to start again from scratch. We are also grateful to the Scrutiny Committee for its special report, published only yesterday, and we will look carefully at the points that it makes when formulating our final proposals.

Mr. Leighton: Is it not true that we can scrutinise until we are blue in the face, but the point is that power is being taken away from this Parliament?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: To the extent that the treaty makes provisions for decisions to be taken by majority votes—as I have already said—we cannot ensure that our will will prevail. That has been the position from the moment we acceded to the European Community's treaty in the first place.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): It was confirmed by referendum.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It was confirmed by referendum and modestly extended in the subsequent provisions of the Single European Act. That is the point that I have already made. Scrutiny is important to ensure that British Ministers who attend the Councils go there armed as effectively as possible with the views of the House to see whether they can get those views to prevail.

Mr. Leighton: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman recall that, in that referendum, the Government of the day issued a manifesto which said that no important decision would be taken without the agreement of a British Minister, answerable to the House of Commons?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I was not a member of the Government of the day because it was a Labour Government. The position is as I have described it.

[Sir Geoffrey Howe]

Majority voting was provided for from the outset in some 40 articles of the treaty of Rome and in about a dozen more articles under the Single European Act.

As hon. Members will know, the Select Committee rejected the idea of a single Select or Grand Committee for Community matters, and proposed instead the creation of a new system of European Standing Committees—as we think they might be called—with specific subject areas. It recommended closer informal contacts between Members of Parliament and MEPs. It suggested that the Scrutiny Committee's remit, as well as the range of documents available to it, should be widened. It wanted more forward-looking general debate before European Councils, but it shared the near-universal recognition by those who gave evidence to the Committee that the late night, one-and-a-half hour debates on the Floor of the House on EC documents have become progressively less useful for their declared purpose, and progressively more inconvenient for the House.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I intervene in this encouraging and optimistic speech because there are hundreds of ladies outside asking if there is anything that we can do to prevent the Common Market from removing the restrictions on the export of live horses and ponies to the continent. As I have advised them—rightly or wrongly—that there is nothing that I or any other hon. Member can do about that, can the Secretary of State say whether the new arrangements will make any difference? It is important that people who take the trouble to come to the House of Commons to complain about something be given some idea about whether we have such power now—I understand that we do not—or will have under the new arrangements.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Nothing that we are debating today will alter the provisions of the treaty and associated provisions on that issue. I am not in a position to offer precise advice about the exact state of national or Community law on it. I suspect that the outcome may depend, in some respects, on how far we are able to persuade our Community partners to accept a general framework of law that would meet the objectives that my hon. Friend has in mind. To that extent, this debate is relevant, because if the improved procedures that we are discussing enable my hon. Friend—with even more assiduity than usual—to arm Ministers from this country with stronger arguments, the debate will have been of advantage. I cannot answer about the precise provisions of Community law on that topic without notice.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Perhaps I can help the Leader of the House. The hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) could suggest to his constituents that, if the European Parliament were given a greater legislative role, they might be able to lobby it more effectively, and see their lobbying translated into action. It is the actions of hon. Members such as the hon. Gentleman that have prevented that change, which many of my hon. Friends have wanted.

Mr. Teddy Taylor *rose*——

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am afraid that I cannot give way to answer further questions from my hon. Friend. I remind him that I am not speaking as the Secretary of State—still less as the Foreign Secretary or the Solicitor-General. I am merely the Leader of the House and there is a limit to my imputed knowledge in respect of these matters. There is even a limit to my omniscience as deputy Prime Minister.

That insight about the importance and effectiveness of the late-night debates will form the central basis of the Government's response. In offering our response, however, we did not wish to pre-empt the views of the House. That is why we have not yet moved to make any detailed amendments to the Standing Orders. We shall certainly consider all the points that may be raised in this debate before putting our detailed proposals before the House later this Session, with the aim of operating any new arrangements from the start of next Session.

I am pleased to say that the Government are willing to accept the great majority of recommendations in the Procedure Committee report.

The main change, which I have already mentioned, would be the establishment of a series of new European Standing Committees, each of them specialising in particular subjects. Unlike the ad hoc Standing Committees on EC documents, which are selected afresh for each debate, the new Committees would have members appointed for a Session, so that they could build up expertise in particular subjects. We have also accepted that the new Committees should have powers to question Ministers for up to an hour about the relevant EC proposals before debating the documents.

The Procedure Committee report recommended the establishment of five such Committees, but, as the report acknowledges, there is a limit to the number of hon. Members who could be expected to make such a commitment. So, for strictly practical and not for philosophical reasons, we propose to start by setting up three Committees and to review the matter at the end of the first Session. Given the uncertainty involved in any new system, I hope that that approach will commend itself to the House.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Is my right hon. and learned Friend suggesting—it is not clear to me from the report—that the Committees will enjoy the same continuity that Select Committees enjoy and will be established for a Parliament?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As I explained, the present intention is to establish them for one Session. That is in contrast to the existing Standing Committees on EC documents, which are established on a one-off, ad hoc basis. It has not yet been concluded whether Members will be reappointed and I look forward to hearing the views of the House on such matters during the debate.

Like the Procedure Committee, we felt that a single Standing Committee or a Grand Committee would be unable to handle the number and variety of debates—about 50 per Session—that are recommended by the Scrutiny Committee.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: May I comment on that in the presence of the Chairman of the Procedure Committee? We spent a lot of time on the matter and I had strong views in favour of a European Grand Committee. It was argued that we would not get the necessary membership. But could not we have had a Committee with a fixed quorum, an established membership and, in addition, a rotating membership? Such a Committee could have become a forum for debate on European matters where hon.

Members could come and go and debate these matters. I think that such a Committee would always have been manned.

The problem with the recommendation is that we may have a lot of trouble in attracting hon. Members who want to question Ministers, as the Leader of the House suggested, and to fulfil the responsibilities that we recommend in our report.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am trying to give way as often as I sensibly can, but I would rather not give way to hon. Members who have already fought these battles in the Select Committee. It is important that I should try and conclude my speech, and, although I respect the wisdom of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), I hope that he will forgive me if I move on.

It is important to stress that, under our proposals, any hon. Member would be free to attend the Committees' debates if they wished. To encourage that, I am considering another recommendation on the best way of drawing attention to the Committees' forthcoming debates in my weekly business statement.

The establishment of the new Committees is central to the new system. We foresee a number of benefits. First, the new system will allow most debates to take place at a civilised hour and reduce the number of late-night, sparsely attended EC debates, which are all too frequent at present.

Secondly, it will offer hon. Members, including those who are not members of the Committees, the opportunity to play a more effective role by allowing them to question Ministers and thus to assess and influence Government policy more fully.

We are still considering the breakdown among the three Committees—of the matters to be considered—and in particular whether the division should be on a subject or on a departmental basis. We should welcome the views of the House on that. Clearly, however, it will be desirable that the number of debates is split as evenly as possible between the Committees, although allowances must be made for variations in the subjects on which proposals are emerging from Brussels. That matter, too, would be subject to review at the end of the Session.

There is one point on which we have gone beyond what the Procedure Committee recommended and on which I know the Scrutiny Committee takes a different view from the Government. It relates to the system of referring documents to the Committees. We believe that the new arrangements will allow more effective scrutiny in Committee and to allow them to prove their effectiveness we wish to work on the presumption that the majority of debates will in future be taken in Committee instead of on the Floor of the House as at present.

To that end, we propose to change the balance of the present referral system so that all documents will automatically stand referred to a Committee unless, after discussion through the usual channels, a motion is tabled to hold the debate on the Floor of the House. I expect that to change the proportion so that about two thirds of the debates will take place in Committee rather than on the Floor of the House as they are at present. It will be open to the Scrutiny Committee to recommend that a particular document should be debated on the Floor of the House if it regards that as especially important, and the Government would naturally take that into account.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): It might be better to clear this matter up now rather than later. The difference between the Scrutiny Committee's views and those of the Leader of the House is rather less than he supposes. I think that, for the reasons that he explained, it is likely that the majority of referrals from the Scrutiny Committee will be to the new Standing Committees, and the presumption ought to be that they should be so referred. The difference between us has to do with whether the judgment should ultimately lie with the House, or with the Government, in consultation. For all sorts of reasons, the House would prefer that the judgment should remain with it, although, in all honesty, I think that if that happened, we should still achieve the result that the right hon. and learned Gentleman seeks.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that compact and courteous intervention. I have studied the report that the Scrutiny Committee produced yesterday on this very topic. What emerges from the analysis in that report is that our proposals go with the grain of actuality, which is another way of saying that the outcome may be much the same. It is our judgment that it is best to tilt the balance of decision making in that way, and that is perhaps an understandable difference of judgment between us. No doubt views will be expressed on the matter during the debate.

The Government's response also confirms our continued intention to try to bring proposals before the Scrutiny Committee rapidly and to arrange prompt debates when that Committee so recommends. We have, in general, steadily improved our record in that respect. On occasion, there may be a balance to be struck, as the report notes: a debate too early in the life of a proposal increases the risk that it may be approved in a substantially different form. Even so, we expect that a presumption in favour of early debates will make it increasingly rare for proposals to come to a Council for adoption before the House has had a chance to debate them. Because of that, the Government have not accepted the suggestion that Ministers might make oral statements before a Council as a substitute for a debate.

The Procedure Committee report also advocated that improved opportunities should be provided for hon. Members to debate general developments in the EC—as opposed to specific legislative proposals before the Council of Ministers. The Government welcome that. The most recent six-monthly debate was already more forward-looking and took place before the Dublin summit. In future, such debates might be renamed simply "European Community debates" and would give the House an opportunity to express its views on issues that are expected to be considered at European Council meetings.

On a more technical point, we have accepted the recommendation for a modest extension in the terms of reference of the Scrutiny Committee. That will regularise the Committee's position by giving it a more formal mandate to carry out inquiries which the Government felt that it was already able to conduct. The hon. Member for Newham, South has been suggesting such a change for a number of years and, as suggested in yesterday's special report from his Committee, we shall be discussing with him the precise wording.

The Government response recognises the benefits to be gained by building up informal links between this Parliament and Members of the European Parliament. We

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fully support initiatives such as the conference of scrutiny committee chairmen from the 12 member states—with European Parliament representation—held in Cork last month and the proposed parliamentary "assizes" at which both European Parliament and national Parliament representatives would be present, which is to be held in Italy later in the year to discuss preparations for the intergovernmental conference.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): I simply seek information from the Leader of the House about the idea of assizes, which has been put forward by the European Parliament. Can the right hon. and learned Gentleman tell the House more about that proposal? When is it likely to be held, will there be a delegation to it from this Parliament, and how will it be chosen?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I thought for a moment that I was going to be cross-examined about the linguistic background to the use of the word "assizes" in this context. As a former member of the Wales and Chester circuit, I have a clear understanding of what the assize commission is like. I doubt whether this assize will be anything like that. It is an interesting example of a possible mistranslation of the word "assize", which means something quite different from what we used to know at the Lampeter assizes.

This gathering is likely to take place in October, during the Italian presidency—which is the next one. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has already commended it in concept to the House, in the debate the other day. On that basis, we hope that representatives from this Parliament will be present. I cannot yet give the House any more information, save to say that both he and I have given a favourable response to it, so one hopes that there will be a reasonably favourable outcome.

Various channels are already in operation between Members of Parliament and Members of the European Parliament. Many of those are on a party basis for contact and for the exchange of views between hon. Members and Members of the European Parliament. The European Democratic group now meets regularly in the Palace of Westminster. It meets proudly, progressively and effectively here. I hope that such contacts can be cultivated and that more contacts and channels can be opened.

I know that the recommendation in the report on telephone and postal charges for communications with Community institutions will be especially valued by hon. Members, and the Services Committee has commissioned further work on both. I hope to make further progress on all of this in the not-too-distant future. We are also looking at the question of wider access for Members of the European Parliament to the House facilities in other respects.

The principles on which the Government have based their response to the report are first, that Britain wants to maximise its influence in the Community, secondly, that the House wants to play a constructive part in influencing the content of Community legislation and thirdly, that Westminster and the European Parliament can, each in its own distinctive ways, significantly increase the democratic accountability of both the Council and the Commission.

Against that background, the Government hope and believe that this response will help to bring our scrutiny procedures up to date and will allow the House to play a proper role in the consideration of Community legislation. For these to work effectively requires a positive commitment by the Government—which I give—and a commitment by the House. On that basis, our combined input can be substantial, and I commend these documents for consideration by the House.

6.2 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): It is good that this debate is taking place on a motion for the Adjournment of the House, because that provides an opportunity for all of us to reflect on the documents before us: the report of the Select Committee on Procedure of November 1989, the Government response of May of this year, and, last but not least, the report by the Select Committee on European Legislation which was published yesterday. I welcome the opportunity spelt out in the speech of the Leader of the House for us to give our observations and comments, and for the Government to take them away and to consider them before any definitive proposals are brought to the House for a decision.

There is general agreement about the need for improved procedures for scrutiny of European business and legislation. That must be so, not only in the present circumstances but because of the increasing momentum of change in Europe, the completion of the single market in 1992 and the developing debate on economic and monetary union. The debate on the social charter is of particular importance to Labour Members and I deplore the Prime Minister's description of it as "piffling little powers". There are many important issues embodied in the social charter and we want to see an informed debate about them. When we also consider the possible enlargement of the Community and the dramatic changes in eastern Europe, we can only conclude that all this vital —and often exciting—train of events will demand and deserve more time for debate and consideration in the House of Commons.

Today, we have had the latest example of the need to have more effective and more wide-ranging financial scrutiny and control of our own Government in respect of their dealings involving the European Community. I wish to put on record the fact that no Labour Member decried or denounced the achievements of Rover under the ownership of British Aerospace. That was not the issue. The issue was a deception of Parliament and the European Community by the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, the predecessor of the present holder of that high and important office.

The Leader of the House made the point that our existing procedures for scrutiny have barely changed since they were introduced in 1973. I agree that we should see the Strasbourg Parliament and this House as complementary—as working in co-operation on these important issues of policy and these important developments—and not as being in conflict. There is ample opportunity for both Parliaments to improve the scrutiny and control of legislation.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): I have been looking at the wonderful document, "Looking into the Future", produced by the Labour party as a run-up to the next general election. The Labour party has a great deal to say there about the European Community. Can the hon. Gentleman give us some idea how this so-called

"complementary relationship" would function if the Labour party agreed to allow the Community institutions to acquire a higher function—in relation, for example, to a central bank—than Conservative Members would be prepared to allow? Can he comment on the way in which that scrutiny would operate?

Dr. Cunningham: That intervention has nothing to do with the debate. As the hon. Gentleman has not even got the title of the document right, I do not have much confidence in his analysis of the contents. [HON. MEMBERS: "What are they?"] I am quite happy to depart into a debate about the Labour party policy and the document "Looking to the Future." That is not one of the documents on the Table of the House for discussion today, but if the Leader of the House will provide time, we may be able to come to that matter.

I recognise the importance of the work of the Procedure Committee in preparing its recommendations to the House under the chairmanship of the hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) and improvements in procedures are always welcome to me personally. I take no pleasure—this week is a perfect example—in sitting here until the early hours of the morning scrutinising legislation, whether it be United Kingdom legislation or legislation from the European Community. It is an unsatisfactory way for any Parliament to operate, and anything which improves that is, in principle, welcome to me and, I believe, to most Opposition Members.

I also applaud the work of the Select Committee on European Legislation under the chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), who is indefatigable in devoting himself to his responsibilities in these matters. He is always skilful and certainly always tireless in his pursuit of the issues, and we are grateful to him and to his Committee for the publication of their report yesterday in time for discussion today.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that keeping the House up for an hour voting last night was a waste of time and simply used up hon. Members' energy? That was in the power of the Labour Chief Whip.

Dr. Cunningham: In the midst of controversial legislation, the House often has many Divisions. I cannot say that I enjoy it, but it is often important for political parties to put on record their views of particular issues —and the hon. Gentleman's party is no exception. As there is such a wide gulf between the Labour party and the Government on issues involving the national health service, in the judgment of my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) it was important for us to record our position in the Division Lobby last night. Like the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston), I cannot say that I enjoyed it, but sometimes it is important to put matters on record.

Despite all the hours that many hon. Members spend in this place and all the work that we put in, the House of Commons is a relatively weak and deficient legislature—in many respects, not just in its scrutiny of European legislation. In the past decade, the momentum of legislative change has increased dramatically. From a Government who came to office professing less government, we have had more government and more legislation than ever before. Yet our democratic processes and political and constitutional arrangements have apparently been beyond question, protected on some mythical high ground as a tidal wave of change washes over everything and everyone else. I welcome debates of this kind, because at least we are talking about the need for a strengthened, modernised and better informed House of Commons, which can begin to redress the imbalance between a centralising executive Government and the House which has the duty to examine, question and hold them to account.

As I have said, we have just witnessed an example of that imbalance in the totally inadequate statement and responses from the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on the Government's deception with regard to the sell-off of Rover to British Aerospace. That was ironic when just last month, following the European Community summit meeting, the Prime Minister said that she would do her best to see that as much information as possible comes before the House. Her message certainly did not get through to her Trade and Industry Secretary—or perhaps it did and, characteristically, he simply dismissed it.

Accountability in decision-taking at whatever level is a basic requirement of democracy. If the European Community is to be more effective, it must develop an improved system for making decisions. Over the years, the Community has gained powers from this and other national Parliaments. That process has not been accompanied by greater accountability and scrutiny. Where decisions are rightly made at the European level, the decision makers must be accountable.

We believe that the European Parliament should also be given the powers that it needs to complement and not replace national parliaments. The scrutiny of European Community legislation is an important aspect of our work and it will continue to grow in importance. At present, the House deals with European business in what is universally regarded as an inadequate fashion. As the volume and importance of decision-making in Europe has increased, we in the House have failed to keep pace with developments.

The Opposition therefore welcome the debate on specific proposals to improve the procedures with which we scrutinise that business. I should make it clear that in my view, whatever Ministers may say—the Leader of the House seemed somewhat complacent—the way in which the Government have restricted opportunities for hon. Members to question Ministers on European matters over the past decade has not been a good example of how to proceed. Statements on Ministerial Councils have become a rarity, being made only when a Minister wants to publicise a so-called success, usually blocking a progressive move for co-ordinated action on the environment, for example.

Twice-yearly debates on Community developments often occur months after the period reported, but I am pleased to welcome the proposed changes, the suggestion that we should have a European affairs general debate and the proposal that the Leader of the House should announce at business question time each Thursday what European business will be coming before the House.

As a result of the Single European Act, the Council of Ministers can decide on measures to implement the 1992 single market by a qualified majority vote. That may have focused our minds on the fact that our scrutiny of European legislation has become somewhat out of date,

[Dr. Cunningham]

but it has made the status quo even more unacceptable in the process. We therefore have to move to a new, better and more effective system of dealing with such matters.

The practice of regular ministerial statements after important Council of Ministers meetings has almost disappeared and nothing has been done to fill the gap and to enable Parliament to question Ministers. That remains a major problem. The decisions taken by the Councils are to important for the House not to have adequate opportunities to influence them or to express an opinion on their work. Hon. Members need more information and access to what is happening in the European Community. Given the increasing volume and speed of decision-taking at Council levels, the House needs to be far more alert.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): In that connection, do the Opposition support the idea of postage and telephone call facilities? Without any disrespect to the way in which the Services Committee operates, the danger is that the consideration and study of the matter will mean further weeks and months of delay while a relatively simple system is put in place which most other Parliaments have adopted long since as a matter of routine. Will the Opposition undertake to support celerity and haste in this matter?

Dr. Cunningham: The short answer to that is yes, but I will explain in more detail a little later.

I commend to the House the memorandum submitted for consideration by my Friends the Members for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) and for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) to the Procedure Committee. Here lies the major difference between the Government and the Labour party. As I have said, I welcome much of what the Leader of the House has said, but I do not welcome the proposal for three Committees. We adhere to our view that a Grand Committee on European affairs is a far better and more practicable approach. It is a matter not of ideology but of having a practicable system for working in the House.

I have reservations, which are shared by the Whips Office, about the ability permanently to provide sufficient hon. Members to man the Committees in the way envisaged by the Leader of the House. Inevitably, there would be some pretty serious differences of opinion about the distribution of places on those committees between the parties. I do not believe that anything like sufficient consideration has been given to those matters.

I share the concern expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) in an earlier intervention about the Government deciding automatically whether a matter should be discussed in Committee rather than on the Floor of the House. That is a proposal to take power away from the House of Commons and vest it in the Executive. I have considerable hesitation about agreeing to that proposal. There is no record of the House being obstinate or obdurate about these matters, so I ask the Leader of the House to reconsider that proposal.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Before the hon. Gentleman leaves that point, would his objection be overcome if the Committee upstairs were accessible to all hon. Members, so that they are not frozen out by it being moved upstairs?

Mr. Cunningham: That is the proposal, but it does not meet the point that I am making. The whole House should have the opportunity to discuss these matters, and I put that on the record for further consideration. With a little more discussion, we may be able to reach agreement.

I welcome what the Leader of the House said about improving relations between hon. Members and Members of the Strasbourg Parliament. I understand the historic angst about Members being appointed or indirectly elected, but now there are democratically elected Members of the European Parliament representing Britain and we must have sensible working relations with them. The way in which they are treated when they come to this House is appalling. When I visit the European Parliament, I am made welcome as a guest. I have wide-ranging access to its facilities, yet Members of the European Parliament must queue like anyone else to get into this place. They have no access to the Galleries of the Chamber.

We have a Gallery for distinguished strangers, a Gallery for Peers, and other designated Galleries. I cannot for the life of me understand why we cannot have a row in the Gallery designated for Members of the European Parliament. That would be a simple way of showing the determination of the House to seek better relations with our colleagues. There are other ways in which we should enable elected Members of the Strasbourg Parliament to have access to other facilities in the House, but I shall not go into detail now.

I turn to the point made by the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes). It is a matter of astonishment to everyone, particularly business people, when I explain that if my Euro-Member of Parliament writes to me, he does so in effect at the taxpayer's expense, but if I reply to him I do so at my own expense. If he telephones me—he is a Conservative Member, but never mind—from Strasbourg or Brussels, the call is paid by the European Parliament from public funds. If I telephone him in Brussels or Strasbourg, I receive a bill. That is surely nonsense, and I hope that the procedures can be accelerated so that we can resolve it soon.

As the Leader of the House knows, European Members of Parliament can travel anywhere in Europe on legitimate parliamentary business. I see no reason why hon. Members should not be able to make a limited number of visits to Strasbourg or Brussels, at public expense, in pursuit of legitimate business on behalf of their constituents. Until we involve ourselves in what is happening in Europe and other member states, we shall always be seen as reluctant, or we shall lose out because we are not using the institutions of the European Community half so effectively as the national Parliaments of other member states.

I hope that my response to the introduction to the debate by the Leader of the House, much of which I agreed with, has been helpful and constructive. I further hope that, when we finally decide how the procedures should be changed, there will be much agreement across the Floor on the changes that should be implemented.

6.23 pm

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): The debate is on two considerable matters of importance, and one follows from the other. First, we must make people understand, whether Members of Parliament like it or not, that major parts of British sovereignty and the direct control of part of the

British law have passed from the British Parliament to the European Economic Community. That is a fair but bland statement to make, but one that frequently is not clearly understood. Therefore, it is of greater importance than in the past, when British Ministers could veto EC directives and regulations, that the House should be able to examine carefully and, where necessary, debate the new laws passed by Brussels.

However, it must be understood that changes in procedure, which we are debating today, will do nothing to lessen our treaty obligations or the overall effect of the Single European Act. The fact that the Council of Ministers determines more and more issues under the majority voting procedure does not, nor should it, lessen the importance of the House maintaining proper scrutiny of the action of British Ministers. The expansion of majority voting may mean that there is a need to examine, and perhaps develop, new channels of influence. Therefore, two of the recommendations in the report deal with links with the European Parliament. None of that lessens the essential requirement for Ministers to be answerable to, and examined by, the House for their action on European matters.

I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House and the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) for the kind remarks that they have made about me and the Select Committee on Procedure. The Committee does the work; I am only its instrument. I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for agreeing with my request that the Government's response to our report on the scrutiny of European legislation should be in the form of a White Paper rather than a letter to the Committee. That has allowed hon. Members to enter the debate fully informed of the Government's views and able to react to the report rather than having to listen to the speech and make judgments on a prima facie basis. Without wishing to sound pompous, I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on providing a response to every one of the 28 recommendations and not side-stepping any of them.

I need not repeat that the report is the first in-depth report providing detailed consideration of how the House deals with and scrutinises European legislation since the Procedure Committee report in 1978. We attempted to do a thorough job so that perhaps it will not be necessary to carry out a further investigation for another 10 years.

May I therefore divide my analysis of our report's recommendations into four different sections. First, I refer the House to paragraph 43 of our report:

"In the evidence submitted to us there was general agreement that the way in which the House currently debates European legislation is profoundly unsatisfactory. Particular criticism focused on the amount of time spent by the House after Ten o'clock on European business, notably in the form of debates subject to a 1½ hour limit under Standing Order No. 14. These were variously described as 'cursory' and 'not very well attended'. In addition, the then Leader of the House referred to the tendency of such debates to attract Members more interested in rekindling the embers of the argument over the principle of membership of the Community than in examining the detailed merits of a particular proposal . . . Stress was also laid during questioning on the great unpopularity of these late night occasions, particularly amongst backbench Members whipped for divisions which seldom materialise."

We were impressed by the strength of feeling about debates on Europe being set for a late hour and the sterility of major debates, which are taken twice a year in prime time and were, until today, set only to consider matters in retrospect. Equally, we realised that to make demands on prime time for all the matters that the Scrutiny Committee considered and recommended for debate by hon. Members could not be practical.

We therefore recommended that the two major debates should be organised in the two weeks prior to the twice-yearly summit meeting, that the debate should be on a substantive motion and that the Government should be responsible for providing the House, prior to the debate, with a list of the matters likely to be on the summit agenda. Obviously it would be helpful if we could have the exact summit agenda, but I am informed that that is frequently not available until a few days before the summit meeting. However, the Foreign Office must know approximately what is likely to be debated at the summit meetings and it is obviously right and proper that the House should know about that before our debates take place.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Is not the description that my hon. Friend has just given of late night attendances equally true of attendances at 6.30 pm? That strengthens our point about having such debates upstairs in Committee rather than in an almost empty House.

Sir Peter Emery: My hon. Friend may well be right. I was hoping that the two debates every six months on European matters would attract a greater number of hon. Members interested in them if hon. Members were to be debating matters for the future rather than referring to things that had happened weeks or months previously and upon which the views of the House could have no effect.

The second major alteration to procedure is our recommendation that the new special European Standing Committees should be established, with the same membership, for a year instead of for the duration of a Parliament. We thought that it would be too much to ask someone to commit himself to such a Committee for the length of a Parliament. We thought that it was reasonable for someone to commit himself for a year to consider upstairs the bulk of the matters which the Scrutiny Committee recommended should be considered by the House.

Those special European Standing Committees should have power to hear statements from Ministers and to cross-exaine them on the relevant documents before the Committee before proceeding to the normal consideration by way of a debate on the documents. We considered whether those Committees should be given powers to call for papers and persons, but we thought that that would duplicate the work of the departmental Select Committees. We thought that it was necessary to have details about the documents before the Committee and that that could best be achieved by cross-examining the Minister responsible.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that one of our important recommendations in the report was that there should, as far as possible, be a link between the new Committees—the Government have accepted at least three of those—and the departmental Select Committees which cover the same subjects? Would it not be unfortunate if, for example, the Select Committee on Agriculture did not know what the special scrutiny Committee on Agriculture was doing? There should be a link, and that is why we suggested that at least two members of a departmental Select Committee should be members of the special Standing Committees

[Mr. David Winnick]

that we are recommending. That linkage is important because, if it does not exist, the two Committees will not know what is going on.

Sir Peter Emery: The hon. Gentleman has kindly dealt with a whole paragraph of my speech, to which I now need not refer.

We saw the importance of the hon. Gentleman's point. My only criticism of having three special Committees instead of five is that it will be difficult to ensure a link with two Committees, perhaps between finance and trade and industry, which would involve four members of the Select Committee, so that only six other members would be left on that Select Committee. There are difficulties, but I agree that there must be seen to be a link between the departmental Select Committees and the work of the specialist European Standing Committees.

To encourage greater interest in European regulations, we believe that matters on the same subject being considered by those with a particular interest and whom we hoped would want to serve on those Special European Committees would provide better and more expert consideration, especially as service over the year built up and the committee members understood the problems that they had to consider.

There must be no misunderstanding about the fact that all hon. Members can attend and speak at the special European Committees. We want to encourage all hon. Members interested in particular subjects to do that. The only limitation is that they will have to catch the Chairman's eye and they would not be able to vote on the motion before the Committee because that would be the responsibility of the members appointed to the Committee. Hon. Members would have full powers to attend the Committee and to question the Minister so long as the Chair recognised them.

Mr. Wells: With regard to linkages, the Select Committee on European Legislation has the power to call for persons and papers. Indeed, the British sausage was discussed in the House today and the European Legislation Committee undertook considerable investigations to inform the House about that issue. Therefore, such information would be available to the special European Standing Committee before it sat.

Sir Peter Emery: My hon. Friend is right, and that is why there should be co-operation between the two bodies. That underlines the point made by the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick).

We have asked the Leader of the House to announce in his weekly business statement what documents will be considered by each of the special European Standing Committees, the day on which the debates will take place and which matters will be considered. This information should also be included in the party Whips. That would encourage hon. Members to attend the special Committees. It would also provide them with an opportunity to attend. We hope that this will provide a regeneration of interest among hon. Members instead of leaving those important matters to hon. Members who have been described as the "European buffs". The availability of such information would stimulate full and proper interest in the matter before the Committee instead of leading to a debate which degenerated into arguments about whether we should or should not have signed the treaty of Rome.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: My hon. Friend continues to make assessments of those late night debates as comprising a bunch of idiots talking about past events, but I cannot recall his presence at many of those late night sittings.

Sir Peter Emery: I suggest that my hon. Friend is much too interested in taking part in such arguments to observe the number of people who must be kept here late at night as a result of his arguments. He fails to notice the number of people sitting about the Chamber or in the Corridors listening to those quite useless debates.

The Government have responded to our recommendation about the members of the special European Standing Committees by suggesting the appointment of only three instead of the five recommended by the Procedure Committee. My Committee recommends five because the vast majority of the work falls reasonably into the subject headings of agriculture, finance and treasury, trade and industry, transport and the environment and, finally, other subjects. That would seem to spread the load fairly evenly, although most of the work in the past has been on finance and agriculture.

We understand the arguments about limiting the number to three Committees, but it is essential that they are subject oriented. They should not all be general Committees. Indeed, the division might be agriculture; finance, Treasury and trade and industry; environment and transport with other subjects referred to whichever Committee seems most appropriate.

In order to attract hon. Members to serve on the new committees, it is essential that they know what major subjects each committee will consider. They must know when they ask to serve on one of the three Committees what subjects they will be asked to consider.

I must make it clear that the recommendations of the Procedure Commitee do not mean that every matter referred for consideration by the Standing Committee must be considered in Committee. There are bound to be some subjects—I am glad that the Leader of the House realises this—which both the Government and the House consider to be of sufficient importance to demand consideration on the Floor of the House. The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, can debate more clearly than me who should make that decision.

I hope that when matters are considered on the Floor of the House there will be perhaps more than one debate on one day and they will be arranged to take place before 10 o'clock at night. If the debates are sufficiently important to be considered on the Floor of the House, they are important enough to attract some part of prime time.

The shadow Leader of the House referred to the possibility of creating a European Grand Committee. We studied that closely. As the members of the Committee will know, there was a divergence of views on the matter. The suggested rolling membership of the Grand Committee seemed to some of us to have a disadvantage. We were attempting to set up committees of people with specialist knowledge who could understand and deal in depth with specific subject matters that came before them. It seemed that such matters could be dealt with more sensibly by specific Committees than by a European Grand

Committee. On the difficulty of appointing members to the new Committees and obtaining volunteers, I remind the House that we already man a considerable number of Standing Committees on European Community documents each year. Such Committees may have different members, but the manning, or womaning——

Dr. Cunningham: Staffing.

Sir Peter Emery: Indeed, the staffing of such Committees is undertaken at present. The difficulty of finding members for the new Committees need be no greater than for Standing Committees now and hon. Members should be more willing volunteers.

Dr. Cunningham: I do not want to go into too much detail, but there are some important unanswered questions. For example, what will be the role of Opposition spokesmen in the Procedure Committee's proposals, which were largely endorsed by the Leader of the House? What will be the breakdown of the membership of the new Committees between the parties? It would be much easier to find members for one Grand Committee and maintain it with a reasonably limited quorum. If necessary, the Grand Committee could have sub-committees. That seems a far more practicable way to proceed. It will allow the creation of a forum in which both Ministers and members of the Committees can work. It is not clear whether the hon. Gentleman envisages that Ministers will be members of the Committees. Where would that leave Opposition spokesmen? If we had a Grand Committee the lines would be much more clearly drawn. It would be much more likely to lead to agreement between the parties.

Sir Peter Emery: Clearly, a Minister would have to be a member of the Committee because he would be cross-examined. We considered that it was obviously necessary to include an Opposition spokesman, whether the primary shadow Minister or a number two. That happens already in the manning of Standing Committees on European Community Documents. There is no great difficulty there. I hope that there will be no greater difficulty in future with the new committees than in the past. Of course, I understand that matters such as the hon. Gentleman mentioned would have to be dealt with. It would be foolish of me to suggest that there will be no complications. There are always complications when any change is made. But I hope that by creating new Committees, the change will be of considerable benefit.

I have not yet touched on our recommendations for the Scrutiny Committee. I understand that the Chairman of that Committee will seek to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. He can speak for himself; he does not need me to speak for him. He does an admirable amount of work for the House, and his new report published only yesterday is worthy of thorough consideration by the House. Although my Committee has not considered the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee, I think we would basically agree with them.

Five other matters are worthy of note. The House is not behind other European Parliaments in the scope and detail of the consideration that it gives to European regulations. We are further ahead in our detailed consideration of scrutiny than any other Parliament. That does not mean that we are perfect, but we are further ahead than any other Parliament. The only nation that has a joint parliamentary and MEP committee is Belgium. We considered the possibility of setting up such a committee. However, it was interesting to note that the Belgian committee does not consider any of the proposed regulations in detail. Mainly it holds general discussions on broad-brush issues affecting the EEC.

Among my Committee's witnesses there was almost a universal view that late-night one-and-a-half-hour debates have become ineffectual. We need to provide a means by which important European matters, and often new laws for Britain, can be considered by a much larger number of Members of Parliament than is the case at present. Lastly, the remit of the Scrutiny Committee should be extended somewhat.

I now turn to the relationship between Parliament and the European Parliament. The relations and contacts between Members of Parliament and MEPs are dealt with at the end of our report. As greater power passes to the European Parliament, as ways of questioning majority decisions by the Council of Ministers now lie with the European Parliament, and as members of the Commission and Commission decisions can be questioned by Members of the European Parliament, it behoves Parliament and Members of the House to work more closely with British MEPs than ever before. If not, the influence of Parliament on EEC decisions will become less and less. I believe that MEPs wish to encourage that closer relationship. We Members of Parliament should reverse our past general indifference to MEPs and warmly welcome greater contact and co-operation with them.

To some of my colleagues I must say that it is too late to fight past battles. We are now part of Europe. Let us help to lead the EEC, not sit and complain about it.

This debate will not be world shattering, nor are our recommendations and the Government's acceptance of them revolutionary. However, I honestly believe that there is a great need to improve present consideration by the House of European regulations as they affect Great Britain. Our present procedure has become moribund. The proper working of the suggested improvements, if considered and used by Members of Parliament, will provide a more detailed scrutiny and debate of European regulations and directives than ever previously achieved by the House.

6.49 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I am grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for calling me at this stage. It enables me, as Chairman of the Select Committee on European Legislation—commonly called the Scrutiny Committee—to thank the Chairman of the Select Committee on Procedure and his colleagues for all their work last autumn in producing a comprehensive report on matters relating to EEC scrutiny. Without that, the Government White Paper—to which the hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) referred—would probably not have been of the same quality. I also thank the Leader of the House not only for presenting that document as a White Paper, but for arranging today's Adjournment debate, which allows broad discussion. I thank him especially for what he said in his speech about proposed further discussions with me—I would represent my colleagues on the Committee—with a view to reaching a common agreement about changes in the Committee's

[Mr. Nigel Spearing]

terms of reference, and in the all-important resolution of 1980 under which the Government operate, by order of the House.

The Committee did not issue its report until 7 o'clock last night. The delay was due to the crush of European legislation. In his speech less than 24 hours later, the Leader of the House has accepted at least one of the Committee's important requests and recommendations. I am tempted to say, "Is that a record?" Our special report HC 512 of this Session deals only with matters relating specifically to our terms of reference. I shall refer to that in a moment.

Publicity is the petrol of politics. It may not be well known to some hon. Members or to the public, but while the House is in session we publish a weekly report summarising important documents published by the Commission. Every week the report lists at the back the documents that are still lying on the Table of the House awaiting debate. They are listed in departmental order. That is an example of glasnost and visibility. Unfortunately, as not enough hon. Members know of the report, when European documents are debated in Committee or late at night in the House, some hon. Members are not so well prepared as they might be.

The Committee agreed with many of the recommendations of the Procedure Committee, especially the idea of turning the six-monthly debates into prospective views rather than discussions of a report which, of course, should still be laid. It also agreed with the request for more publicity for debates, and an undertaking by the Leader of the House—which he has repeated today—that during business questions he would announce what Committees will be in progress the following week.

Sir Russell Johnston: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the debates to which he has referred, although supposed to be about the report, have largely been concerned with the future and what was taking place at the time in the Community?

Mr. Spearing: Yes. The twice-yearly debates were invented when the then Ted Short was Leader of the House. We want the debates—as does everyone—a week or two before the official twice-yearly European Council meeting, but the agenda of that meeting is not always known. I shall not go off my track and talk about the arrangements and procedures adopted by the Council, but they sometimes make it difficult for the House to debate subjects which may come up at short notice.

The report of the Scrutiny Committee has been published and speaks for itself: I have a copy here for hon. Members who wish to read it. However, I should like the House to be aware of one or two important matters. The terms of reference of our Committee are still too narrow. As long ago as 1986, when we read about the Single European Act, we suggested that our terms of reference should be wider, and the Government have come some way towards that. We are grateful to them for saying that we may be able to see working documents and others that are not formally published but which come into the Government's hands. That would be helpful.

We would also like to see the Commission make documents available to interested parties in the United Kingdom. Why should trade associations or anyone else be better informed than the House about the Commission's thinking? I hope that the Government will bear that request in mind, not just for the benefit of the Scrutiny Committee but for the benefit of other Select Committees—if not in the terms of reference, at least in terms of conduct.

The Committee welcomes the suggestion, in recommendations 17 to 19, that a Minister should be subject to perhaps an hour's questioning in Committee. Although various procedural matters may need to be worked out, I think that everyone agrees with the principle. However —as I said when I intervened in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham)—the Committee is unanimously opposed to the Government's suggestion that all documents should be referred automatically by Standing Order to a Committee. As I said to the Leader of the House in another intervention, I believe that many will be referred in any case, and the Committee would welcome that.

In the appendix to the Committee's report—published yesterday—we show that that is an increasing trend. A good morning Committee debate—especially if it is well publicised—can be more effective than a debate on the Floor of the House late at night, especially as hon. Members can speak more than once, which they cannot do in formal debates in the House. Nevertheless, there should still be a formal agreement on the Floor of the House to refer matters to a Committee. If there are any differences of opinion, they will be known, and the House will retain control.

I can give the Leader of the House good reason why that should be the case, if only to back up Government policy. When we meet our committee counterparts in other Parliaments, they are sometimes surprised at our powers, and amazed to learn that we can approach Ministers any time we like, although in reality they are usually contacted by our clerks on the telephone or by letter. While the powers of our Committees may not be as extensive as we would wish, they are none the less the subject of admiration. If there were automaticity, we could not make those claims. The Foreign Secretary has rightly said that we are beefing up the procedures of our Committees. It would be a pity if they were diminished. I hope that the Leader of the House will reconsider automaticity, because we would welcome the results.

The important resolution of 30 October 1980 considerably changed the way in which the House related to the Government. There have been major changes since 1975. That resolution still refers only to documents of legislation. The Government guarantee to have debates before a decision in Brussels, other things being equal, on legislative documents only. What is such a document? A White Paper is a notice of legislation. We all know that effective decisions are taken on a White Paper and that a debate on the subsequent Bill is not so effective as it might have been if one has not had a debate on the White Paper. The Select Committee on European Legislation is still unhappy that some matters of great importance are not necessarily debated. There was a little trouble over the Delors report because we did not debate it although we recommended such a debate. Unfortunately, the resolution did not bite.

The Scrutiny Committee has no competence under its terms of reference regarding the proposed three Standing Committees. My colleagues on the Select Committee share my belief that there could be practical problems if three

Committees only are appointed. We are more aware than anyone else of the volume of legislation which comes out as we wade through those documents every week. If that volume of legislation is channeled to the three Committees, albeit changed every Session and fortified—I was glad to hear from the Leader of the House that any Member attending will be attached to the Committee, which is what the Procedure Committee suggested—it may impose too great a work load on the Committee members. If a Committee dealt with trade and industry policy, the environment or various forms of transport ranging from air to shipping, one can imagine the volume and complexity of the issues to be dealt with by that one Committee. We know that Members have special knowledge or expertise in such matters, but the volume of work could present difficulties.

Perhaps we could undertake an experiment based on the present procedure for nomination to Committees undertaken by the Committee of Selection. I know that I might be calling horses for courses in that respect. More hon. Members than currently envisaged would be involved, but the number of documents and debates would be the same. Those hon. Members could be selected because of their specialist knowledge. Similarly, we could perhaps have a panel of volunteers available, selected by the usual organisers of our business. Plenty of notice should also be given to those hon. Members who have an interest in a particular subject but are not appointed members of the relevant Committee.

I thank the Leader of the House for the innovation evidenced on the Order Paper about which the Scrutiny Committee has been writing to him for some time. Last week there were no fewer than nine motions on the Order Paper which gave plenty of notice of the documents going upstairs. Today there are six such motions on the Order Paper—about cadmium in water, milk, meat safety and the rules relating to game and rabbit meat. They relate to specialised topics, but any citizen or hon. Member who reads our Order Paper will know that such topics will be debated in the near future. That will give hon. Members the opportunity to look up the relevant documents and to contact interested groups. It also gives the public the opportunity to contact hon. Members. Such interested hon. Members may volunteer to sit on the relevant new special Committee and perhaps the usual channels will go about their usual business. Those Committees mean that the Minister has an hour to set out his case and there is an hour of debate afterwards. That could lead to more effective scrutiny.

It is important to remember what the hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) said. At the end of the day, we are only advising Ministers who go to the Council of Ministers to partake in discussions. They then come back to the House with what they have or have not achieved.

Sir Peter Emery: It is important that the proposed Committees consider various issues because they will not only advise Ministers, but allow Members of the European Parliament to know our views. It is important for British Members of the European Parliament who are debating specific matters to know that they have been considered in Westminster and to know our views.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. The Second European Reading is equivalent to the second round, and it is most important that MEPs should know what Members of this place think. If they read the Standing Committee record, they will have that information. I am sure that some members of the public —and, even important, people in industry and local government—are unaware that the Standing Committee proceedings are published within a couple of days of the sitting. The undertakings given by Ministers and the concerns expressed by hon. Members are published for the public to read. I hope that our colleagues in the European Parliament read those records before they take them to their respective committees. A great deal of work in the European Parliament is undertaken in such committees, and our records might prompt amendments to documents under discussion.

Mr. Leighton: We are torturing ourselves tonight talking about the unsatisfactory present situation and whether we should have one large Committee, three smaller ones or even more. We are doing so because we are trying to square the circle. We are trying to do the impossible. The truth is that the European Community and parliamentary democracy are incompatible. I do not know how many people read the Standing Committee records. Suppose a Committee considered the common agricultural policy and concluded it was a bad one because it put up food prices and damaged the third world. What effect would that have? It is difficult for the Whips to get hon. Members on to such Committees because of the essential futility of the scrutiny undertaken by them. It leads to nothing.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to my hon. Friend because I was about to say that, while I had made a speech which, I hope, was in the tradition of Chairmen of Select Committees and faithfully transmitted the Committee's views—my hon. Friends will let me know at the next meeting if I failed—I hope that it is in order to make a few more personal remarks with "Newham, South" across my head.

The first Member from West Ham, South was the founder of the party of which I have the privilege to be a member. The people of West Ham are not highly capitalised in terms of money, but in terms of skill and the expression of their opinions. They sent that man to represent their interests and to change the law because the law was the only protection that they had. That man came here on the day of the Loyal Address. He put down an amendment to it because it did not mention unemployment. It was selected and he divided the House.

The people of east London saw Parliament as their salvation, as it could change and make law. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) is right that the attraction of the debate depends on the effectiveness of the decision reached. If one can only influence rather than decide, debates are marked by a low attendance—that follows as night follows day. To that extent I agree with my hon. Friend.

It is important to consider broader matters that may have escaped the attention of the House, especially those that the Scrutiny Committee cannot consider. What is on the menu at the moment? There is the procedural motion that the Prime Minister mentioned earlier to agree to an intergovernmental conference on political union. I do not believe that one could get a bigger procedural motion than that. We also have a report by Foreign Ministers on economic and monetary union. I do not think that the

[Mr. Spearing]

Select Committee on Foreign Affairs will be dealing with such issues, and I note that the Chairman of that Select Committee, the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), is in his place for the debate. We have a brace of Chairmen present this evening.

There is the question of parallel ecu currency—an issue which has caused much discussion. No doubt the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service will wish to deal with that. There is a famous court case concerning fishermen that has caused much concern, and there is the question of the intervention of the Commission on the subject of compensation to British Aerospace, about which we have had a statement today.

It is clear that more and more matters of a European Community nature are coming before us. Many of them are beyond the scope of scrutiny in terms of legislation, although they are extremely current. I am not sure whether the House realises—I am trying, although my views are well known, to be impartially descriptive—the situation in which the British Parliament now finds itself.

If I was asked to describe all this to an invited audience, I would ask my listeners to try to imagine what London was like before all the road changes had taken place. One could go and park where one liked, there were no one-way streets to speak of and, generally speaking, the traffic lights were in one's favour so that one could turn right or left almost with impunity. Today the situation on the roads is almost the reverse, with giratories, one-way streets, no parking, no right turns, no commercial vehicles, no buses and many other restrictions.

That state of affairs has been arrived at because of the situation into which Parliament has got itself in terms of law-making, with its obligations to the treaty of Rome. We brought it on ourselves, and the Leader of the House was right to refer earlier to section 2(1) of the treaty. On the water, if one goes through red traffic lights—even if those behind urge one to do so and even if fishermen say, "You must go through those lights—do not worry because we have the Queen aboard and we are all agreed, including the Queen's representatives, that it is permissible to go through those red lights"—one is liable to be booked and find oneself up before the beak. That happened in the current case concerning fishermen.

The same can be said of the British Aerospace case. A sign at the beginning of Aerospace avenue might say "No public vehicles." In defence of what we believe to be the national interest—I appreciate the position of the Government—Her Majesty's Government said, "As we cannot put up a public vehicle, we will put up a private vehicle with £40 million money aboard." Somebody noticed that, and we find ourselves in trouble.

That may be a crude illustration but, in essence, it is the position in which the Parliament of the United Kingdom is now placed. There may be offsetting advantages—that is an issue that we constantly discuss—but we must be realistic in accepting that that is the position from the point of view of our law-making activities, and things are getting more serious.

In that connection, I recall the Prime Minister's remark to me earlier today about procedural motions. A motion to which she has put her signature in the past two days relates to a statement in annex 1 of the Community communiqué, which is concerned with political union. It spells out what is going on and refers to

"the ongoing transfer of tasks to the Community and the corresponding increase in the power and responsibilities of its institutions."

Nothing could be clearer than that.

On the question of economic and monetary union, I recall the time when Lord Cockfield appeared before a Select Committee. Those who have heard the noble Lord expound on the subject of the single market will not quickly forget his replies—I was about to say lectures—to questions asked at Select Committee meetings. He is an experienced and fascinating man to listen to. After he had been expounding on the subject to a Select Committee at which I was present, he was asked, in effect, "Surely the man on the Clapham omnibus or the lady on the Stuttgart tram says that this is a Government of bankers, by bankers for bankers—how would you reply to that?" I hope that I do Lord Cockfield no injustice when I say that he replied, in effect, "Bankers are stable, common-sense, useful people." But that is not what government is about.

It was once said in a famous speech made a long way from Brussels that government should be of the people, by the people, for the people. If this House were to disappear from the United Kingdom, that form of government would not vanish from the earth. People throughout the world want that type of government and they are attempting to create institutions which we in the United Kingdom have evolved, developed and practised for a long time. There is a danger—we can debate how great it is—that that form of government could perish from the United Kingdom and, therefore, from the institution in which we are now seated discussing these matters. Through lack of knowledge, it could perish by the votes of those who are Members of the Chamber which gave it birth.

7.16 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Many people are cynical about whether scrutiny can operate. That being so, it is up to those who have the opportunity to indulge in scrutiny to make sure that it works. That is what this House has been about for as long as history books have been written. It has been up to the House from time to time over the centuries—in relation to many matters, taking one century with another—to deal with issues that are every bit as significant as those that confront us today in relation to the European Community.

There have been times over the centuries when the House has taken stock of the situation and has made sure that it exercises the supervision—scrutiny and control—that is necessary, given the realities of the circumstances in which that generation has found itself.

The Scrutiny Committee has done a better job than many people believe. For example, on 25 June last there appeared in *The House Magazine*—described rightly, because it is a first-class magazine, as

"The most widely read magazine in Parliament"

an article—focusing on Europe, under the heading, "Europe—meaning of unity."

Several hon. Members have referred to the relationship between MPs and MEPs. I make no bones about the fact that, so long as we apply the notion of subsidiarity in the sense in which I interpret it—which is that the European Parliament remains subsidiary to the national Parliament

on important questions such as we are discussing tonight —there is a case for ensuring cross-reference between ourselves and MEPs. We keep them in touch and discuss matters with them. There is nothing to stop us doing that, and we should do it.

The article referred to what Lord Bethell MEP described as "an important political issue." He was talking about saving the British sausage and said, making what he obviously believed to be a serious point:

"What is the House of Commons doing about all this? The civil servants are hard at work on it. The European Parliament will soon have it in committee. But, as far as I know, the House of Commons is doing nothing. A £500-million-a-year British industry is at stake and the MPs Scrutiny Committee does not have it on board."

After saying,

"This is what is meant by the 'democratic deficit'",

he said, referring to our activities as Members of Parliament:

"the MPs will wait until the whole thing is sprung on them as a very unpleasant surprise, involving jobs in their constituencies."

There are many butchers and people involved in the meat trade in my constituency. I live in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill), who knows more about the subject than the rest of us put together. The matter was raised in the Scrutiny Committee some months ago. I pressed for it to be thoroughly considered and said that we should acquire information which only certain people could provide for us so that we could have a proper and well-informed debate on the subject in the House, and perform our functions as a Scrutiny Committee and a scrutinising Parliament.

It would have been helpful if the degree of complementarity had been extended to Lord Bethell, discovering what was going on in this Parliament because we are well ahead of the game—I say that without wishing to be unkind to the noble Lord. The evidence that we have accumulated will have a significant impact on the way in which that legislation develops.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: How?

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend asks how, and I shall explain. When one considers legislation in the House, of whatever kind, whether domestic or European, it is up to us to do so early enough and to take appropriate steps to ask the right questions. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) is a most valiant defender of the process precisely because he always asks the sort of questions that are highly relevant to finding out the truth —I admire him for that. It is essential that we do the same with European legislation and use the opportunity to ask the right questions early enough.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East would be right to say to me, "We have not been doing that very well so far." I would dispute that, because I think that we have on a number of occasions, but that does not alter the fact that it is the function of this debate and the report produced by my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) to improve the scrutiny process in the context of the developments that have been taking place in the Community. Therefore, in a sense, this is an exercise of scrutiny about scrutiny.

The remedy lies with us. We must make it our business to find out what is going on at an earlier stage. I got hold of the Christopherson paper produced for the Ashford castle meeting on economic monetary union seven days before the meeting. It gave most important information about what was being decided and discussed at that meeting in relation to economic and monetary union. I do not claim any great credit for that. I simply felt that I was doing my job and made it my business to find out about the issue because it was so essential to the on-going debate on economic and monetary union. I raised the matter in the Select Committee. It is important that we should all be vigilant.

The vast range and impact of legislation going through the European system necessitates our improving the scrutiny process for the good reason that, during the past several years the volume of legislation from the European Community, which has a direct impact on all our constituents, has grown enormously. The volume of domestic legislation often seems utterly irrelevant in comparison with the impact of that coming from Europe. The volume of, and time we spend on, legislation should be proportionate to the impact it has on our constituents.

We must also look carefully at legislation coming from other national Parliaments, and its impact on us. There should be a much more level playing field with regard to the manner in which legislation is scrutinised in other countries and here. Recently, we had a meeting with the Bundestag European affairs committee. My hon. Friend the Member for Honiton spoke about which way the other European member states scrutinise their legislation. There is no doubt that we legislate and scrutinise our legislation in a better, more comprehensive way, through our Select Committee system, than do most of the other member states. As developments take place in the European Community, it is essential that we do everything we can to talk to the other national parliamentarians to persuade them to engage in the same sort of scrutiny as this debate provides.

7.25 pm

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): I apologise for not being present when the Leader of the House opened the debate. I was conducting a radio interview about the death of Bob Carvel. The House has lost someone who was not only a remarkable journalist, but a good man and lovable critic whom we shall all miss.

I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery), the Chairman of the Select Committee on Procedure, for the work that his Committee has done. Time, as always, is limited, so the main part of my speech will consist of five general points. First, one factor that clearly emerges from the report is that the Government, while claiming to be great defenders of Parliament—as they frequently do—against the erosion of the terrible powers from Brussels that are about to clasp us in their bureaucratic arms, have made no serious attempt to give Members of Parliament a real, effective and timely opportunity to contribute views on European policy as it is formed. The position is contradictory and not easily defended.

The Government say that they will do better. Whenever the Leader of the House says anything, I am always seduced by his cuddliness and evident good nature.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): He is a right old pushover.

Sir Russell Johnston: Yes, the right hon. and learned Gentleman is an absolute pushover, but time will tell.

[Sir Russell Johnston]

Secondly, this position is hardly surprising, since this is not the way that Parliament works anyway. We are essentially a Parliament, after the event, and respond to things once they have happened. As Lord Hailsham said, we respond to the elective dictatorship in our midst. We inveigh against, condemn and vote against it. It seems pretty intellectually indefensible to argue that Parliament should have a pre-legislative role only in respect of European legislation, when our procedures and customs —one might say rituals—deny us that in relation to domestic legislation. In the jargon of the day, I do not think that one can build a ring fence around European legislation, because there is too much overlap.

Thirdly, the report of the Select Committee on Procedure refers more than once, understandably, to the problem of finding time to deal with everything. I intervened in the speech of the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) to remind him of what the House did last night. We spent an hour after midnight, when everybody was tired and should have been tucked up in bed, engaged in voting—an entirely pointless and vacuous activity with no relevance whatever. It simply exhausted people and the time could have been spent in positive activities, such as thinking, writing or scrutinising. No doubt some hon. Members slept late this morning and those who did not will have been less effective today. The hon. Member for Copeland is a decent chap and mounted a defence which might be described in chess as the Cunningham diversion. He said that such voting formed part of the way in which this place was run, but I do not think that he believed that himself.

Fourthly, the Community is already quasi-federal in its construction. We must face that. The citizen has two routes to express an opinion on European legislation. First, he can go to Westminster in the hope of influencing the Minister, who in turn may influence the Council of Ministers. Secondly, he may go to his MEP and hope to exercise some influence through the European Parliament. We must not focus too much on our status as an institution. The issue is about how our citizens can be best enabled to have their opinions heard and their interests taken into account.

The Government prevaricate about facilities to phone the Community, and that is negative. The hon. Member for Copeland spoke about that and the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) intervened and elicited from him a clear view. I do not know what the Services Committee can dig up that we do not know already. We have been in the European Community since 1973 and have known about these things for a long time. The Government should extend to the Community institutions the free phone facilities that hon. Members enjoy in the United Kingdom. After all, hon. Members would not phone Brussels for fun. I do not pick up the phone to amuse myself but in order timeously to register constituency concerns.

I have a strong feeling that my fifth point falls into the category of crying at the moon, but I shall make it anyway. We regularly congratulate ourselves on being members of a rather unique debating Chamber, a place which is unlike the continental chambers that the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) dislikes and where every so often there is a series of set speeches. That does not lead to the interplay and the give and take of debate that we expect in this place. However, we have less to be proud of than we assert.

Let us look at the form of winding-up speeches. I am not sure whether the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the hon. Member for Hove (Mr. Sainsbury), who is in the Chamber, will make the winding-up speech in this debate. Such a speech usually falls into three parts. In part one the Minister runs through the names of the Members who have spoken and says, "My hon. Friend the Member for Bloghampton, South made a fascinating and important contribution. My right hon. Friend the Member for Little Significance, North would not expect me to be over-precise in responding to his question. Turning to the Opposition, the hon. Member for Utopia, Central, made an interesting speech but it did not seem entirely to accord with my reading of his party's constitution. The Liberal party Member for Elysium with Nirvana further demonstrated his long separation from power"—and so on. One can make such speeches quite easily.

Part two of the winding-up speech is usually longer and sets out somewhat less than objectively the rectitude of the Government's position. Part three, which runs into the peroration, unequivocally damns all the persons, spokesmen, works, ideas and shibboleths connected with the official Opposition and says that they must be dismissed. It is easy not to fit into that formula. For example, federalism is central to the European debate and is espoused not only by British Liberals but by German socialists and Italian Christian Democrats. However, because it is not the policy of the Government or of the official Opposition, we do not debate it in a proper way. The House is not always good at debating ideas. We debate only major party attitudes, and I am afraid that we do that only in a confrontational way. We should spend more time dealing with arguments, and if we made the effort we could do that.

Having made those general points I shall conclude with specific references to the Select Committee's report and the Government's response. I am greatly impressed by the phrase "the Government will respond sympathetically." I have heard it many times and, although it sounds smooth and emollient, alas, such a response does not always come to pass.

Recommendation 3 deals with the availability of documents. There is no good reason why such availability should not be agreed. The Government often regard documents as confidential and keep them close to their chest until the last minute.

I do not agree with the Committee or the Government about a separate European Community question time. There should be a slot for that during Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs questions. That matter should be reconsidered, and in that context I have the agreement of the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing).

I am worried about more committees being established. At a certain point the burden on hon. Members becomes so great that the opportunity to challenge the Executive is reduced, although in theory this is what it is supposed to be for. I lean towards some sort of open Grand Committee rather than more Committees which hon. Members would have to man.

In future, the detail of European legislation will be dealt with in the European Parliament and not here. We shall

have to concentrate on broad Second Reading principles. The Scrutiny Committee is unquestionably hard working and its Chairman is a paragon of diligence, but I do not think that the Committee has succeeded in changing anything. The Leader of the House said that two thirds of European debates will go upstairs and the other third will take place here, probably at an inappropriate hour. If that happens, it will not be much of an improvement.

Mr. Spearing: I think that the hon. Gentleman's kind remarks about me are unjustified. The staff and members of the Committee are also involved in its work. It is not the task of the Scrutiny Committee to change or to influence the Government. Its job is to ensure that there is an opportunity for hon. Members to influence and press the Government before decisions are taken in Brussels. The Committee is procedural and provides opportunities. It is the members, in the motions and the amendments to motions that they table, who influence the Government's activities. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will consider that.

Sir Russell Johnston: The hon. Gentleman is not only diligent but modest. What he says is true, but at the end of the day, if the Committee is worried about something, it points it up and in that sense seeks some change to be effected.

Fourthly, there is not enough about the European Parliament in the document. The House has taken the wrong approach to the European Parliament. I do not intend to argue about the balance of power, but I agree with the hon. Member for Copeland who, speaking on behalf of the Labour party, said that our relationship should be co-operative. Could we at least open the door to its members? If we do not let them into the Chamber—I would not exclude their admission under certain thought-out circumstances—we can at least let them into the Dining Room. As the hon. Gentleman said, we should give them somewhere to sit upstairs. In short, we should treat them in as civilised a way as they treat us when we visit them.

I conclude by picking up something that the Leader of the House said towards the end of his speech. He said: "Britain wants to maximise its influence within the EC." That expresses the issue in the wrong way. What he means is that the Government want to maximise their influence in the EC. The proper objective is to maximise the influence of the individual British citizen in the EC. That should be our aim.

I am a Liberal, a minority person. I have long experience of the consequences of what I think to be unfair representation in this place. The total exclusion of Liberal Democrats from the European Parliament is not simply wrong but stupidly excludes a valid British standpoint from expression there. The view of Britain is not just the view of the Government. It finds reflection in the various views of its individual people, and to give that expression must be the objective of what we are seeking to introduce.

7.41 pm

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I understand that there is a tradition in the House of Commons that hon. Members do not make savage personal attacks on other hon. Members when they are not present and have not been given notice of the intention to do so. Therefore, I find it difficult to refer to the speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) who, unfortunately, is no longer here.

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, I think that you will agree that to describe our late-night debates on European measures as useless, pointless, sterile and simply battling over the past is not a fair reflection of those constructive debates in which people with special knowledge discuss the issues.

It is interesting that the people who laugh about those debates are the people who never attend them. None of the 10 Members of that great Procedure Committee is here tonight to discuss their great proposals, and of those 10 great Members I recall only——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I am here.

Mr. Taylor: My apologies to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Tony Banks: I am here too.

Mr. Taylor: I apologise. I have a list of 10 names and if the hon. Gentleman was a member of the Committee he has not been recorded as being present.

To refer to our debates in that way is rather unfair. The Select Committee's proposals for the consideration of EC legislation are of no real significance. The Select Committee and the House have no powers to do anything about the mass of Euro-laws which come out of Brussels, and the new Committees will also have no power.

In practice, the basic feature of the exciting recommendations is that the general embarrassment caused to the Government by the revelation of certain measures will be reduced. Instead of measures being considered late at night by a small group of difficult and critical Back Benchers, they will be considered by carefully selected Committees which will meet in the morning. Their members will be happy because they will have the power to question Ministers and, through time, they might even acquire the power to travel to Europe and elsewhere to discover more about the issues that they are describing. In effect, nothing will change, save that the Government will be a little less embarrassed and Back Benchers will be able to go to bed a little earlier.

The proposals are simply another example of the policy that we have adopted for years on Euro-matters—simply pretending that reality should be ignored and looking on the brighter side of things. To pretend that we can make the way in which the Community works more democratic is simply kidding ourselves. That is why we have hardly any representation here from the Select Committee and why it has put forward the measures as though they are some exciting new development.

The day-dreaming goes on all the time. We had it this afternoon in that quite splendid statement by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the discussion which stemmed from it. We found agreement almost all over that we should have no surrender and would fight to the death to hold on to what powers we have. But I think that we all knew in our hearts that the power was slipping away all the time.

For example, we found that if the ladies outside tonight, who are so rightly concerned about the rights, liberties and freedoms of ponies and horses come to us, we will be able to do nothing, and if they take the advice of the Liberal party and go to see their MEPs, they will tell them that they passed a unanimous amendment which was sent to the Commission and that a respectable man called Mr. MacSharry threw out their recommendation, so nothing

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happened. Democratically, those poor ladies who are so rightly worried about the export of live cattle can do nothing at all.

Mr. Spearing: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that on 11 January this year a Standing Committee considered that matter and the Government moved a motion for which they sought the support of the House which said:

"supports the Government in their intention to negotiate a satisfactory welfare standard."

The hon. Gentleman is right to say that the Council will not agree to the maintenance of our minimum value export order. But, even more important, is he aware that sections 40 to 49 or the Animal Health Act 1981, which imposed those rules, will be negatived by a regulation, and that the repeal of that Act will not come before the House unless it is directed for agreement to repeal? Therefore, the powers of which he speaks are even greater than perhaps he supposed.

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman is right. That shows how much democracy is basically disappearing almost completely. For the liberal party, even with its smiling face, to tell people not to worry, because if they cannot do anything the nice people in the European Parliament will be able to, is to mislead people wholeheartedly.

Mr. Dykes: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Taylor: No, my hon. Friend will probably make the point that there are a number of amendments, but that is a load of rubbish because the ones that are accepted are the ones that come from the Commission anyway, as he well knows.

We must not try to pretend that things are what they are not. We talk about free trade in 1992, but we all know that that is basically a joke. For example, we heard today that insurance will be on the basis of free trade, but we know that nothing of the sort is contained in the proposals. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) will support with great rejoicing an EC initiative to spend a great deal of money on the promotion of lower-tar tobacco and the Anti-Cancer Year. I think that will cost about £60 million. Yet we ignore the fact that this year the EC is spending more money than ever on dumping high-tar tobacco on east Europe, Africa and the third world. Such things go on and no one wants to know. Basically, we try to pretend to ourselves that things are being sold. Despite what we are doing, power is going away without our deciding it.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): When the hon. Gentleman debates parliamentary democracy with his constituents, how does he explain the massive indifference shown by hon. Members to these important matters? I remind him that, even on the night that we debated the interim judgment of the president of the European Court of Justice on section 14 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1988, there were very few more souls in this place than there are at the moment.

Mr. Taylor: I well remember that debate, and the hon. Gentleman was present, as he usually is when an important issue is discussed. It was tragic that, when we were tearing up a United Kingdom law for no good reason, only a handful of hon. Members were present. Difficult, complex and controversial issues are debated late at night or referred to a safe Standing Committee comprised of safe Members who will cause no embarrassment to anyone, but usually with one statutory "difficult" Member included. That is not done because the Government are trying to hide anything from the public, for the same practice would be adopted by a Government of a different party.

Mr. Cash: I am very interested by my hon. Friend's line of argument. The new ad hoc Committees will have the power to ask Ministers to appear before them. Does my hon. Friend agree that, if a Committee has the power also to ask for papers and records, it will be able to get at the root of issues early enough in the day, as I know my hon. Friend would want it to do? Does he really believe that that is possible?

Mr. Taylor: It simply will not be possible. My hon. Friend knows very well that, even if the Committees had the power to ask for every paper and to see very Minister, or, if things got difficult, to send a deputation, at the end of the day they could achieve nothing, because power is slipping away from us. My right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House said that even if some power leaves us, there is still the protection given by the Single European Act, but we know that the Commission is taking unto itself more and more legislation by exercising the majority vote provision in article 100A, and there is nothing we can do about that.

Mr. Dykes: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Taylor: My hon. Friend is being ridiculous.

Mr. Dykes: I am glad that my hon. Friend is giving way at long last. He referred to me a number of times, or at least once. Why does he not have the courage to extend his analysis and say that the logic would be that, if the European Parliament and MEPs had more power, the ladies who came to the House today concerned about the safety and welfare of export animals would be able to work with Members of Parliament and Members of the European Parliament conjointly to achieve the results that my hon. Friend seeks? My hon. Friend is not prepared to admit that the European Parliament should have increased powers and work with national Parliaments.

Mr. Taylor: I never like to give way, because it simply takes up time. Unfortunately, my hon. Friend has a total obsession with the EEC. He knows that there is no way that the European Parliament could take effective powers unless there were a European Government, including a European Foreign Secretary, Transport Secretary, and Minister for Health. To pretend that we are being given new powers of inspection and supervision, and to make proposals, is all kidology. As the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) said, we are kidding ourselves if we try to pretend that we can enhance our democracy.

You heard for yourself, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about the new decision on interim relief. As the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) said, that issue arose a few months ago. The European Court assumed a power—whether or not it had the right to do so we do not know—in respect of interim relief from British laws. A second case arose today. I received a lovely letter from my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the

Home Department saying that the German state lottery company is taking action in the British courts that could give it the power to question the validity of the Lotteries and Amusements Act 1976, which prevents lottery tickets from being sold in Britain. It is taking that action on the basis that that legislation contravenes the treaty of Rome. It may be right or wrong, but if that company applies for interim relief, our law will be scrapped for up to two years —and then my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East will have the pleasure of advising his constituents to buy German lottery tickets so that they can help finance the German health service, even though Parliament voted against the running of lotteries in this country.

Let us not pretend that we can solve anything by changing from late night debates to carefully selected Committees that will meet in the morning, and which will appear to be very wise and pontificate but get nowhere at all. Remember the ladies who came to the House today. If any of us had to speak to them, what could we say as democrats? One would have to say, "We can do nothing to protect horses and ponies; nor can the MEPs." Democracy is at risk.

Dr. Godman: I was unable to be present earlier for this debate because I did not leave a Standing Committee until 7.15 pm, but is not the hon. Gentleman being too defeatist? Surely he should be arguing for a change in the structure of the relationship between the European Parliament, national legislatures, the Council of Ministers, and the Commission.

Mr. Taylor: That would be a joke, unless one could establish the basis on which proposals from the Commission are decided by the Council of Ministers. Nothing can be done unless two steps are taken. We are looking at monetary union, and Labour Members talk about the ecu and all the rest of it. If the Opposition's supporters do not like the present Tory Government and their economic policies, they can chuck the Government out. If there is a Labour Government and the electorate feel they are being unfair to Southend or to Scotland, that Government, too, could be chucked out. However, if powers are given to a central bank—as Labour is tempted to do—and it follows economic policies that are bad for Britain and for jobs, or which are unfair by comparison with Germany or France, the public could do nothing.

We should not kid ourselves with silly Committees, because there are only two ways we can go. First, we could adopt what one might loosely call the Ridley plan, saying, "Please do not let us move any further away from democracy. The other European nations can take that path, but we will not follow." Secondly, the next time that the Common Market has no cash, we could impose conditions on extra cash from Britain, and in that way try to introduce some semblance of democracy.

I know that I speak a lot about such issues, but after many years in the House representing people of all political opinions, I find it tragic that we are slowly destroying our democracy. No one seems to notice or to care. That is not being done by a Conservative Government because they are nasty people, but we have the responsibility for starting the whole thing off. Labour does not want to talk about it because it is a changed party now and basically supports the Common Market. The Liberals do not want to talk about it because they were in favour of the Common Market before anyone else.

Rather than blame the Conservatives or Labour, or anyone else, we should try to ensure that our democracy does not fade away. That cannot be done by transferring powers to the European Parliament. That is a joke unless one goes all the way and establishes a European Government. Instead of establishing new Committees and saying that late night debates are useless, and instead of members of the Procedure Committee telling us what to do and then not attending the subsequent debate on their proposals, it will be far better if we look at the basis of democracy in the EEC. It is a big issue, but not a party issue, and it will not go away. We should all consider it.

7.57 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I may tell the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) that I am a member of the Procedure Committee, so obviously I want to hear the views expressed this evening. I have not listened to every speech, but I shall certainly read *Hansard* very carefully. The hon. Member for Southend, East appears to be checking the list of the Committee's members. He will find my name among them.

Mr. Teddy Taylor *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Banks: I do not know to which document the hon. Gentleman is referring, but if he examines the Select Committee's report, "The Scrutiny of European Legislation", he will see that my name appears first in the list of members, in alphabetical order. Let us assume that the hon. Gentleman is capable of scrutinising EEC legislation more accurately than he is of scrutinising the report of the Select Committee.

The doggedness of the hon. Member for Southend, East is legendary, so it was a little rich of him to accuse the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) of having an obsession with the EC. However, the hon. Gentleman's most important point came at the end of his speech, when he said that if we are to scrutinise EC legislation properly and to give powers to the European Parliament, we would have to move towards adopting a form of federal structure, with a European Prime Minister, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Foreign Secretary, and so on. That is precisely the way that we are going. No doubt the hon. Member for Southend, East deplores that fact, as do many hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), to whom I pay tribute for his dogged chairing of the Scrutiny Committee.

I am one of those people who, if they have not precisely had a change of heart about the EC, have been caught up by the developments in eastern Europe, to the extent that I want to see the boundaries of Europe stretch rapidly beyond the narrow limits of the Twelve towards a greater Europe. I like the idea of being a European in a European federal state that stretches from the Atlantic to the Urals —it excites me.

I realise that there is a long way to go before we reach that stage, but, it is the way of the future. I do not need to apologise to the House for the views that I have held about the EC. My opposition to it was, and remains, based on the fact that the EC was essentially an economic and political entity to confront the east. That was the important point about it—it was a political entity which was intended to give western capitalism the greatest

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possible firing power when confronting socialism in the east. But there has been such a change in eastern Europe, and that is why I want a wider Europe.

However, a wider Europe has to be democratic. In this place we have the worst of all possible worlds. We have a bureaucratic structure in Brussels that pumps out more and more legislation affecting people in this country. Hon. Members who are elected to look after the interests of their constituents cannot do so any more. I understand exactly what the hon. Member for Southend, East and my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South mean when they complain that power is leaving this place. In the long run that is inevitable, but that does not mean that we should allow power to haemorrhage away. We have to ask how we can control events.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): I am interested by the hon. Gentleman's use of the word "power". Surely he agrees that a loss of power only results because we have ceded so much cash to the European Community. So many of the ideals that the hon. Gentleman and many hon. Members on both sides of the House support and admire could be achieved without such an immense transfer of cash to the European Community. It is that transfer of cash to the Community that gives it the power that the hon. Gentleman is now criticising.

Mr. Banks: No, legislative power is the key. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South will have the budget figures more at his fingertips, but this country's contribution to the EC budget, compared with our total gross national product, is not massively significant. We are talking about legislation, not money, when we talk in terms of power leaving the House.

The other aspect of the EC that makes it so unacceptable to many hon. Members on both sides of the House is that 60 per cent. of the EC budget goes to the common agricultural policy, and it ends up in enormous food mountains in my constituency, where we have an intervention store. I find that obscene, given the proverty in the borough.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The hon. Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) was talking about the Common Market, and my hon. Friend was referring to money. We have spent about £12 billion on being a member of that outfit since this Prime Minister came to power. She is supposed to have brought back barrel-loads of money from the Common Market, yet it has cost the British taxpayer £12,000 million. That farmer on the Conservative Benches is one of the people who is making money out of it. Every family in Britain contributes £16 a day to the common agricultural policy to line the pockets of the hon. Member for Ludlow and the rest of them.

On top of that there is fraud—about £7 billion of it—or what is known as the "gravy train". God knows how much money they are making out of that, and out of the set-aside scheme for farmers, which is a kind way of saying, "Here's a payment of £80 an acre for farmers to watch the grass grow."

Mr. Banks: When my hon. Friend describes the EC, I could cheerfully kick it to pieces. The scandals in the EC make it such an abhorrent institution to so many hon. Members. But I am trying to argue that we should go beyond that. The EC is not merely the common agricultural policy—or it should not be—and it is not merely the fraud which is taking place within the 12 states, and which must be stopped. It is so much more than that.

I do not want to talk for long, because I know that many hon. Gentlemen, and perhaps the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman), want to speak, but I must tell the hon. Member for Southend, East that, whether we like it or not, we are in the EC up to our ears. It is a question of where we go from here. Withdrawal from the EC is no longer a viable political objective, or a viable political statement to make. Although withdrawal certainly remains Labour party policy, according to previous manifesto commitments and conference decisions, I do not think that even Labour Members who are most vituperatively opposed to the EC believe that a future Labour Government will take us out of the Common Market.

We have to decide whether we will end up standing on the sidelines, complaining about the erosion of power from this place—which I readily accept is happening—or start doing something about it. We must say that we do not like the EC institutions, but we are going to consider the concept of a wider Europe—we must capture the imagination that flows from people such as Gorbachev and respond in an imaginative way. We must say that we want a peaceful redrawing of the map of Europe which would be one of the most blessed events that any of us could experience in our lifetime—especially as many hon. Members have seen Europe plunged into war at least once this century.

Recommendation 10 of the Select Committee's report is that an oral statement should be made to the House before the Council of Ministers' meeting, and it is important that that be accepted fully. We all feel frustrated when we realise that we are often impotent over EC legislation, and we are not even given the opportunity to voice our opinions before major events take place. In many cases, we are not even given the ample opportunity that we should have to voice our opinions after momentous decisions have been taken.

We must find more time for debate. After all, that is all that the Opposition can do. At least, as the Government control the time of the House and have the majority vote, Conservative Members can do something. As Opposition Members—although we will not be in opposition for much longer, I am glad to say—we have to confine ourselves to going on about legislation that we do not like, whether it is domestic legislation or EC legislation. We can only query decisions that the Prime Minister has made up her mind on and told the House about subsequently.

The more time we have to discuss the major events that are taking place in eastern Europe, the more we shall be able to influence them and the less we shall be regarded as a bunch of whingers, standing at the fringes of Europe wringing our hands and saying, "We do not like what is going on but we shall not throw ourselves enthusiastically into trying to influence future events."

In the end, the Select Committee did not recommend that we should have a special EC Question Time, although I spoke in favour of such a recommendation because I think that we should. The Government are never in the mood to give a Select Committee more than it asks for, so they have naturally endorsed recommendation 15. I think that we should have a specific time for EC questions, as we did until 1985, because questions represent an effective

way of raising issues. It is not necessarily a question of getting answers from Ministers, as Ministers always have the last word and can give us any answer or no answer at all. But questions are fully understood by those outside this place and are an effective way of keeping the Government in check.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Francis Maude): Is there any reason why the hon. Gentleman should not ask EC questions of individual Ministers at their own departmental Question Time? After all, no single Minister has overall responsibility for European Community matters.

Mr. Banks: Of course not, and that is precisely what one does. I suspect that most of today's questions to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food were about the impact of EC legislation on British agriculture, and that is so for all the other Departments. But, with the random selection of questions and the shuffle at 4 o'clock, there is no guarantee that one will find, within the reachable confines of the list of questions, those that directly address EC matters. There is an element of pot luck involved.

We could have sections of Question Time allocated to EC matters or just one general EC Question Time at which all the Ministers were lined up. I understand that that is what happens in the Australian Parliament, where one can ask anything of any Minister at any time. The best thing is to choose the Minister who is nodding off and ask him to answer a question off the top of his head. Usually, the poor soul wakes up to realise that he has been asked a question. No doubt the Government would oppose the idea of having all the Ministers there at once, but the fact remains that questions are a useful way of holding the Government to account, and I am sorry that the Select Committee—of which, I regret, the hon. Member for Southend, East did not realise I am a member—did not recommend that.

I realise that there are divisions on the Opposition Benches, but many of them are more imagined than real. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South knows more about the EC than I do. When he and I get into a detailed argument, we generally find—after we have cleared away the important minutiae of the way in which the EC operates at present and started to think about the concept of a wider political entity stretching from the Atlantic to the Urals—that we can join hands on the ideal of a socialist United States of Europe. That is the sort of thing that we are looking for and, in the end, that is what history will give us.

8.12 pm

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): First, I wish to pick up the general philosophical point, which most hon. Members have made, that we are concerned about democracy. We want to ensure that constituents, companies and groups throughout the country can influence legislation which they must, by law, obey. I shall concentrate on one aspect of democracy—consent. The idea that has informed our democracy in Britain is that we all have the ability to discuss any proposal that the Executive may place before us, and we agree that when we have debated the matter, the majority will rule and the minority will accept and abide by the majority's decision.

If Europe is to succeed, we must ensure that the same applies there. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) does not like the European Community, but as we are in it and intend to go ahead with it, he wants to ensure that it is both sucessful and democratic. We must find ways to achieve that aim through this House and, if it is not presumptuous to say so, we must find ways of helping our fellow members of the Economic Community to do the same.

It is alarming to see what happens in Italy. The Italians are well behind in implementing many of the European directives and resolutions that will come into force when the single European market is completed in 1992. The punter in Naples, or further south in Sardinia or Brindisi, has absolutely no idea what his parliamentarians have agreed in Strasbourg or Brussels. Even the parliamentarians who meet in the Italian Parliament in Rome have not considered many of the European directives.

I understand that the directives are all considered and passed once a year on the same day. That means that the ordinary man in the street in Naples will suddenly find himself having to adhere to a law of which he has no knowledge and on which he has been unable to consult Members of his own Parliament, let alone Members of the European Parliament. What will be his reaction when he is told that he must serve fish in one particular way or make sausages in another, or perhaps adhere to European legislation on more important issues?

Mr. Teddy Taylor: He will say, "Get lost."

Mr. Wells: I think that that is true, and if so, it is a dagger at the heart of the European Community and its success. If we all begin to say that, none of the directives or laws of the European Community will be implemented. We shall have massive problems in achieving a European Community governed by the rule of law, consented to by its people and with its member states willing to implement even those laws with which they do not agree.

Mr. Dykes: I realise that this is a generalisation and that there may be variations, but it would seem that in Italy men and women in the street operate directly through their MEPs. My hon. Friend will have noted that, in the European elections in June 1989, the turnout in Italy was 89 per cent., and that 92 per cent. also voted in a referendum for greater European union. There is a general enthusiasm there, which we may not have here.

Mr. Wells: My hon. Friend is entirely right. One of the difficulties in persuading the Italians to take a closer interest in the legislation of the European Community is that there is enormous enthusiasm for the general concept. The same is true in Spain. Those countries do not take an interest in what is actually being proposed. They simply pass the legislation en bloc and say, "Hooray! That is what we joined the Community for." The adherence of the ordinary person in the street to European directives and law is much more widespread in Britain than it is in Italy or Spain because of the procedures, however inadequate, that we have used in this House.

For example, my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) has for many years played a valuable role in the Select Committee on European Legislation. We are trying to improve the way in which we deal with European legislation, so as to achieve what my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) wants

[Mr. Wells]

—to ensure that we at least are being as democratic as possible. We have not yet achieved that—even with the report.

I wish to refer briefly to the terms of reference and the resolution. As the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) said, taken together they prevent the House from considering anything recommended by the Scrutiny Committee which does not directly refer to a legislative document coming from the Community. We must be able to debate issues that are coming before the European Council which, since the passage of the Single European Act, has become the major policy-making instrument of the Community.

Our Committee must be able to consider those matters, to call for persons and papers if the matter requires it and to make a report to the House to enable the House to discuss matters before the Prime Minister goes to any European Council meetings or before she or other Ministers attend Council of Ministers meetings. We are not in that position and my right hon. and learned Friend's proposal does not make that explicit. He says that he will consider adapting and adopting the terms of reference and the resolution.

Mr. Skinner: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wells: I would prefer not to.

We must adopt and adapt the resolution of the House and extend the terms of reference of the Select Committee to permit us to have such a debate. When the Madrid Council met, we all knew, because of what had been happening at the European Council meeting at Hamburg, that the questions of European monetary union and of the Delors report would be discussed. The Select Committee considered that, as did the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service. Both Committees presented reports to the House before the Prime Minister was due to take off for Madrid. However, we were unable to command, to recommend or to get the Leader of the House to institute a debate before the Prime Minister departed.

That is a thorough-going undermining of the privileges of the House. Parliament was unable to take a part or to influence or advise the Prime Minister before she made very important decisions on our behalf. Although she came back to tell us what she had done, that is not exactly being accountable to this Parliament. We must put that right. I hope that when my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House considers the terms of reference of the Select Committee on European Legislation and the resolution that follows, he will make certain that the Committee can consider such matters and recommend them for debate.

The setting up of special Standing Committees leave a great deal to be desired. In the debate this evening, other Members, such as the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), have said that they believe that a European Grand Committee might be the right answer. If we do not get the construction of the proposed three Committees right, we shall need something like a European Grand Committee to do the job for us.

We must consider the membership in detail. On some matters, the new Committees may need members from the relevant Select Committees. Can we therefore appoint the members of all 10 of the Committees for the whole of a Parliament? Should there not be some core members, the Committees then being added to as the subject matter changes? If we have just three Committees and the subject matter is varied, we shall need other hon. Members in them. It is essential that other hon. Members can attend and speak, and I welcome that suggestion.

How will we staff the Committees? They will need expert and continuing staff so that they can build up the expertise of both staff and regular members of the Committees. No reference has been made to how the committees will be staffed. I suggest that they are staffed at least as well as Select Committees, and possibly better.

Another question that has not been addressed is what the chairmanship will be. Will the Chairman be chosen from the Chairmen's Panel, or will he or she be selected from among the members of the Committee, as is the case for Select Committees? There needs to be a Chairman for the Session, so that he or she builds up expertise in a particular area for the Committee.

I endorse what the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) said about automaticity. It must remain possible for a matter of strong political debate and discussion to be taken on the Floor of the House and not in Committee. The committees would not be a good forum for such debates. We need only 20 hon. Members to be standing in their places to insist that a debate takes place on the Floor of the House, and I recommend that.

The size of the Committees also needs to be considered. I am not certain that 10 is a sufficient number if a Committee is to sit constantly. If the European Legislation Committee is to be given the additional powers to which I have just referred, the number of members must be increased from the present 16.

Sir Peter Emery. My hon. Friend talks about 20 Members being able to ensure that a matter is debated on the Floor of the House, but how often does he think that that might happen? If it is to be a frequent occurrence, we shall return far more to the debates from 10 pm to 11.30 pm that we are trying to avoid. We must achieve a balance between the two.

Mr. Wells: I could not agree more. My hon. Friend is quite right, but the record shows that it is only on rare occasions—I do not think that there has been one in this Parliament—that 20 hon. Members have risen to insist on a debate on the Floor of the House when a matter has been proposed for reference to a Committee.

Mr. Skinner: There is a problem about time in this place and about fitting in the agenda. The Common Market gets pushed to the back because the Government know only a few hon. Members on either side of the argument take part in the debates, and most are anti-market.

Another part of the agenda, called the private Bill procedure, has been increasingly used—in fact, it has been abused. We have a private Bill almost every week. In my time in the House—you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will confirm this—the procedure has been growing apace. We could adopt the report on the private Bill procedure which recommends that we change it and make promoters go back to planning authorities to get permission for port Bills and so forth. There is another private Bill on Monday. There are three hours in the palm of the

Chairman of Ways and Means. Without private Bills, we could have Common Market debates on the various issues and we might be able to have six or eight a year.

The hon. Gentleman spoke of telling the Prime Minister what to do before she went to a meeting. I know that he is not after a knighthood. If he were, and he told the Prime Minister what to do, he could forget the knighthood and the peerage because she will chop his legs off.

Mr. Wells: I can reassure the hon. Gentleman that the question of a knighthood has long since gone. I have already tried the procedures that he has suggested and been rejected. None the less, I will continue to give my right hon. Friend advice.

Whether we shall have more debates on the Floor of the House is a matter of time. We should have most of the debates in the enhanced Committees, but there should be a relatively easy way to override the normal direction and ensure that debates are held on the Floor of the House. Politically contentious matters are properly dealt with on the Floor of the House.

Brief mention has been made of the special Standing Committees and whether Ministers and shadow Ministers should be members of those Committees. That matter must be addressed, especially when important legislative matters are being considered. I remember when my hon. Friend the Minister, when he was at the Department of Trade and Industry, used the procedures of the House to influence the debate in the European Parliament by ensuring that we had debates here on, for example, the insurance directive, well in advance.

I remember when my hon. Friend the Member for St. Albans (Mr. Lilley) arranged early debates which were read by the Commission and which strengthened the negotiating hand of my hon. Friend in the Council of Ministers. That early use of debates in the Chamber should overcome the pessimism of my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor). If we use the procedures and set up the Committees properly, it is possible to influence the course of events and the legislation which goes through the European Parliament.

We should give serious consideration to offering membership of the special Standing Committees to European Members of Parliament. We have been unable to get European Members of Parliament informally to attend the European Legislation Committee because that involves procedures within the European Parliament as to who should be sent and whether only British Members of the European Parliament should attend the British Parliament. Sometimes the European Parliament gets in a muddle and suggests that its spokesman on a particular subject should be sent to the British Parliament. I believe that instead of approaching the European Parliament we should offer membership of our Committees dealing with European matters directly to European Members of Parliament. Perhaps they should not be able to vote in those Committees, but they should be invited to attend them.

In conclusion, as my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary suggested, we have to develop the European Parliament to check the Commission and to make the Commission accountable to the European Parliament. In that connection, our Ministers have had to accept a Commission decision in relation to today's statement on British Aerospace. But who is to bring the Commission to account? Where is the Committee which examines the Commission as to how and why it took that decision? At the moment the Commission is not subject to such examination. The European Parliament should do that job.

Equally, our national Parliament should be related directly to the Council of Ministers. Procedures such as those that we are debating today can bring our Ministers to account. If all the national Parliaments represented at the Council of Ministers did that, we should begin to regain democratic control over Community institutions. It is vital that we continue to strive to make Europe the democratic organisation that we all want it to be.

8.32 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): It might be too dramatic to say that we are discussing the future of the House of Commons, although my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) spoke about the combined future of eastern and western Europe. however, the documents that we are considering deal with some aspects of the future framework of the House of Commons.

At one time, one could say that Britain did not have a constitution and was dependent on its past statutes. Nothing was binding for the future, as the House could change the law. However, the treaty of Rome, the Single European Act and other measures that have flowed from the operation of the treaty of Rome make that argument no longer feasible. Although we cannot bind the future, our treaty obligations, the decisions of the European Commission and the deals and discussions within the Council of Ministers can bind our future and limit the power of the House. The more we bed down into the European Community, the greater the legislative restrictions that bear down upon us. The saga of the Spanish fishermen is merely the beginning and is a logical consequence of our entry into the European Community.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West, who said that we were in the worst of all possible worlds in regard to the European Community institutions. We do not have democratic provisions, so the democratic bandwagons must move either towards pan-European democracy and a reformed Europe, or towards trying to return sovereignty to the House and to remove those restrictions. It is not always easy to see which alternative is the most feasible.

The Government's response to the documents from the Procedure Committee and from the Scrutiny Committee was fairly grudging, especially on matters concerning democracy, scrutiny examination and knowledge. Democracy does not involve simply formal legislative decision-making and democratic rights and procedures. Knowledge and information build upon democratic rights and procedures, and remain important.

Some of the current developments in Britain are anti-democratic. The ancient right of petitioning, which existed long before the democratic franchise, has acquired greater significance as it is being eroded. Sometimes the weaker aspects of democracy need to be defended to advance the democratic process. That is why the reports that we are considering are not futile. They should not be disregarded, as they provide levers and avenues by which to extend understanding, which is an important part of democratic procedures.

[Mr. Harry Barnes]

The Government's response was not in keeping with the spirit of the report by the Scrutiny Committee and the Procedure Committee. The Government's clearest responses to the Procedure Committee dismissed certain proposals or made negative ones. The Procedure Committee said that there should be no change in Question Time and the Government agreed. I believe that the Procedure Committee and the Government are entirely wrong. The Scrutiny Committee suggested that there should be slots, and other proposals have also been put forward.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West suggested the Australian pattern in which Members could question several Ministers. That system also operates in Canada where the Opposition ask the questions and the Ministers decide among themselves who should respond to each question. That is not necessarily better than our system, but it could operate for European Community questions by having all the relevant Ministers present and open questioning as we have in Prime Minister's Question Time.

The Government agreed with the Procedure Committee in dismissing some proposals and endorsed its rejection of others. There is to be no European Community Grand Committee as that proposal was rejected by the Procedure Committee and the Government jumped on that bandwagon. They seem to have reached a compromise on the proposal that one European Grand Committee should deal with all European affairs and the suggestion from the Procedure Committee that there should be five special Standing Committees. The Government agreed that there should be three Committees. That resembles their compromise on whether we should be out of the European Community or be part of a grand pan-European democratic structure. The result is a bureaucratic, undemocratic system which is deemed to deal with unitary control from the centre and on which we have few democratic checks.

I could mention other aspects of the Government's response which are negative. It was suggested that there should be no formal links with MEPs and the Government agreed with that. The Government accepted certain proposals only with qualifications as they hummed and hah-ed over various proposals. They accepted extending the Committees' terms of reference but then stated that that should be strictly in relation to deposited documents and that there should be no free-standing studies on broad policy issues. However the Leader of the House suggested that there might be some discussion on broadening the terms of reference to make them more acceptable to the Scrutiny Committee than had ever been imagined.

The language of the Government's response is not very inspiring. The Government tend to say, "We are already doing many of the things that have been suggested." When more documents are requested by a Committee, they say, "We have been doing this for a while. You can trust us." It is partly because there has been no trust in the procedures and partly because the Executive are tied in with the activities in Europe that reports such as this have been prepared.

The report suggests that there should be business-type statements to allow general discussion to take place. The Government reject that. The proposal made by the Procedure Committee for automatic referral to the new special Standing Committees, which the Scrutiny Committee does not like, suggests that 40 hon. Members standing in their place should be able to force a debate on the Floor of the House. The Scrutiny Committee says that 20 hon. Members is appropriate. We can argue whether 20 or 40 is appropriate, but, whatever the figure, it gives hon. Members the opportunity of some control on significant measures.

If the procedures that are adopted lead to greater knowledge of European affairs, more hon. Members will want to say to the Government, for example, "You are wrong about the recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee, and there are enough of us to force a debate on the Floor of the House."

Other parts of the report are acceptable and are in line with the recommendations made by the Procedure Committee. They are not of staggering significance, but they will be worth while. Business statements will mention special Standing Committee meetings so that hon. Members are aware of them. But when business statements are made, most hon. Members ask a prepared question and say, "Why will not this, that or the other be discussed this week?"

The report mentions how pressure groups will be able to scrutinise parliamentary activity and inform hon. Members what is taking place. That adds to the checks and balances of a democratic system.

Given the problems, it is little wonder that the Scrutiny Committee has said that it is looking for changes to its terms of reference that are not merely cosmetic. It hopes that its recommendations about pre-legislative documents being available will be accepted in a positive spirit, and it rejects automatic referral to the new Committees and stresses the point quite strongly.

What should the House do about these measures? Paragraph 117 of the report shows what is required, mentions the volume of work and

> "the fact that a small number of documents continue to be adopted before scrutiny is complete; the ineffectiveness of late night debates on European documents; and the impact of the increased use of majority voting on individual member states' ability to block legislation to which they are opposed."

It acknowledges

> "the inevitable constraints imposed by the United Kingdom's treaty commitments on the House's ability to improve the effectiveness of scrutiny and the corresponding need to approach the subject with realistically modest expectations."

That paragraph shows what will be required in terms of information, knowledge and understanding to enable hon. Members at least to check what is taking place elsewhere.

The issue of democratising Europe is much wider than the issue in front of us. It might be suggested that the report proposes rather nit-picking and insignificant measures. That is not so, and must run with what is available. If we do that, we may begin to open many wider issues. Luckily, democracy is not just about formal voting procedures, the right to vote or other legislative avenues; other aspects are associated with it. The principal aspects are the formal arrangements and, whether they are being attacked in Europe or in this country, we must consider them closely.

I hope that hon. Members who have spoken strongly about democracy will pay some attention to what is happening in this country, such as the disfranchisement of

many people. About 600,000 people are missing from the electoral roll. That is an important point to make, even if it is not immediately relevant to the debate.

8.46 pm

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Walden): As the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) moved towards the end of his remarks, I found myself in more agreement with him than I had been at the beginning, although he ended on a note with which I am not immediately sympathetic. The hon. Gentleman was unfair to accuse the Government of being grudging in their response to the report of the Select Committee on Procedure. Rather, the hon. Gentleman was grudging about the report and the commentary of my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House on it.

The Procedure Committee recommended what it believed to be the right approach—an all-party Committee—and the Government seem to have made a generous response to the report. We should be grateful for that and for this debate. I hope that it will be the first of a series of debates. We cannot consider only the issues disclosed by the report and those that have been tagged on to it in the debate, in the belief that we can settle them in one series of discussions with Government, produce new procedures and that we shall be all right for the next 10 or 20 years. Clearly we will not be, because events are moving very fast.

The characteristic of the scrutiny offered by the Select Committee on European Legislation is that it is very meticulous but highly restrictive. We are confined to a somewhat blinkered approach. We have the document and nothing but the document, unless, by a sidelong glance, it is yet another document that we can link to it. That role is too suffocating for the Committee.

I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House will not accuse me of ingratitude if I concentrate on the points on which I disagree with the Government's response, because I acknowledge that there has been a welcome move by the Government to realise that more must be done to improve the scrutiny of European legislation. I am delighted that the Government are willing to move on the terms of reference, but I am disappointed that apparently they are not prepared to move far enough.

My right hon. and learned Friend said that he was introducing some modest measures. I should like to persuade him to be immodest. I do not invite him to make a major change because the Scrutiny Committee is not seeking that. However, we need to break the link with documents. If we cannot do that, our role will continue to be stultified. If I heard my right hon. and learned Friend correctly, he said that in the process of scrutiny we should be trying to focus on the new issues that should concern the House. The Scrutiny Committee would like to have that role. For example, two important intergovernmental conferences were agreed at the Dublin summit. However, we will not be allowed to comment on those.

The Select Committee on European Legislation's second special report of the 1985-86 Session—and the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), has already referred to it—stated:

"as a Scrutiny Committee, we were never able to report on the Act"—

the Single European Act—

"or on the Inter-Governmental Conference held in accordance with the Treaty in autumn 1985 which produced it, because both were outside our terms of reference. A similar situation has occurred from time to time in the budgetary affairs of the Community, when an Inter-Governmental Agreement has been used to supplement Community funds." We will be similarly confined as other events occur.

In their response to the Procedure Committee, the Government appear to be worried by the thought that the Scrutiny Committee might become involved in

"free-standing studies of broad policy issues which might tend to duplicate the work of other Committees."

Let me reassure my right hon. and learned Friend: we want only a modest extension of our role. Would he consider a quota which might be allocated to us of special investigations that we might carry out?

Let us experiment. There is a spirit of experimentation infusing some aspects of the Government's response to the Procedure Committee. Why cannot that spirit of experimentation overflow into this area as well? If it does not work, or if—perish the thought—the Government are uncomfortable with the product of an investigation by the Scrutiny Committee, the Leader of the House can come back to the House and tell us that it is not working and that he wants to suggest another change. However, let us experiment. We should not adopt the attitude at the outset that there cannot be any change.

Mr. Spearing: I agree with much of what the hon. Gentleman has said. However, I believe that his case about quotas is even stronger than he is making it. Does he recall that in the year to which he referred an arrangement had been reached with the Select Committees that, if they did not want to consider a particular matter, there was no reason why an enlarged preference for our Scrutiny Committee could not be used to investigate that matter? Without such a power, there is a visible gap in Select Committee investigations.

Mr. Haselhurst: I was trying not to be too immodest in the proposal that I was putting before my right hon. and learned Friend. If the Government are concerned about the Scrutiny Committee spreading its wings, is it really wrong to suggest that it should be allowed to flutter them a little? Let us see how such a modest extension of the role, perhaps on a quota basis, would work out. That is an essential move if scrutiny is to take on a more comprehensive meaning.

I support the Scrutiny Committee's view about the special European Standing Committees and the power of referral. I suggest that the Government should see how we get on with the new European Standing Committees before they reach a final view on automatic referral. They should step back from that proposal at the moment. Let us run the new Committees for a year and see how the system works. If it goes wrong, the Government's case is made and the House will no doubt accept their view. However, they should not press the matter before we have seen how the new Committees work.

I endorse my colleagues' opinion that we should accept the Procedure Committee's view and have five of those Committees. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery), I believe that the burden on three Committees would be too much. It would be wise to spread the load and see how we go. I understand the problem about whether hon. Members will turn up to the Committees. It is a matter of how seriously the House as a whole believes that the job must be taken.

I do not want to sound too censorious, but in some ways the tone is set by the Government. If there is any

[Mr. Haselhurst]

feeling of ambivalence about the Government's commitment, some hon. Members might not believe that this is the most important thing that the House can be doing. It is clear from everyone who has spoken today, particularly from those who are most hostile to the Community, that there is a realisation that the process must be taken seriously and that, if we are to make a success of scrutiny, we must all be committed to it.

As I said, the tone must be set by the Government. However, I do not believe that those who are still fighting in principle the battle of 1971 are doing much good. They are not helping to develop a serious approach to scrutiny in the House. They are not helping us move on to more effective control of European legislation. They intone about the solemnity of this Parliament, but what is Parliament but the embodiment of the will of the people? The will of the people has been determined on the matter of whether we should be involved in the European Community. They should trust what the people have decided and put those arguments behind them.

In the spirit of experiment, I hope that the Government, after they have reflected on this debate, will follow the Procedure Committee's recommendations. I want to refer to several minor points. They are minor in comparison to the Procedure Committee's recommendations, and they are dealt with in what amount to footnotes in the report.

I endorse what the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said about the use of telephones. He made his point very well and we must pay attention to it. I am glad that the Services Committee has been asked to consider that matter, and I hope that we will have positive and not grudging action.

With regard to the relationship with Members of the European Parliament, I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells). Perhaps the new European Standing Committees will be the vehicles by which MEPs are introduced into our proceedings. The Procedure Committee said that that would require primary legislation. If that is so, we should face up to it. If we are taking scrutiny seriously, perhaps we should have a little primary legislation. If primary legislation will strengthen the role of this House, we would not make a meal of it; let us get on with it. It is just possible that the creation of the new Committees could evolve to allow in MEPs in certain prescribed circumstances. That would help us to liaise effectively on the whole question of scrutiny.

A point was made earlier about travel. I would not necessarily want to go as far as the suggestion of the hon. Member for Copeland that individual Members should have the right to travel. I am not unsympathetic to what he said, but I said to myself in parenthesis that to call for individual hon. Members to have the right to travel on the continent when currently it is proposed to tax them on travelling within their own constituency seems a bold call. If we cannot go as far as the hon. Member for Copeland suggested, perhaps we should consider special arrangements for the Scrutiny Committee.

Mr. Robertson: I was waiting to see whether the hon. Gentleman would confine the largesse to members of the Committee. Many of them are in the Chamber tonight. With regard to the taxation of benefits and the threat that all travel by hon. Members will come within the tax net, I wonder whether there would be more enthusiasm for taxing hon. Members' travel in their constituencies if Ministers' cars were treated on the same basis.

Mr. Haselhurst: I gave way to the hon. Gentleman in a spirit of good will—I have a great deal of respect for him—but it was clearly a mistake. He pursued the parenthesis that I had embarked on. I do not wish to be drawn any further on it.

The hon. Gentleman anticipated me. I was about to suggest that a more modest proposal than to allow everyone to travel on the continent would be to adjust the terms affecting the Scrutiny Committee. I do not suggest that out of any selfish reason. I simply wish to put it on record that the Scrutiny Committee needs to travel within Europe to a degree to do the job with which it is charged. It is not a matter of the Committee deciding, for example, that it needs to study how the dairy industry in New Zealand is faring. The Committee must meet the European Parliament, the Commission, and the United Kingdom permanent representative in Brussels and liase with parliamentarians in countries which are about to hold the presidency. That is a modest proposal.

It would be helpful to keep the expense of the Scrutiny Committee's travel apart from the normal expenses of the departmental Select Committees. By implication, we should have to include in that the members of the European Standing Committees.

Mr. Dykes: My hon. Friend makes an important point. He seems to suggest that members of the Scrutiny Committee are no longer nervous about going abroad and meeting foreigners, that they feel much more at ease when they do and that those journeys can no longer be classified in conventional terms as visits abroad because we go to the Community and meet other parliamentarians. Does he agree that his suggestions are even more relevant and unavoidable in the context of the European Parliament's response to various initiatives? The assizes in Italy are coming up in the autumn and other developments are going ahead fast. It appears that the European Parliament will respond positively to the idea of receiving Scrutiny Committees from national Parliaments in a formal sense on regular visits and, indeed, individual members of the Committee when they visit the Strasbourg Parliament. Would he encourage that process, too?

Mr. Haselhurst: I hear what my hon. Friend says. I would certainly encourage that process. We must recognise that we are part of the Community. We ought occasionally to be seen in other parts of it if we are to appear a credible force and be taken seriously when perhaps we object to some aspects of developments with which the majority of our colleagues in the Community agree. We must be seen as serious players in the game. That does not just mean Heads of Government and Ministers. Increasingly, Members of this House must be seen abroad. Those who lament the loss of power of this House should heed the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes).

The ever-closer union of the European peoples is coming ever closer, whether it is perceived to be inching towards us or galloping towards us. It will happen. Those who worry that that takes away the sovereignty and power of this Parliament should pause to wonder what power and what sovereignty will be left in this Parliament if Britain stands outside a Community that goes from strength to

strength, whether it stretches from the Atlantic to the Urals or there is merely a modest increase in the present number of member states.

If we are to command proper control of events that will affect the destiny of this country, we must consider our procedure ever more carefully and ever more regularly. I say to my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House, again in a spirit of experiment and flexibility, that if he is prepared to take a few chances with some of the suggestions put to him both by the Procedure Committee and in the debate today, there is no reason why there should not be a supplementary report from the Procedure Committee or the Scrutiny Committee after 12 months. We could then debate the further report.

We have had a useful debate today, but it is unfinished business. We must return to the subject again and again in fast-changing circumstances to ensure that the relationship of this Parliament with other Parliaments of the Community and the European Parliament is as right as it may be.

9.4 pm

Mr. Michael Knowles (Nottingham, East): My hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) made his case in a gentle and kindly way—understanding the Government's point of view—that was illustrative of his character. Perhaps I could put my points more robustly. After all, today's Order Paper refers to "Scrutiny of European Legislation", as does the Select Committee report.

The Government's proposals were very well taken apart by the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes). His criticisms of them were, in my view, absolutely right. My biggest criticism is this: perhaps they are all right if one considers that scrutiny is enough, but I do not.

I am a member of the Select Committee on European Legislation, and agree with its report. I endorse what was said by our Chairman, the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing)—at least in the first part of his speech—but I believe that we should go much further: we must return to the idea of some form of Grand Committee to examine forward policy. At present, any scrutiny policy means looking at a piece of paper that has already been produced; the policy is already well down the path. It is already half committed, and secret deals have been done in the Council before it ever sees the light of day. The problem for the House is that it does not get ahead of the game as far as European policy is concerned. That is the challenge that we must face.

If the Government had introduced their proposals 10 years ago, they would have been fine, but they are not good enough now. We are promised that in the future something will be done about the nonsense of telephoning or posting a letter to anywhere else in the Community. The sums concerned are trivial; hon. Members are more than prepared to pay themselves. However, it betrays an attitude that has not changed, judging by the Government's response to the proposals. We have a major battle to advance an inch, whereas it should be something that happens automatically with virtually no discussion.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am delighted to hear my hon. Friend refer with such enthusiasm to these matters. I want to convey to him the clear impression that the Government would be delighted to press ahead as quickly as possible, but—until recently—that proved difficult because the attitude to which he has referred lingered in some parts of the House. The Government's attitude is "the quicker the better" in regard to most of these practical and sensible proposals. I would find the general tone of the debate encouraging if it were less critical of the Government.

Mr. Knowles: I understand my right hon. and learned Friend's position. In these matters we are all pushed into role playing: he sits on the Front Bench and defends the Executive, whereas I sit on the Back Bench as a legislator. It is natural that I should wield the tools I have to bring pressure to bear.

When have we debated in the House recent reports from the European Parliament? Recently, there has been the Martin report, which was concerned with where the European Parliament wants to go; the Colombo report —the new draft treaty for European union; the Giscard d'Estaing report on the principle of subsidiarity—we have endless discussions in the House on subsidiarity and federalism, and I recommend that fascinating report on those topics; and the Devuager report and the assizes, which were mentioned in passing earlier. There was an offhand reference to discussions through the usual channels. European Parliaments are supposed to be represented in the assizes, rather than the two Front Benches.

When will the House discuss those matters and who will represent the House in Rome in October? That must be decided within the next month because the House will not return from the recess in time to reach a decision. We need to keep a weather eye on that.

Mr. Haselhurst: Perhaps I could help my hon. Friend by nominating him.

Mr. Knowles: I thank my hon. Friend for that kind thought. At all times he is a kind and generous man.

Some of today's speeches have betrayed the fact that hon. Members have an arrogant attitude towards the European Parliament. It is as though this Parliament were the only representative assembly not only in Europe, but in the world. My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) suggested that we did the job of scrutiny so well that the other 11 national Parliaments should copy us—they would then be all right. I find that arrogance stunning. Usually it is preceded by the misquote that this is the mother of Parliaments, but it is England that is supposed to be that mother. I must admit that some of our offspring do much better than us on occasions.

I understand the 19th century classical parliamentary system where members of the Executive sit in the Chamber and answer to the legislature. I understand the separation of powers. The modern British political system is characterised by tight control by the Executive and tight party systems. That means that the Executive virtually controls the legislature. I am not sure that we shall be lecturing other people much longer. The idea that the British system is the best at all times and in all circumstances is remarkable. We should consider the Parliaments of our European partners.

In Denmark, Ministers appear two or three days before a Council of Ministers meeting with the agenda and go through it with the relevant committee so that it has some idea about what will be discussed. That is a vast

[Mr. Knowles]

improvement on the parliamentary control excercised by the Executive. We can learn from other Parliaments, and we must give up our arrogant attitude.

One of my hon. Friends spoke about checking the Commission. That is right, and the only body to do that is the European Parliament, but who checks the Council of Ministers? At one time, the idea was that national Parliaments checked the Council because every individual Government had the power of veto that came with the Single European Act. Earlier, my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House said that the Council is a legislative chamber, but it is the only one I know in the western world that meets in secret. That is a cause not for pride but for criticism.

We must grapple with the principles that lie behind the arguments on subsidiarity and the federal system. I agree with the hon. Member for Inverness, North and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston). I would rather move to a federal system where powers are delineated so we know where we are. It is also argued that legislatures can control the Executive at two levels. Power has now slipped from the national level, but it has not been acquired at the European level. If we are not careful, the power of scrutiny will not be exercised by either tier.

We must stop looking on our colleagues in the European Parliament as opponents. They are our colleagues and we are in the same business together. Let us get on with that business and ensure that we establish a democratic Europe.

9.13 pm

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): It may not be an exaggeration to say that 1990 may prove to be a watershed in the history of European affairs considering the dramatic events in eastern Europe and the developments within the European Community—demonstrated by the fact that two intergovernmental conferences are planned. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister also made a significant statement this afternoon, which was followed by a most interesting set of exchanges. My right hon. Friend gave us one of the clearest expositions of Britain's position in the EC that the House has yet heard.

This debate is significant for two reasons. First, we are demonstrating that the will of Parliament can be heard. I take issue with the contention of Lord Bethell, who was quoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) and who implied that European legislation was not properly scrutinised. It is well known that hon. Members can obtain from the Vote Office a piece of paper—I have a copy of it in my hand—each week which explains practically everything going on in the European Commission. It is possible by that means for hon. Members to appraise themselves of the legislation that is coming to this House and to take steps to ensure that, at some stage of our procedure, it gets adequate consideration.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) was critical of the way in which we consider European legislation. He thought that the pass had been sold and that our deliberations today about change were neither here nor there. I do not regard that as sufficient reasons for not making changes.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Waldon (Mr. Haselhurst) pointed out, if the changes prove insufficient, there is no reason why we should not make further changes later. Like others, I was glad to hear the Leader of the House say that there was no reluctance by the Government to review the situation and perhaps to go faster in future.

The second important feature of the debate is that at last we are sending out the right message to the nation about the importance that we attach to the consideration of European business. For too long, the nation has heard too little about our consideration of such matters, mainly because our debates take place late at night when the press have gone home, so our remarks are not reported in yesterday's or tomorrow's papers, when the radio stations have closed down and when the prospects of getting coverage for our deliberations are slim. As hon. Members have said, our debates often occur at the eleventh hour and we are debating matters in retrospect.

I welcome the positive commitment of the Government to improve the procedures for scrutiny. The proposed changes recognise the realities of the situation, and not before time. While much of what we discuss by way of European legislation and directives is mundane, it includes important issues. There are matters of principle and policy at stake. In addition, much of the legislation, because of practical considerations, is irreversible and takes precedence over national law.

I welcome the determination to debate future events. Looking to the future, it is vital for Britain to make a success of our membership, and to do that we must demonstrate to the country that we have the will power and determination to do what is necessary.

I shall sound a word of caution—the exchange rate mechanism and the European currency unit will not do more for us in this country than we are prepared to do for ourselves. If we want to create sound money—I am sure that we do—lower interest and inflation rates and better exchange rates, those aims are all within our control. No one must run away with the idea that because we join the exchange rate mechanism, those things will be done for us. It depends so much on the political will of this Parliament and House, and the individual will of men and women throughout the country, whether as managers of our industries or members of the work force within industry. We should make no bones about it: competent countries will go ahead within the Community regardless.

I accept that the Council of Ministers will have to remain the main decision-making organisation in the European Community. I have frequently spoken about the importance of protecting the principle of subsidiarity, and I do not intend to speak about that any more this evening.

There was an interesting exchange some time ago involving power and the relationship between the powers of this House and those of the European Community. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) seemed reluctant to accept that power and cash were inseparable and indivisible components, and that one cannot have power without cash. He implied that legislation could be passed without costing money. I strongly question that. That old-fashioned and outdated idiom that power came out of the barrel of a gun is now a dead letter. That has been epitomised in eastern Europe. Power today, in modern Europe and the modern world, means economic power.

The hon. Member of Newham, North-West said that divisions among Opposition Members in relation to Europe were more apparent than real. Does he really mean that? Where was he this afternoon when we saw the phenomenal spectacle of the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) agreeing with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister? I do not think that it was possible for the Prime Minister to include the Leader of the Opposition in that. No doubt the divisions that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West declines to recognise were recognised by Conservative Members.

The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) intervened on the issue of structural funds—he would because it is an essential plank of socialism to have large central funds that can be dispersed for those purposes that socialist politicians feel that the state can serve best. Socialists support the structural funds; I do not.

The hon. Member for Bolsover also said that that was the means by which farmers lined their pockets. He suggested that agriculture did well out of the structural funds. However, the state of British agriculture today is the poorer as a result of the structural funds. I am certainly not reluctant for the common agricultural policy to be dismantled. I believe—I have said this to the House many times—that structural funds are totally unnecessary in the context of what wer are trying to do in Europe. We can create a prosperous and peaceful Europe without structural funds.

Europe needs us for our pragmatism, our experience, our sense of history and our acceptance of the rule of law. Above all, they need us for our courage. That is well personified by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, who is not afraid to say no when unacceptable proposals are put to us.

9.22 pm

Mr. Dykes: I shall be brief. The winding-up speeches are awaited with great anticipation because we are anxious to see whether there is a meeting of minds between the Government and the Opposition on the scrutiny proposals. I thank my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House for the Government's positive response to the suggestions of the Procedure Committee and the Scrutiny Committee. However, I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will reconsider the automatic referral syndrome that is proposed as part of the Government's response, because that would be an extension of the Executive's power over Parliament. That is the kernel of the debate. As my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) said, perhaps the matter could be considered in a year or two, depending on how matters turn out.

In the debate there has been a realistic recognition that we are part of the European Community. I was struck by a leader in a newspaper on Sunday which said:

"If Britain had been well governed over the decades and had enjoyed decades . . . of steady economic growth, combined with social harmony, the decision . . . about our membership would be more difficult. In almost every way our European partners have done better and continue to do better than us."

When my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House was Foreign Secretary, he was acknowledged as an enthusiastic exponent of our membership of the Community. He served Britain well in that role by defending our interests and recognising the reality of our membership of Europe. That is what the central scrutiny procedure is to be about.

Like other hon. Members, I am pleased that we have got away from pretending that scrutiny is a fringe activity, carried out originally, because for some hon. Members the form and structure of our legislation for entering the Community was controversial. That is why the Foster committee was set up.

I was impressed when the Spanish scrutiny committee approached us after the return of democracy to Spain. Its members said that they would like to speak to us about our work and about how they should proceed in Madrid. One of the terms of reference of the Spanish scrutiny committee in Madrid was "to promote and accelerate the development of the Community in Spain." From memory, those are the exact words. I wish that we had had such self-confidence at the beginning of our membership. However, we approached it in the classic British way which has stood the test of time.

We are all grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) and to the members of his Committee for their excellent suggestions. I strongly agree with most of them. Unlike some hon. Members, I welcome the Government's response to the idea of individual subject Committees. Whatever the number of such Committees—and I realise that that might cause difficulties—that is a better approach than the Grand Committee idea.

We have now reached the later stage of mature scrutiny and must maximise liaison with our colleagues in the European Parliament. I should like to see Conservative Members liaising with Labour Members and Members from other parties in that Parliament. I agree with the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) that it was unfortunate that we have an election system which produces results judged by other Members of the European Parliament to be monumentally unfair. There are no Liberals in that Parliament. We may have to face that issue and in due course may well decide that for European elections it would be right to have proportional representation, even if we do not change the voting system for election to the House of Commons.

The scrutiny procedures are capable of being highly developed, provided we recognise that the additional layer of political, economic and social activity, which is the European Community layer, is not our enemy but our natural ally. The success of that depends on cross-fertilisation of ideas between the Christian Democrats, the Socialists and the Liberals in the European Parliament and their national equivalents in the Parliaments of member states. They are all struggling and/or working together for the political results that we wish to achieve, not one excluding the other, looking down on the other, describing British MEPs as of no consequence. All those days are now over. We are now into the stage of new realism.

As my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House said with his characteristic humour just now, his chances, as a very good Leader of the House, if I may embarrass him by saying so, of promoting scrutiny in the House are now improved and enhanced because at long last the Labour party, after only 15 or 16 months, has miraculously transformed itself with some exceptions—such as one or two of those elderly hon. Members who questioned my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister today on her statement on the summit, the hon. Member for

[Mr. Dykes]

Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and others—into a pro-European party for the first time. That has occurred in an extraordinarily short time.

It was the lack of such support which stalled the possibility of proper practical measures of scrutiny, telephone calls, postage and passes for MEPs. Labour Members in the Services Committee and elsewhere would have none of it. They did not want such people here with their continuing theme. I remember that it took several years to extrude a modest system of passes for MEPs. I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend will remember, even then, how grudging Labour Members were at the late-night debate when they conceded that.

Now it is all roses, light and enlightenment for Labour Members. I do not refer to the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) whose views have been consistently enthusiastic. But we shall have to watch closely to see whether that change is more than skin deep in the future. I think that the Conservative party, with the Liberals, will retain their natural monopoly of enthusiasm for the EC, but perhaps Labour will come up to scratch later.

Whatever the case may be, we are now embarked on a much more serious and profound scrutiny procedure, and I hope that we shall have the practical concomitants of that—telephone calls, postage facilities and all the rest which would make that work useful not only for the House and Britain, as the Procedure Committee has recommended, but for every elector, contrary to the anxieties of the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing).

9.31 pm

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): It is nice to be able to follow the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes), whose opportunism and idealism shine through, despite the fact that he was being glowered at by the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash). There is a much wider gulf between them than the two and a half sword lengths that divide the two sides of the House.

This has been a remarkably even-handed debate, not given to the normal cut and thrust of partisan politics, and that is as it should be. This matter transcends party politics. We are considering how Parliament can strengthen its role within an increasingly powerful European dimension. A constructive approach has been taken, which I am sure the Leader of the House will reflect on and then bring forward his further proposals.

We have been considerably helped in our work by the report of the Procedure Committee which was expanded upon by the Chairman, the hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery). He will be aware that I disagree with some of the conclusions of his report. He chose to reject the evidence and ideas that I and my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) put forward, but that does not undervalue the strength of his recommendations. I shall deal with the question of the Grand Committee later.

We were also helped in our deliberations by the work of the Select Committee on European Legislation whose Chairman, my hon. Friend for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), graces these sessions with an assiduousness that is unparalleled. He brings a considerable clarity to our debates. He and I disagree on a number of issues relating to Europe but on the key question of the importance of scrutiny and the way in which Parliament should deal with that, we are at one.

I was interested to note the approach taken by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to the question of scrutiny in our debate on the European Community a couple of weeks ago. The hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) asked whether the right hon. Gentleman could mention a single debate

"in which the Government changed their position as a result of the views expressed in the House?"

The Foreign Secretary replied:

"Having taken part in such debates, I am sure that the Minister's view is often shaped"—

and there were cries of dismay at that point, or perhaps they were cries of disbelief. After all, the Foreign Secretary is a writer of fiction—of extremely good novels—and perhaps right hon. and hon. Members felt that he had slipped into his writing mode as distinct from his ministerial mode. Nevertheless, he went on:

"No, I mean that. Ministers' views are shaped and shifted by many angles of approach as a result of such debates. That is what Parliament is about. One does not expect Ministers to do 180 degree turns in public but one expects them—and this is what happens—to be influenced and to tell their officials as they leave the Box, 'I do not want to go through that again'."
—*[Official Report*, 11 June 1990; Vol. 174, c.26.]

Hansard records that there was laughter at that point, and so it should.

The new doctrine of scrutiny and accountability of the Executive is to give the Minister a sufficiently hard time that the barometer of dissent is taken to the officials in the Box, whom we are not supposed to mention, with the message that the Minister does not want to go through a similar experience again. I do not know whether that was a description or an incitement, but it certainly gave an interesting insight into the way that the Government view such matters. The Leader of the House may say that Parliaments throughout the Community, if not across a wider spectrum, view us with considerable envy, but I feel that we should have a rather more systematic method of tackling accountability.

The Government's approach is illustrated also by the Prime Minister's throwaway line when she reported to the House this afternoon on the European summit. In the off-the-cuff way in which she seems now to conduct her diplomacy, she described the social charter—against which huge battalions of Government Ministers and endless numbers of civil servants are deployed, on the grounds that the charter would jeopardise jobs and pose the threat of a Marxist regime on this nation—as conferring "piffling little powers".

That way of balancing the business that we conduct in relation to the Community has been a characteristic of the past 11 years. Although the Government have come round to the conversion of the power and role of the British Parliament, the past 11 years have been characterised by a gradual but increasingly pronounced reduction in the role of parliamentary power over the Executive.

One significant example is the reports from what used to be called the Foreign Affairs Ministerial Council, which meets monthly and is the senior Council of Ministers meeting held between the Heads of Government summits—the European Council. It has been renamed the General Affairs Council, but it retains a supervisory and almost executive role.

For many years, it was a matter of form to make an oral report to Parliament, followed by cross-examination in

this chamber, on reports from that Council. More recently, there was a two-and-a-half year gap between oral statements, and on 21 February this year, it was only through your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, on a request made by myself, that the Government were forced to the House on a private notice question to account for the deliberations of the extremely important Foreign Affairs Council on 19 and 20 February, when the British Government were beached on the question of sanctions against South Africa.

So, on the one hand, the Prime Minister's view, expressed in a reply on 1 May to the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) is:

"We should stop any more centralisation and make certain that the future of the Community is implementation of measures through the national Parliaments."—[*Official Report*, 1 May 1990; Vol. 171, c. 907.]

That is the rhetoric but, as the *Daily Mail* so prosaically puts it today, the other side of the prime ministerial coin is clearly different, and we realise that Parliament has been kept constantly in the dark for 11 years. If we are witnessing a change in the Government's position, we welcome it strongly. My hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) made that clear in his opening remarks.

We are talking about the balance of accountability between the Executive and the legislature and about how Ministers can be held accountable, not just for their ministerial role and duty, but as legislators in the Council of Ministers—an organisation which meets behind closed doors, and whose deliberations are not open to the same scrutiny as are parliamentary affairs in this country and throughout the European Community.

The Government's response to the recommendations of the Procedure Committee goes some way towards meeting the desire, demand and need for accountability, but perhaps it does not yet go far enough. All too oftern we forget that the Community, through the Council of Ministers, deals not with peripheral, subsidiary legislation but with primary legislation which—as we have seen in the past few weeks—has supremacy over British law. That is the qualitative distinction: matters may have been considered by national or supranational Governments until now, but the Community is engaged with primary legislation, so this Parliament has a right to be involved in the process because it affects the daily lives of people in this country.

Hon. Members have dealt with a number of issues which I shall briefly touch upon. Inevitably, as Members of Parliament, we look to our own role here. The restrictions on telephone calls outside the United Kingdom and on travel have been a continual irritation. I am glad that the Leader of the House has pledged to make progress on that matter. I hope that progress will not be held up by any attempt to do package deals, which might frustrate the needs, desires and the operational effectiveness of hon. Members.

I am not suggesting an open-ended commitment to travel within the European Community, but it should not be confined to members of Select Committees. One of the regrettable features is that foreign travel is mostly confined to Select Committee members. I am not making a point as Opposition spokesman on foreign affairs and a shadow Minister, but we are one of the few categories not entitled to travel and to investigate the affairs that we have to talk about. If we are to consider ability to travel within the European Community, as we should, it should not be confined to members of Select Committees.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland said, we believe that too few special Standing Committees are being proposed and not enough people will be involved. There are problems of their organisation: how will Ministers, who are members of Committees, at the same time be subject to cross-examination by those same Committees?

My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South referred to the concept of automaticity. We believe that, on balance, the House should have the right to make the decision, rather than documents being referred to the Committees on a large scale.

I disagree with the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber that we should go back to having a European Question Time slot, as there is not a single departmental Question Time that does not involve a large proportion of questions about the Community. To push European matters back to Foreign Office questions would be to restrict ourselves to institutional affairs, which would restrict hon. Members' rights to deal with other issues.

I strongly support the view expressed by the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South and by the hon. Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) that in the interim the Scrutiny Committee should be able to consider wider issues than those to which it must confine itself at present. The hon. Member for Saffron Walden made the valid point that two intergovernmental conferences are about to start and said that the Scrutiny Committee will not be able to consider the wider issues involved because there is no document on which it can base its considerations.

Mr. Cash: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Robertson: I am afraid that I am running out of time. On a world service broadcast that we recorded this afternoon, I told the hon. Gentleman that I should feel inclined to allow him to intervene in my speech—but not in the last minute. If I did so, it would deprive the Minister of the right to be intervened on by the chairman of the Bruges group.

I regret that the Procedure Committee rejected our idea of a European Grand Committee. I stand by that idea, as I still believe that such a Committee would have immensely good qualities. I am sure that if the House looked into the matter in greater detail, it would be attracted to the idea.

The Leader of the House was right in one important regard as well as in some of the details. This debate is, and should be, about maximising the influence of Britain in the increasingly important European law-making procedures. That is the common interest of hon. Members on both sides of the House. The Government's contribution to the debate has been positive in that regard, even if it has been slightly defective in the limited respects that we have identified.

For the moment, we reserve judgment and await the considered response to this constructive and wide-ranging debate.

9.46 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Francis Maude): When the House of Commons debates its own role and functions, there is occasionally a tendency for our discussions to lapse into

[Mr. Francis Maude]

narcissism and introversion. There is sometimes even a sense of undue self-importance. I am happy to say that this has not been such a debate. It has been a serious and sensible debate about an important matter which concerns not only the House of Commons but the process of government and the way in which the United Kingdom operates within the European Community.

One of the many good things about the debate has been the atmosphere surrounding our discussion of specific proposals. I have some sympathy with the remarks in the Procedure Committee report about some of our late night debates. I do not want to disparage those debates, to which I shall refer later, but it seems that there is a tendency for old and general battles of principle to be refought—although, as I have said, I do not disparage those points of principle, because many of them are important. What has emerged from this debate is the sense that however we feel about the European Community—whether we are enthusiastic about it, whether we are idealistic, whether we think that it is perfect or imperfect—we are in it and we have to live with it and make the best of it. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House said, we must look at ways of maximising our influence within the Community. That concept has provided a good framework for the debate.

I was not here for the whole of the speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor), but I have seen a note of it and I heard some of it. If I have a criticism of the way in which my hon. Friend puts his case, it is that he is perhaps somewhat defeatist about the role that the House can play. My hon. Friend is absolutely right when he says that the House of Commons, in the process of scrutiny, does not exercise direct legislative control and that it does not go through matters clause by clause in the way that it does on domestic legislation. However, that does not mean that the process of scrutiny is an empty process, or that it is meaningless or merely a sop to the House of Commons. I cannot emphasise too much that we take the process extremely seriously.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East and other hon. Members are right to say that qualified majority voting—both in the treaty as it was originally and as extended in the Single European Act—makes a difference. We are very rarely out-voted. Since the Single European Act was passed, we have been out-voted on three occasions. Two were on the same dossier because, far from our being dragged into something excessively European against our will, we were concerned that it was not proceeding towards fast enough integration. We were having difficulty overcoming protectionist restriction elsewhere.

Scrutiny of Community legislation has played an important part in the work of the House of Commons since we joined the Community. As the report of my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emergy) makes clear, there has not been a significant review of the procedures for the past 12 years. I am sure that the changes that the Procedure Committee has made—and the changes that the Government are canvassing—will make those procedures even more effective.

I regard myself as something of a veteran of the late night debates. In my role at the Foreign Office, I undertake few of them, but when I was a Minister at the Department of Trade and Industry conducting the 1992 negotiations, it seemed as if all 50 of the scrutiny debates were conducted by me personally. There were times when I was participating in one every week and many were late at night. That was not always terribly convenient. Nevertheless, they were good debates and those who took an interest played a full part.

I was glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) drew attention to the fact that the debates increasingly take place early in the process. It has been the Government's deliberate intention to ensure that the House has an opportunity to influence and to shape the decision-making process early when it is still capable of being shaped.

I can tell my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) that it is rare for those debates to take place in retrospect. I can think of few occasions when that has happened recently. If it does happen, it is regrettable, but it is sometimes inescapable if events move very fast, and the Government are keen to ensure that the debates take place in good time.

I hope that that keenness and the fact that Ministers take those debates seriously will show my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) that the Government take this process seriously. I know of no Minister who is involved with day-to-day Community business—there are many of us now—who takes lightly the process of scrutiny and of submitting himself or herself to answer to the House of Commons for the Government's position.

Mr. Cash: Does my hon. Friend recall that with respect to both the Madrid summit and the Ashford castle meeting on economic and monetary union, with the paper presented by Mr. Christophersen, there did not appear to be an opportunity for the House to consider the implications, although the papers were available through the European Community?

Mr. Maude: That point is familiar to me, and the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) also made it. I do not think that any of us are under an illusion. As we move towards the intergovernmental conferences which begin at the end of this year, the House must have a proper opportunity to debate the position. We have already had the chance to debate economic and monetary union. It was an extremely good debate on important matters that the House of Commons should debate. Whether they fall strictly within the process of scrutiny, as the hon. Member for Newham, South and my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) would wish, is a matter of secondary importance.

The process of scrutiny is effective. If I may put it personally, it certainly feels effective when one is the Minister expounding a measure to Parliament. The House contains a fund of expertise and specialist knowledge to which Ministers are exposed in scrutiny debates and cannot fail to be influenced. In many of the debates, my opening speech frequently resembled the process of giving evidence because there were frequent interventions from hon. Members asking detailed factual questions or questions of principle. It is right that Ministers should be subjected to that cross-examination and required to answer to the House of Commons on the effects of any

proposal and on the Government's position. The proposed improvements will make that system an even stronger discipline.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) was right to say that a good strong scrutiny process strengthens the hands of negotiators by providing a clear expression of parliamentary views. That advantage is shared by few other Ministers around the negotiating table. That is not a claim that we are the only perfect representative system in Europe, as my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) might suggest, but our system of scrutiny is better developed than most others within the Community. That is a fact that is recognised by others as well as being trumpeted by us.

A particular example of the strengthening of the Government's position as a result of debate was the debate on economic and monetary union to which I have referred. Last November, it became clear that a single currency in the manner of Delors stage 3 simply was not acceptable to the House of Commons. That is not to say that it will never be acceptable to a later House of Commons, but it is not acceptable to this House of Commons. That means that the Government's position in those negotiations is perfectly clear.

The pattern of scrutiny in other member states is changing. In some countries there is detailed debate. In Denmark, for example, where scrutiny has been less highly developed hitherto, there is a growing interest in developing that process. In France, the scrutiny committee meets weekly, the German committee was in London this week, to discuss our arrangements, the Dutch committee meets fortnightly and I know that new scrutiny committees have been established recently in Spain and in Greece. Many other member states now have scrutiny procedures, many of which are being reviewed.

All that work was given a renewed boost by the conclusions of the Dublin Council this week, on which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister reported earlier. The documents on institutional reform prepared by the Foreign Ministers clearly stated that one of the mechanisms for improving democratic legitimacy in the Community is the greater involvement of national parliaments. Two years ago there was almost no discussion at Community level of the role of national Parliaments within the Community. We have always argued for that, and Mr. Delors, the President of the Commission, helped to stimulate a wider discussion in his speech at the European Parliament last year.

It is worth examining briefly what we already do. Making Ministers answerable to the House of Commons for what they do in the European Community goes much wider than the simple process of scrutiny. The process of parliamentary questions to Ministers and to the Prime Minister involves a great degree of accountability. It is not right to condemn European Community questions to a ghetto of their own, because Ministers should answer to the House for what they do in the Community, as they do for domestic responsibilities.

I give evidence to the Scrutiny Committee every six months, at the beginning of the presidency, on the plans for the presidency and submit myself to its expert interrogation. Before going to the European Council, the Foreign Secretary gives evidence to the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs. The Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee has made a study of economic and monetary union, and there is a wide range of other aspects of accountability.

I know that there is much anxiety about automatic referral, and my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) suggested that the proposal might be left for a little while. We shall consider the matter carefully.

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

Terms and Conditions of Employment

That the draft Employment Subsidies Act 1978 (Renewal) (Great Britain) Order 1990, which was laid before this House on 15th May, be approved.

Agriculture

That the Home-Grown Cereals Authority Oilseeds Levy Scheme (Approval) Order 1990, a copy of which was laid before this House on 18th May, be approved.

That the Home-Grown Cereals Authority Levy (Variation) Scheme (Approval) Order 1990, dated 15th May 1990, a copy of which was laid before this House on 24th May, be approved—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

Question agreed to.

Romania

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

10.1 pm

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): In opening this debate on the Government's policy on Romania, I should make a couple of declarations. First, although I have no pecuniary interest in Romania, I am writing a book on the history of the Romanian revolution. I am advised that I should declare that as a potential interest; I certainly hope that it will become one.

Secondly, I should give a political health warning. Although I have travelled regularly to Romania since the revolution, I never travelled there before it and would not have done so, such was my abhorrence of the evil and criminal Ceausescu regime, which was overthrown by the Romanian people's revolution on 22 December.

That political health warning is important, because I want to show that the Government's policy on Romania is seriously flawed, that the Government completely misjudged the dramatic events that unfolded in the capital, Bucharest, earlier this month, and that as a result they seriously over-reacted in a way that was inimical not only to our interests but to those of the Romanian people and the broader cause of bringing the former regimes of the Soviet bloc into the mainstream of European life.

In making that case, I wish to draw on several statements made by the Minister in the days and hours after those dramatic events. Making due allowance for the fact that events moved fast, I must say, although I greatly admire the Minister and often agree with him on foreign affairs matters, that some serious errors were made.

The Minister—I have gone through the transcripts of his interviews with several television and radio reporters—took a consistent line: that the Romanian Government had been responsible for the brutal crushing of a peaceful demonstration, mainly by students, against the Government of Romania and its policies. The Minister told Brian Hanrahan:

> "We have seen no reports of a systematic attempt at a coup . . . What we are worried about is the way in which at the first challenge from opposition groups, which I have no doubt was an inconvenient challenge, they seem to have reacted in a way all too reminiscent of the old days."

In interview after interview, that line was maintained. The statements made at the time equated in many respects the new elected authorities in Romania with the old discredited authorities. The comparison was deeply offensive to the democrats and revolutionaries in Romania who had overthrown the dictatorship. They had risked their lives at a time when it was not clear how the dice would fall. Those men put their lives on the line and it was offensive to them to be compared in that way.

I have the advantage over the Minister because I was on the streets of Bucharest during those dramatic events. I can assure the Minister from what I saw with my own eyes that if it was not an attempted coup that was unfolding in Bucharest, I do not know what an attempted coup is. I followed the crowd and mob through the streets of Bucharest. Sometimes I was only a few yards behind them, although in most cases I was 100 yards or so away from the events.

I watched the crowd of what the Minister described as student demonstrators invade the Interior Ministry, which is the Romanian equivalent of the Home Office. They stormed that building and set it ablaze. I followed them as they moved on to the central police station which is their equivalent of Scotland Yard. They smashed a police truck through the station's locked doors. I saw them invade the central police station and set it ablaze. They freed prisoners and they looted artefacts in the police station. They even broke into an armoury and had begun to liberate weapons before the police opened fire. If that was not the beginnings of an attempted coup, I do not know what it was.

I followed the crowd to the ugliest incident—the siege of the television station, that extremely emotive totem of the December revolution. The crowd invaded the television station and they beat hell out of everyone they could get their hands on. Even the weather man was savagely beaten by the crowd. Journalists and broadcasters were beaten and film was destroyed. The transmission of the entire country's television went off for an hour. The central television station was occupied by hundreds of demonstrators, but the Minister described all that as if it was a common or garden demonstration of the kind that we might see on our streets. However, we did have a particularly bad demonstration some weeks ago, and I was there as well. The whole country was rightly angered and shaken to the core by the scenes of violence, but they bore no resemblance to the serious situation in Bucharest in those late Tuesday and early Wednesday hours.

I was able to test the character of the crowd of what the Minister persisted in describing as students. On the Sunday after the events I have outlined, the *Observer* described the crowd as liberals. I make no apology for repeating what I have said in the House before: the political character of a significant number of the people in that demonstration was ultra-right, racist and anti-semitic.

Two of the slogans that I heard from innumerable people in that demonstration were "Out with the Spanish yid Roman"—Prime Minister Petro Roman, whose mother is a Jew—and "Iliescu was a whoremaster presiding over a brothel of reds and yids." For the nationalists and anti-semites in the crowd, the terms "communist" and "Jewish" were entirely synonymous. The Minister is aware that that is a problem across central and eastern Europe. It would be a fundamental mistake for the British Government to imagine that that was a crowd of student liberals out on an everyday demonstration. It certainly was not that.

While I am at it, I wish to correct a particularly offensive error that the Minister made in every one of the transcripts. In every interview he accused President Iliescu of Romania of describing the demonstrators as gipsies. There is no record of the president using such a description. The word for gipsy is "tigani". In any record that I have seen—I have searched for it—the president never used that word. He used the word "golani" which in Romanian means tramps or low-life characters, which some, if by no means all, of the demonstrators were. The Minister's accusation was entirely wrong. His mistake was politically important. It is the ultra-right in Romania which hates the gipsies, the Jews and other minorities in the country. It is important that that reality is understood.

If the House does not believe me, I quote to it an authority to whom I do not usually turn. Conor Cruise O'Brien is a well-known Conservative commentator and he wrote an article in, of all places, *The Times* on 22 June this year. It said:

"Mobs of both persuasions menace Romanian liberty. Conor Cruise O'Brien argues that student protestors threaten democracy as much as miners with clubs . . . This was no protest, but a student-led attempt at a *putsch* against the recently elected government of Romania. . . . The great difference between the two sets of mob violence is that the first was directed against the elected government, while the second was initiated by the elected government in its own defence."

That is another fundamental reality which the Minister has not recognised and should recognise this evening. Not to do so would be to draw the wrong conclusions.

The Government's conclusions have been mean and spiteful. They amount to a demand for economic sanctions against the Romanian Government. In his speech to the Press Gallery on 20 June, the Foreign Secretary said that with his advocacy, but not his alone, the Romanian Government would not be invited to the discussions of the Group of 24 with the emerging European democracies and the European Community. He said that conditionality must apply. On the basis of that conditionality, the Romanian Government would not receive the aid package that other east European Governments would receive.

Such a stance sits uneasily with the Government's attitude to other countries. They do business as usual with Baghdad and Peking. Baghdad has committed crimes against our own country and Peking has committed crimes on a gigantic scale, mowing down thousands of people with machine guns. We can do business as usual with them, but we take a mean and spiteful attitude to the Romanian Government for the events that I have described in the time available to me and which Conor Cruise O'Brien described in *The Times* at greater length, very well. The Government should have the courage to say that, in retrospect, knowing facts that they did not know previously, they are prepared to think again.

To his credit, the Minister made it clear in all the transcripts that the National Salvation Front Government have the support of the great majority of the Romanian people. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) and the deputy leader of the Labour party, my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) were observers at the elections. The National Salvation Front Government seek to build a mixed economy and are heading towards a market economy. They are determined to develop parliamentary democracy in their country. If we turn our back on them and slam the door in their face, we shall send the message to them that the European Community and countries such as Britain are not interested in helping them through these difficult times.

The Romanian people need our help to defend and develop their democracy. They feel that Britain is a cradle of democracy which has a lot to teach them. However, we can only teach people with whom we are engaged in dialogue. We could help to provide a genuine police force. In the events that I have described, the police ran away: they hightailed it out of town, so frightened were they of the mob. We could help them train a police force which could face up to civil disorder, and so avoid the ugly scenes involving the miners and other workers on the streets of Bucharest.

We should also encourage trade. Romania is not some impoverished banana republic in central Africa or Latin America, but a European country with no foreign debts, tremendous natural resources and a big market for us—24 million people. It would be foolhardy of Britain to turn its back on such a country. The French will not do so; French diplomacy is active in Romania. Nor will other European countries take the view that Britain is taking.

I have spoken to the Minister previously about the question of child AIDS in Romania. There has been a tremendous response to that from the British public through articles in *The Guardian*, an article by Anna Smith in the *Daily Record* and another by Bob Wylie in *The Observer*. Those powerful articles have brought the human tragedy—the legacy of the Ceausescu period—to the attention of the British people. They have achieved a phenomenal response from British donors, who have sent hundreds of thousands of pounds. Many other groups, such as orphans and people living in penury on low wages, have had almost nothing to buy for the past 10 to 20 years.

Let us not turn our backs on those people. The British people would not understand if, at the same time as they were giving with their cheque books to help Romania, the British Government were slamming the door in the face of the Romanian Government. I beg the Minister and the Government to think again.

10.16 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. William Waldegrave): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) for giving the House the chance to have this timely short debate on Romania, and also for his fiery and heartfelt speech. He will not be surprised if I do not agree with everything that he has said, but we both agree that we care for the future of Romania.

All hon. Members and members of the British public who watched the events of the revolution through those moving television broadcasts wish Romania success. My argument with the hon. Gentleman is not about the horrors out of which Romania has fought its way. I pay tribute to him: unlike a number of others—whom I will leave him to name—he did not accept the hospitality of the previous dictator. His hands are clean in that regard. He has also made a considerable contribution on the humanitarian side, along with other hon. Members from both sides of the House.

How do we judge the recent events? It is clear that, after 40 years of a particularly ruthless communist dictatorship —including 25 years under President Ceausescu, and his predecessor was no picnic—it was too much to hope that the transition to freedom would pass without any difficulty or hitches. The Ceausescu era fostered intolerance and, above all, distrust and mutual suspicion. The strongest feeling that I encountered when I visited Romania was the lack of trust between people that had been engendered by those years. Everything had to be learned from scratch. In other countries of eastern and central Europe, the often sullen, slow-moving and incompetent communist bureaucracies could at least be turned to democratic use. However, in Romania even the bureaucracies were corrupted by Ceausescu and the organisations—down to the football teams—were often corrupted, and involved in the Securitate.

After the revolution, from January onwards, the National Salvation Front came under criticism from its political opponents in the reformed and newly reconstituted political parties, and on the streets, for its ties with the personnel and the behaviour of the old regime. Nevertheless, the fact that such opinons could be freely

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expressed was a measure of the change that had occurred. When I was in Romania in January, I found chaos and disorganisation, but also optimism and hope for the future.

In the campaign leading up to elections on 20 May, there was certainly no shortage of well-founded allegations that Mr. Iliescu and his colleagues in the NSF were not playing the democratic game as it should have been played. The opposition parties faced the intimidation of their candidates and supporters and persistent difficulties in setting up publications and making their voices heard. The NSF took maximum advantage of its control of radio and television.

To leave the Romanian Government in no doubt about our concern at what was going on we summoned the Romanian chargé on 11 May and pointed out that the way in which the elections were held would have a great impact on British and western attitudes to Romania in the future.

In the event, few independent observers doubt that the campaign, as it was run, helped to increase the already substantial support enjoyed by the NSF. Despite the limitations of the campaign, however, the elections were, if hardly a paragon, at least an important step towards democracy. Throughout the long day at polling stations nationwide Romanians of different political persuasions co-operated, in the main peacefully and enthusiastically, to elect a President and two chambers of a Parliament.

That there were many departures from ideal democratic practice—instances of malpractice and fraud—is not in doubt. Most independent observers, however, including hon. Members from both sides of the House, came to the conclusion, which I share, that even if the campaign and the poll had been scrupulously fair, Mr. Iliescu and the NSF still would have won a considerable majority. They concluded that the election should, by and large and in the circumstances, be taken as valid.

By early June, we were therefore hopeful that Romania was starting on the difficult road to democracy, although we had no illusions about the magnitude of the task facing her. The events of 13 and 15 June put paid, for the time being, to our cautious optimism.

To some extent the hon. Member for Hillhead has conflated two separate events. It is true that in the early hours of 13 June the Romanian security forces cleared, by force, the demonstrators, at that time largely peaceful, from University square. He is right that the second event involved a group of largely young thugs—possibly egged on by others with grudges against the Government. We shall probably never know the full story. They attacked the police and others with sticks, stones and petrol bombs.

The hon. Gentleman is right to say that there were scenes of disgraceful violence. The hon. Gentleman saw demonstrators storm the police headquarters and the television station. I do not for one moment condone that violence directed at everybody. I think that there is still little evidence to show that it marshalled forces that could possibly be described as those representing an incipient coup. It is perfectly fair, however, for the hon. Gentleman to say that in a democracy—everyone in Romania should now be seeking to build democracy—those opposing the elected Government should do so peaceably. There can be no excuse for the mayhem of 13 June in Bucharest.

What we must judge—we deal with Governments—is the response of the Romanian authorities. Here I part from the hon. Gentleman. The violence organised by the Romanian authorities was of a different order altogether. It is the duty of an elected Government not just to win an election, but to wield power within the law. That is why we were so profoundly shocked by President Iliescu's decision to call on the miners to act as vigilantes. The systematic and ruthless attempt by those miners to incapacitate the main opposition parties was profoundly shocking not just to Britain, but to other western countries.

The hon. Gentleman gave his own eye-witness account. There are many others, for example, the report carried by the *Daily Express* of Monday 18 June about Mrs. Rodica Glaser, who was also in Bucharest and whom my officials have questioned. She saw the systematic beating and killing of people and the raping of women by those so-called miners.

There is no doubt that the brutal savagery of 14 and 15 June was directed by people in positions of authority. How else would those miners have been able to find straight away the offices and homes of the Liberal party and Peasants' party leaders? Why else would there be so many reports of well-dressed figures directing the violence, while the police—not in every case running away, according to accounts that I have had—stood idly by?

When groups of vigilantes called in by the highest figure in the land roam the streets dispensing summary justice to those whose opinions, or even appearance, they do not care for, and when the elected leader does not condemn such activities but instead thanks their perpetrators, prospects for democracy are dark indeed.

Those so-called miners went on a rampage through the gipsy quarter, handing out violence of a high degree. That is why the British Government have roundly condemned President Iliescu's action. We did so by way of an immediate diplomatic protest in London, and in Bucharest on 15 June. On 18 June the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and his European Community colleagues issued a vigorously worded statement—all of them, not just us—deploring the behaviour of President Iliescu's Government. They decided unanimously to put off a decision on signature of the European Community—Romania trade and co-operation agreement.

As a further sign of disapproval—again unanimously—Romania is not being invited to the ministerial meeting of the Group of 24 on 4 July to discuss aid to eastern Europe. Humanitarian aid must continue, but there can be no question at present of the aid that is conditional on the development of policies which we support being released as if those conditions had been met.

It is important that certain matters should be raised here and now because they may help. On 21 June the British ambassador in Bucharest invoked the CSCE human rights mechanism to raise with the Romanian authorities the fate of the three arrested student leaders—Munteanu, Dinca and Nica—and some hon. Members may remember meeting Mr. Nica when he was here in March for the political seminar organised by the IPU and the GB-East Europe Centre.

Even though, in all those cases, the Romanian Government have accepted that they hold the students in question, they had not as of this afternoon given access to Leon Nica, whose family has still not been allowed access to him or to contact him, and he has been moved from

place to place apparently without any information being given to his family, let alone to lawyers or to any other legal authorities.

Investigations are continuing. We shall watch carefully the way in which they are carried out and the way those under arrest are treated. Hon. Members will have seen that Mr. Munteanu was interviewed on Romanian television a couple of days ago and rejected the charges against him. We hope that that portends a more open-minded approach to those under arrest.

Mr. Galloway: How is it that it can be business as usual with Peking after the gunning down there of thousands of students, yet we are freezing out the Romanians in response to the events that we are discussing tonight?

Mr. Waldegrave: I had intended to deal with that point. We are doing business as usual with Romania. There is no question of economic sanctions against that country or of our trying to stop trade with Romania. Indeed, we—the British Council and others—are trying to step up contacts with Romania.

But we are saying that funds that we—bilaterally in this country or collectively in the Group of 24 and the European Community—have established to respond to the steps taken by eastern and central European countries which are building free institutions based on the rule of law must be conditional on progress being made.

It would be wrong and insulting to the reformers in Romania and elsewhere if we pretended that the progress in Romania was equivalent to that in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland. It would be wrong and untruthful. That is why all the countries concerned in the establishment of those conditions, including France, have agreed that those conditional funds should not be released.

But that is not to say that we are boycotting Romania or are not trading with that country. We trade with many regimes worse than President Iliescu's. We must, for we have to live in the world and we still have much higher hopes that Romania, after this setback, will return to the road of optimism and progress.

We recognise the difficulties that Romania faced and still faces, but we must also recognise, and give the clearest signals, that the way in which the undoubtedly difficult situation was handled by the Government—the ruthless violence meted out by the vigilantes—cannot receive in Britain the same sort of support as the methods and peaceful developments that have taken place in Czechoslovakia and in other countries. We shall not forget Romania. Our wish to see her consolidate her revolution and develop into a truly free society is as strong as ever.

The hon. Gentleman will recall the criteria that the Group of 24 set out for assistance to eastern Europe. They included a multi-party system, and free and fair elections —those two are well on the way. The rule of law was shatteringly put at risk by the way the demonstrations, first peaceful and then violent, were handled. We are keeping a close watch on those who were arrested. I have not heard accounts of miners being arrested; all those arrested seem to come from the demonstrators' side—many of them, like Mr. Nica, students with long histories of peaceful activism against the previous regime. If we had seen the pursuit of some of those who raped women on the streets and beat up girls because they were wearing western clothes, we might have considered that encouraging.

The other criteria were respect for human rights, freedom of the media and economic liberalisation. It is clear to all of us in Europe, not just Britain, that for the moment, Romania falls short in many of those aspects. We recognise that not everything can be done overnight. We do not expect miracles, but we were greatly encouraged initially when Romania accepted all her CSCE commitments. It was a measure of our disappointment that we were so distressed when those fair words were followed, first, by fraud in the election—limited, but still serious—and now, by violence against the political opposition.

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at twenty-nine minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 29 June 1990

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Disabled People

9.34 am

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): I wish to call attention to the need to promote opportunity for the disabled, and I beg to move,

That this House pays tribute to the achievements of people with disabilities and to the dedication of individuals and organisations that support them; welcomes the measures taken by the Government, by local government, by health, education, training and transport agencies and authorities and by many employers, to enable people to overcome or cope with their disabilities; believes that, whenever feasible, users of facilities and services for disabled people should be involved in decisions affecting the running of them; and calls on the Government to find ways of expanding opportunity for and removing obstacles to personal achievement and fulfilment by people of all ages and all types and degrees of disability.

I am grateful to the powers, wherever they are, that enable me to bring forward this topic for debate this morning. The powers may be on this earth, although I suspect that they are further up. They sort out the lottery that enables an hon. Member to come number one in the ballot for private Members' motions. I am delighted that it is possible to have this debate.

I have received two apologies from hon. Members who are unable to be present today. They are the heavenly twins who run the all-party group on the disabled: the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) who is today at a conference for the deaf and dumb at Gatwick and my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) who has engagements in the west country. Other hon. Members have expressed their regret that they cannot be here today because it is a Friday and they have long-standing engagements in their diary. I understand that, as I am sure that the House does. I hope that the wider public understand that we are here in quality, if not in numbers, on this smallish stage.

I welcome my hon. Friends and Opposition Members who have come to support the debate. I welcome the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris). We know and respect his long service for disabled people, and his experience and knowledge of the subject of our debate. I am delighted that he has found time to speak for the Opposition today on this topic.

I especially welcome my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People. He has just changed his title, appropriately, to include the words "disabled people" which acknowledges that we are concerned with people. His reputation needs no embellishment by me. As one goes round the country, one meets many disabled people and those who look after the disabled who refer to my right hon. Friend in glowing terms, and who appreciate the care and devotion that he gives to the subject. I am especially pleased that he is speaking for the Government today and I am sure that he will speak for disabled people in all aspects, rather than in just the benefit aspects of disability. It would be difficult to have a motion for and on behalf of disabled people that concentrated specifically on benefits and did not look beyond to the wider aspects. My motion seeks to look at the whole person, the whole opportunity, all the obstacles that need to be removed and all the support that needs to be given to enable people to live life to the full and to contribute to our society.

I hope that this will not be seen as a rather sombre, long-faced debate in which people speak in hushed tones. I know that disabled people are not long faced and sombre, and they do not speak in hushed tones. We should first celebrate the achievements of so many disabled people and then see how we can enable them to go on achieving. We must also discuss how those who have not yet been able to achieve can be given the opportunity to do so.

This is not a debate in which we shall say, "There but for the grace of God go I." In the football terminology prevalent at the moment, we should be saying, "Here we go, here we go, here we go." Disabled people are making progress and, with a bit of support from the House and the country as a whole, they will continue to do so.

I want to celebrate the achievements of disabled people past, present and future, because undoubtedly there are many more to come. Every day, new obstacles are removed to enable those with disabilities to go one step further.

Let us look at the drama that is unfolding here this morning. It is perhaps a somewhat intimate theatre given the cast that is assembled, but it is no less important for that. Hon. Members, however, are not the stars of our drama; the stars are disabled people themselves. We are not the supporting cast either because that is made up of carers—the people and organisations who do so much to support those with disabilities. If we have a role, it is as stage managers—Opposition Members may say scene-shifters—who work together to provide the scenery and enable the stars and their supporting casts to perform. Our script is the script ordained by Parliament and our audience is the great British and international public. We invite that public to share in the catharsis that takes place in the theatre—the tears and pleasures, the laughter and the joy. At the end of the performance they may perhaps give an ovation to the stars of the drama—those wonderful disabled people—for all that they have achieved. To complete the theatrical allusion, we must look for one or two theatrical angels from among the members of the watching public and the Government, to ensure that future productions live up to expectations.

Disabled people are not moaners. They are people of great courage, determination and humour. It is a pleasure to work with them, both individually and in organisations. All the disabled people to whom I have spoken have shown a cheerfulness and generosity of spirit that are not always as evident among other parts of the community. We should recognise and reflect that in our debate. Disabled people have an abiding pride in their achievements. Disabilities do not disappear, but they do not have to prevent someone from living life to the full. Our task should be to encourage that pride in the achievement of personal breakthrough. One immediately thinks of the achievements of disabled people long since gone who have left a heritage that we continue to enjoy. One thinks, for example, of the physical disabilities of Milton and Beethoven. They have long since left this world but their

[Mr. John Bowis]

literary and musical achievements will never be taken away from us. One thinks, too, of people with mental disability —for example, the poet John Clare, who lived near Peterborough. His life was a great struggle but he left behind great poetry. One thinks of the great painter Vincent van Gogh, and the ever-increasing value that is placed on his work.

It is a pity that sometimes the value is recognised only after people have gone. It would be preferable if more rewards could go back into the world of the disabled while they are alive. We treasure the quality of work that is left behind.

I come to those artists whose achievements have struck me during my lifetime. I remember—during what were, to me, the early days of television—watching Susan Hampshire in "The Forsyte Saga". Apparently, the serial was in black and white, although, interestingly, one tends to remember things in colour. Susan Hampshire managed to learn her part although she was suffering from dyslexia and could not read the words. One would never have known that from her performance in that great serial. Richard Rogers, the great architect who is contributing so much to our environment also suffers from dyslexia.

One must salute those people whose abilities are far greater than mine—and probably greater than those of any hon. Members. One thinks of Professor Stephen Hawking, who wrote "A Brief History of Time". Brief it may be, but understandable by the likes of me it is not. Professor Hawking's intellect has risen above the severe disability from which he suffers. One thinks of Kenneth Robinson, of the National Curriculum Council, now professor of arts education at Warwick and of Patrick Nuttgens, director of Leeds polytechnic. One remembers Elizabeth Quinn's great performance in "Children of a Lesser God". All of them have reached the heights in their chosen profession and are showing us what can be achieved.

Often, people come back after a sudden disabling accident or illness, perhaps the most frequent of which is the stroke. Robert Bolt and Patricia Neal have come back into the theatre; they are writing and acting while coping with the after-effects of a stroke. Th violinist Itzhak Perlman comes up to the concert platform on crutches but gives an extraordinary performance, to the great pleasure of all those who hear him.

We must salute the famous because they give great inspiration to all disabled people but perhaps those who are not yet famous are equally important. One thinks of the gentleman by the name of Alan Edwards who was in the bottom stream of a low-achieving school in Durham and had been virtually written off by everyone in the education service in that area until someone taught him music. He was found to have an extraordinary musical ability. That young man could not think of a career in industry because he could not have read the safety signs. Now, he has found his future in music and plays in the Covent Garden orchestra. Even more incredible is the case of the deaf dancer who trained at the Rambert school and who now dances with the Portuguese national ballet. When I asked how on earth someone who is completely deaf can cope with ballet I was told that one can feel the rythym though one's feet and so be capable of contributing to that art form. To those who do not stop and think, that is unbelievable. When one stops to think and to ask, one is astounded and one admires.

I listened to the nominations for the Today programme's "Best of British Youth" awards. One of those nominated is a young girl called Kelly who suffers from cerebral palsy and has campaigned to help others as a way of overcoming her disability. She campaigned, for example, to ensure that the local nature trials had wide enough paths to accommodate wheelchairs and that tapping stones were provided so that the blind could also benefit from that great local resource. Often, such achievements go unsung, but thanks to the BBC, Kelly's achievement is now known.

When I think of the disabled I think above all of Diane Wellsbury. She has benefited from the work of the SHARE Community in my constituency. Having benefited from it, she set out to support it. She decided to carry out a sponsored wheelchair push. A wheelchair push is not someone else pushing the wheelchair; the person in the chair pushes it with their hands. I was present to see her carry out that push. I was almost moved to tears by the sight of that frail young body and her look of determination as the sweat poured from her little forehead as she pushed her wheelchair. She explained why she was doing the sponsored push in a letter in which she said:

"Please spare a moment of your time to read my letter. I am 23 years old and have always been confined to a wheelchair with severe disabilities for which I have to date needed 26 life saving operations. I am a trainee at SHARE Community which helps mentally and physically disabled people. For the first time in my life I now have the opportunity to help other disabled people. I am attempting a sponsored wheelchair push. Please help me."

That girl sums up all that is best in disabled people. She does not know what the future holds, how many years lie ahead or how many more operations she may need. However, she is thinking about how to help others and not about herself. If I dedicate this debate to anyone, I dedicate it to Diane Wellsbury, to the people who look after her and to the many people like her.

Of course, there are many occasions when disabled people are not so fortunate or so able to cope. Although I was right to begin by referring to the joy, laughter, determination and courage, there is also a blacker side to disability. We hear and see the pain, depression, despair and rage that disabled people can express. Very often that is not rage at others, but rage at the disabled person himself for not being able to cope. In some cases they rage at themselves because they try and try, but do not manage to succeed. However, sometimes they rage at Governments, local government or at society which does not seem to understand or to care.

Helping other people to understand is perhaps a central theme of my debate. If we show that we understand sensitively, at least some of that pain, depression, despair and rage can be dissipated. I understand why some disabled people demonstrated about the Telethon. The Telethon was a great effort to get wide public sympathy and financial help for the disabled and organisations that help them, but I understand that some disabled people feel that it was patronising and that they believe they have a right to be treated as a full part of society and not as peep shows or as people who should be patted on the head and then forgotten about.

There is a danger that we will have two nations—the disabled and the less disabled which includes the rest of us.

There is a danger that we will have "us" and "them". Although I suspect that most of us would feel that the Telethon demonstration was perhaps ungracious, because many people were genuinely trying to help, I understand the feeling behind it.

The two nations concept is wrong. The road is seamless and there is a gradual progression. There is no clear cross over to disability. If we understand how close ability is to disability, we can perhaps begin to understand the needs. We must understand that disabled people are very close to those of us who may not consider ourselves to be disabled.

Many disabilities are gradual. For example, the loss of sight can be a gradual process as the world darkens. Similarly the loss of hearing, as I have seen in my family, can be a gradual process which can frustrate someone who has always had good hearing and who has perhaps enjoyed the theatre or music. That person is frustrated as he finds steadily that he cannot hear so well.

Mental facilities can also gradually disappear. We do not appreciate many of those cross overs until we suddenly realise that a tic could lead to a mental or physical disability. Perhaps a way of behaving or a routine could lead to mental illness. I recall watching a television programme about someone receiving treatment at the Springfield hospital in my borough. The woman concerned had a passion for washing her hands and everything else. It had become more than a fetish or a routine. It had become so all-embracing that it was a form of mental illness. We can all see how our personal routines could easily slip into such a form of illness if we do not keep everything in proportion.

There are also sudden cross overs to disability. Those can arise from accidents. Sadly we hear of road accidents every day, and too often we know the people involved. Such accidents can be permanently debilitating. Strokes can also cause a sudden change of life ending the ability to speak or to move. Stroke patients need to be brought back to full life once more.

Many disabilities are not visible and that is perhaps the most frightening aspect for other people. The invisible illness possibly causes the most fear and prejudice among employers. If someone has a crutch or is in a wheelchair we know their needs. However, if someone has a problem in their mind or body that is not so visible, fear can overcome common sense. In the past such fear has led to people being locked away and forgotten. Once people are locked away in their own corner or institution, society says, "That's that. Let's get on with our lives." Society forgets and if it remembers that memory is tinged with fear.

As a child in Brighton I remember going on the under cliff walk at Ovingdean. To cross the road to the walk I had to go through a tunnel close by that great institution St. Dunstan's. I remember walking through that tunnel on my own. It was dark and the lights were not working and I heard the tap tap of a blind person approaching with his stick. I was terrified. Sadly that kind of terror is capitalised on by many childrens books. They learn attitudes from their parents who may have seen someone put away. Children feel that there is something to be worried about or frightened of. I vividly recall the sound of that tap tap. Of course I know now that my fear made no sense and that that blind person was tapping his way to the fresh open air to gain the same pleasure that I gained from the under cliff walk.

We must acknowledge that fear. If we do not do that, we cannot overcome it. John Wyndham and others have much to answer for building on those fears in the books that we have all enjoyed in our youth. No doubt Hammer horror films are building on such fears now. Science fiction stories about mutants and the horrors about people who are not quite "normal" also try to build on that fear. We must overcome that and encourage writers to take that into account. We must be aware of the fear of the unknown and consider how we would cope. Perhaps that fear is behind it all.

How would I cope if I suddenly discovered that my eyesight had failed? I often muse on that matter. I wonder whether it is worse never to have had sight or to have had it and lose it. Is it better not to know what one has lost or to have at least a memory of what one has lost? At school I played the part of the Duke of Gloucester in "King Lear" who had his eyes gouged out by the Duke of Cornwall —no relation, I hasten to say, to anyone living today. As he was taken towards the cliffs that he thought he would cast himself off, he said,

"I . . . want no eyes;
I stumbled when I saw."

When one realises that one stumbled, made wrong decisions and took wrong turnings when one had sight, one has a little humility. There is a complex graph of abilities, disabilities, weaknesses and strengths. Often weaknesses and strengths are weaknesses and strengths of character as much as a physical or mental disability.

People with disabilities are like us. I often think of the Shylock quotation.

"If you prick us, do we not bleed? if you tickle us, do we not laugh? if you poison us, do we not die? and if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?"

The opposite of wrong is right. We can right wrongs by giving rights. The rights that we seek for disabled people are the rights to opportunity, to achieve to the limits of one's potential, and to contribute to society, and the right to support, help and love. Perhaps one cannot demand the right to love—one can only earn that, but one earns it by being understood, so let us have the right to be understood.

Understanding starts young—during or even before school days. If children understand disabled children, they will not undergo a culture shock when, as adults, they encounter people in wheelchairs, with white sticks, hearing problems and so on. I endorse the trend to integrate more disabled children into our education system. We should do so whenever possible. I acknowledge that some disabled children could not cope with mainstream education. Some would find it difficult emotionally or physically to cope, and would need the support of a special needs school and separate education with the support of people with similar disabilities. However, in some cases cost can make that impractical.

Some parents say, "We are worried that our child will be forced into integrated education and will not be able to cope. No one is listening to us." We must listen to every parent and make sure that, when children are encouraged into integrated education, they are ready for it and are able to cope.

Cost is another aspect to be borne in mind. The Oak Lodge school for the deaf in my borough has pupils from a wide area of London. The cost of wiring in that school is phenomenal, but it is of superb quality. It would be difficult to install such high-quality wiring in every school. There is a case for keeping such spectacular schools for the benefit of children with disabilities.

[Mr. John Bowis]

The great danger in accepting the right not to be integrated is that some people will say, "That's fine. People do not want to be integrated." There is a great danger that people will take an out of sight, out of mind attitude, with children being institutionalised for the rest of their lives.

My right hon. Friend the Minister will acknowledge that there have been enormous changes in the past 20 years. There has been a profound, if quiet, revolution. In the 1960s, children with severe difficulties were classified as not able to be educated. Children with physical or sensory difficulties were automatically put into special schools—often boarding schools—and taken from their parents and the communities in which they lived. Children with moderate learning difficulties were put into separate schools—possibly a separate unit or class. Children with emotional or behavioural difficulties were excluded from mainstream education. Many of the children who were excluded and put into separate schools had a wide range of abilities and potential which could not be realised in separate schools. They needed rapport with other children and the educational curriculum to be able to do so. In the past 20 years we have established the right of access to education. We must now consider how to implement it.

In my borough of Wandsworth, more than 1,000 statemented children are in mainstream schools. One of the great virtues of putting a child into a mainstream school is that he or she has access to the new national curriculum, which is crucial to the widest range of education. We must be sure that there are the right levels of testing. Testing is a crucial part of our aim to raise education standards. The testing of a child with a disability is not straightforward. We must have a flexible system so that there are no low expectations and no under-achievements. A child should aim at what he or she can achieve, but we must be sensitive to individual needs or difficulties.

The delegation of financial management of schools is a great step forward. Again, we must make sure that such delegation takes disabled children's needs into account. Local education authorities, grant-maintained schools, the Department of Education and Science, school governors, school boards, teachers, heads and so on are required to look after the interests of disabled children. Too often, they say, "No, we cannot cope".

It is good that there is much more parental involvement in education. As parental involvement expands, the parents of disabled children have a greater opportunity to have their say and to make their impact on our education service. Teacher training is beginning to improve, but there is a long way to go. Teachers must understand how to integrate a child with a disability. We do not want teachers and heads saying, "Go down the road."

Many disabled children attend mainstream schools. We cannot yet say that each school is adequately equipped, supported and serviced. I ask my right hon. Friend to pass on the message that, to get integration right, we must provide resources, support and equipment to carry out necessary adaptations.

There is a great shortage of speech therapists. People who have had strokes, for instance, need speech therapy —many people do—yet it is a Cinderella profession. Speech therapy should be given higher priority. Physiotherapy too is often not available in mainstream schools, but it is provided in special schools.

Too many schools do not have wheelchair access for disabled children. In my borough, which has just taken over from the Inner London education authority, there is not a secondary school with wheelchair access. That is the measure of the task ahead of us. There has probably been a greater advance in primary schools. Long-term planning is needed. We need long-term resources—and resources have to be long term in some cases—and we also need resources as soon as possible.

For 12 years, the education authority in Surrey has had a policy of integrating disabled children into mainstream primary and middle-school education although that has not happened at secondary schools in general. However, about eight years ago Surrey education authority tried an experiment at a school called Park Barn, and now about 22 disabled children attend that secondary school. The school buildings had to be adapted. It was a school where that was possible as it had the space, the land and the buildings. The local authority provided the necessary additional resources in capital and revenue.

The school had to provide a new ground-floor resource room, a physiotherapy room, a treatment room, a speech therapy room, two sets of toilets adapted for the use of disabled pupils, two new laboratories on the ground floor, and all the entrances and exits had to have ramps. The internal ramps made access possible to all rooms on the ground floor.

Two teachers experienced in teaching physically disabled pupils and two part-time helpers were appointed. We must not forget that authorities often have to work in tandem on such matters, and the health authority provided six hours of physiotherapy and six hours of speech therapy a week. Once that had been arranged, it was possible to bring in the children. The next stage was to install a lift in the main building, and the school now hopes to install lifts in the separate buildings. The parents, teachers and all the children in that school have worked together to provide a school bus equipped with a tail lift that can be used by children with wheelchairs.

The result is that not only the school, but the school curriculum is acessible to disabled children. It is necessary for the timetabling to be arranged to ensure that the physiotherapy and speech therapy do not interfere with examinations. All that enables disabled children to participate to the full. They participate in all the extra-curricular activities as well as the curriculum. That means field trips, trips abroad, drama and arts festivals and competitions. All the activities that children enjoy become possible. The reverse of the coin is that the clubs and activities, which were technically just for disabled pupils, have become popular with all the pupils. The PHAB club and the lifeskills class soon attracted all the children, irrespective of disability. That integration can and has worked.

I accept that there must be a balance. We should like to have everything tomorrow. We want access to every school eventually, because otherwise our policy of integration of education cannot be meaningful to the parents of the disabled children. However, if we tried to do everything tomorrow, the funds would have to be taken from resources available for other purposes. That is the balance that we must get right.

Sometimes access to a school is not just for the pupils—often children have disabled parents who want access to the school so that they can feel a part of that school community. All that should be possible, but it will take time. Perhaps we should press for all new school buildings to provide full access, so that full opportunities become a reality every time.

Children leave school and, it is hoped, go on to higher education. My daughter is a student, and I asked her about the access for disabled students. She said that that was fine and that everything was done to enable the student to study his or her course properly. She said that the only problem was that she did not know how to make contact with the blind students. She did not know when they wanted her to say "Hello" or to bring them into conversation, because there was no eye contact. She had had no experience of working with blind children in her school, so in the student world she did not know how and when to say, "Hi, hello, can I help? Why not come and do this with us?" That is something that society must learn, and if it can learn it early, it will stand us in good stead.

I pay tribute to the recent decision to give additional benefits to disabled students. There is now more assistance for sign language interpreting, note-taking and other areas. We still need to consider the benefits for deaf students because many of them face problems in obtaining holiday jobs. I hope that the Government will consider some additional benefit for them.

Britain has about 6 million people with disabilities, according to all the assessment and surveys. It would be impossible to sum up all the many and different needs in one debate. If I go through a typical day, we might begin to understand some of the problems and how they might be overcome. We get up, wash, dress, make a cup of tea and listen to the radio. Perhaps we trip over, pick ourselves up, get ready, go out, go down the street, get on the bus or the underground train and go to work.

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): I am listening with great interest to my hon. Friend. I hope that my question to him will not pre-empt something that he might be about to mention. Does he agree that many employers are forgoing excellent work by not considering disabled people for employment?

Mr. Bowis: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, and I intend to mention employment after I have dealt with the travel-to-work stage. Employers have a large part to play in providing jobs for the disabled. When they have jobs, they cease to be a burden on the community, which then gives them greater self-confidence to play their part in society.

Sometimes, a disabled person needs help to get up in the morning. He may need a dressing changed. Perhaps it is the weekend, when no one comes to give help. In order to wash, he may need taps with longer handles because he might not have sufficient grip to fiddle with the small taps that do not cause us any problem. When dressing, he may find it difficult to cope with zips, shoes and socks. He may want to make a cup of tea, but perhaps the kitchen level is not right for the wheelchair and needs to be adapted. He may want to listen to the radio, but his arthritic fingers may mean that he cannot cope with the knobs on the radio or, perhaps, the control on his hearing aid.

If he falls, there may not be bars fitted to prevent him collapsing to the ground or to help him get up again. There may not be an alarm system to summon help from a friendly neighbour.

If he goes out, the door must be wide enough for his wheelchair. In the street, he may find that cars are blocking the ramps from the pavement to the road. Or he may try to take a bus, only to find that it is one-man operated and that there is no one to help him board it. The result may be that he has to return home and think again. I refer only to the everyday tasks that we all take for granted but which others cannot perform.

As we develop the Griffiths recommendations, we should bear in mind the need to consider co-operation between district health authorities and social services departments. Very often, social services do not provide weekend services, whereas district nurses will call in to change dressings or to help people get up in the morning. Social workers tend to work only from Mondays to Fridays. If certain functions are transferred to social services departments, they must be provided to the standard currently provided by district health authorities.

Social and health care are indivisible. Whoever takes the lead in community care, everyone should work together to ensure that there are joint ventures for everything, including equipment stores.

When people return to the community from institutions, careful consideration should be given to their housing needs. We must not provide homes in houses or hostels that are so much like institutions that the individual ceases to enjoy the benefit of returning to the community. Equally, such people should not be placed in isolated houses, separated from the care that can be provided. If they are accommodated in clusters of houses, staff can be shared among them.

There has been much publicity lately about the Government's attemps to help people who have to sleep rough. Such efforts tend, rightly, to concentrate on young people who sleep in boxes or doorways, and it is only proper that they should be taken off the streets and given some form of accommodation. However, many who suffer from a mental illness do not congregate, and are not to be found with other groups sleeping in boxes or doorways. They may be found wandering on waste ground, and they, too, must be helped.

When society discharges people from hospital and returns them to society, it should take care to consider the accommodation that is provided. In my part of London, the tower block is the most common form of housing. To put a person suffering from mental illness in a flat in such a block does no one any favours. There is an absence of neighbourly care, so the individual becomes more upset, cannot cope mentally or socially, and starts behaving in a way that antagonises other residents. The mentally ill can find themselves not just discharged from hospital but losing the housing provision made for them, with the consequence that they are left walking the streets. Much more must be done to assist such people.

Social services departments are willing to provide the right kind of washing and bathing facilities in a disabled person's home eventually, but all too often it takes a long time. There is a long wait for assessment, and another long wait before implementation. I hope that pressure can be put on social services departments to speed up that process.

[Mr. Bowis]

The question of clothing for the disabled was dealt with in a recent Adjournment debate, when it was pointed out that often special clothes are needed that cannot be obtained off-the-peg. Special clothing incurs special costs, and therefore requires special financial assistance.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) has been pressing for all new houses to be constructed in such a way that they can accommodate the disabled, because any of us can find ourselves disabled at any time. If building regulations can be geared up with that requirement in mind, we shall start getting our housing policies right.

A recent report from the Leonard Cheshire Foundation on standards of special seating found that severely disabled people with multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy or similar disabilities are provided with inappropriate wheelchairs and seating by the NHS, causing them pain, deformity and pressure sores. It is believed that the situation can only get worse. A survey of 1,370 residents in the foundation's centres showed that more than one third of them were badly seated or could be seated better. Perhaps my right hon. Friend the Minister will study that report to see whether better seating can be provided for those who need it. There is little point in spending money on seating that actually makes the patient's condition worse. Money would be better spent on getting that aspect right.

People with arthritic fingers have problems in operating hearing aids. I have mentioned on more than one occasion the lady whom I found watching television with the sound off. When I asked her why, she explained that she was unable to hear the television even with the sound up because her arthritic fingers made it impossible for her to operate the volume control on her hearing aid.

I asked the hearing aid industry whether something could be provided in such cases and was delighted to learn from one firm that there are ways of solving the problem using either a remote control that eliminates the need for the user to be fumbling at ear level, or a device that incorporates a new concept in volume control, simply using touch. The main problem for someone lacking manual dexterity is adjusting a manual volume control that is difficult to feel. An electronic system enables the user simply to touch the surface of the hearing aid to adjust the volume automatically. That is another improvement which would make a big difference to the lives of our deaf fellow citizens.

Happily, alarm systems are growing in number. They have the support of the police and of many local authorities. A scheme was recently launched in my constituency that provides a panic button alarm system involving neighbours trusted with keys, so that they can enter the home of a person whose alarm has been activated to see what has happened. Such a system can save lives, and it provides enormous reassurance to those living alone, upstairs or downstairs.

I refer again to the problem of cars parked across corners or over pavement ramps. If one is in a wheelchair or is blind, such obstacles can present enormous difficulties, particularly in London. Thoughtless parking should be the subject of a publicity campaign by the Ministry of Transport, urging drivers to park carefully and to think before they park. Parking bays for the disabled are often abused, sometimes by people who have moved into a house where a bay was provided for a previous occupant and think that they can go on using it. That gives the whole system a bad name. I know that parking in London's narrow streets can be a particular problem. One either loses a wing mirror or parks on the pavement and risks causing an obstruction.

Blind people in particular have problems with pavement obstacles apart from badly parked cars, motor bikes or bicycles—though those who ride bicycles on the pavement are as much a menace as those who leave them parked there. Those who ride bicycles at dusk without lights also cause additional hazards to people with vision problems. A lady who is partially sighted wrote to me saying that the obstructions on pavements

> "are numerous and varied, seeming to multiply daily. Advertisement boards, twirling vanes, shop furniture and goods, abandoned shopping trolleys . . . unfenced building sites, unguarded holes, unmarked scaffolding, builders tools, equipment and materials, the list is endless."

The list is endless because people are endlessly thoughtless. I hope that we can persuade them to think first. In addition, stray dogs can be a danger to disabled people. The mess that dogs leave on pavements can be extremely unpleasant.

The orange badge scheme has been abused and has a bad name. The public increasingly resent it because people who have no right to a badge use one. I hope that soon we can introduce regulations to make it a criminal offence to use an orange badge to which one is not entitled.

All forms of transport are important. One-man-operated buses cannot cope with disabled people. Bus routes could be better planned to cater for disabled people. Minibuses can follow routes that other buses cannot. They are being used, and I pay tribute to London Buses for that. Bus design could be improved no end. In particular, the omnibus has a facility to lower the front to the ground to enable a wheelchair to roll on. The omnibus may be the way forward for buses in future.

We have endless battles about rail services. Access to Clapham Junction in my constituency is down or up steps. There are no lifts or other forms of access for disabled people. There is no platform flush to the train for the wheelchairs of those who are carried down. It is high time that British Rail and whoever else is responsible got together to enable our disabled public to travel. Waterloo has many more facilities for the disabled.

Clapham Junction is a great junction for people not just from that part of London, but from all over the south of England to change trains to reach their destination. If only we could get British Rail to put up the money for lifts for the disabled. When it says that it would provide money if somebody else also paid, okay, let us see whether we can persuade the local community to contribute a bit. However, when it says that the local community must contribute most, I am not sure. The junction is a national asset and should be provided nationally. My youngest son has just returned from a school visit to Lille, where there is a new metro system comparable to the Tyne and Wear system. Trains are flush to platforms and wheelchair travel is no problem. That should be our task and target.

The problems of people requiring special needs transport are even greater. Taxi card users hope that some day there may be central funding to assist local funding and that there may be an opportunity to hail a taxi in the

street, so that they do not have to endure long waits. Perhaps we could restore the incentive bonus for taxi drivers who pick people up in the street.

I will hear no ill of dial-a-ride. It is a great service. I have a great service in my borough of Wandsworth which is being mucked about by planners who want to force local services into a central or regionalised network. I ask my right hon. Friend to put pressure on London Regional Transport to say that people who use the service should have priority, rather than the wishes, efficiency-based or otherwise, of the transport authorities to have a system which fits neatly into their pattern. Alas, 70 per cent. of my 1,000 members' journeys are local and 30 per cent. are over five miles. LRT has disputed the figure of 30 per cent. and we cannot get the extra bus that other dial-a-ride groups are getting until we fit into the pattern. That is wrong and canot be tolerated.

Benefits are to provide back-up and they show the strength of society's feeling that we should be doing just that. I believe that my right hon. Friend the Minister can claim a good record on the increase in and extension of benefits since 1979. Nearly twice as many people receive severe disablement allowance, twice as many receive invalidity benefit, three times as many receive attendance allowance and six times as many receive mobility allowance. Expenditure has doubled to £8 billion and may be even more now.

A survey by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys' showed a degree of satisfaction among disabled people, but not when age was taken into consideration. If 6 million people are disabled, 70 per cent. of them are over 60 and 50 per cent. over 70. Some 3·3 million of those over 60 have locomotion problems. We must not assume that because a person reaches a certain age, disability is a normal fact of life. If somebody becomes disabled at 64, he or she qualifies for mobility allowance. At 65 the person does not. Yet all the additional costs can be the same. We need to look at that and to square the discrepancy in the definitions of disability of the World Health Organisation, which was used by the OPCS, with that of the Department of Social Security, which does not refer to the ability to move about. The White Paper made no mention of transport needs and I hope that my right hon. Friend will refer to them when he replies.

In January when we had a debate initiated by the Opposition my right hon. Friend said that a review of disability benefits was to take place. I hope that it will. I hope that consideration will be given to the evidence of the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux that some tests are unnecessarily cruel, such as when people are forced to go through pain to see whether they qualify for mobility or attendance allowance. One should accept the GP's evidence as good enough. Attendance allowance can be confusing. If it is withdrawn, it can lead immediately to the withdrawal of invalid care allowance. That is a double penalty and we need to consider it. Perhaps my right hon. Friend can refer to the Simon Crompton, Down's syndrome case about benefits payable to people who live at home. That needs to be looked at sympathetically, and I know that my right hon. Friend will do so.

All those benefits are to help with the extra costs which people with disabilities face. It is partly that they are less likely to earn, partly that they are likely to earn less and partly that they are less likely to earn promotion. One third of disabled people are at work which means that two thirds are not. Those who are, work fewer hours on lower pay rates. If, through benefits, people can work, it means that they can pay tax and cease to need other benefits. In the long run that is helpful to all of us.

My hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) referred to employers. I hope that we can send a message to them on behalf of the 2·5 million disabled people of working age. They should be patient as it may take some time for someone with disabilities to settle into a job.

A report has been published today on the vexed question of the 3 per cent. target for the employment of people with disabilities. Some 25 per cent. of firms fail to meet that target—sadly that includes many Government Departments, no doubt this place and probably the national health service. I accept that many people with disabilities are not registered, but are working and that, therefore, the 3 per cent. target may not be accurate. Many firms and buildings could not cope with some forms of disability, but many others could. We should consider the system that operates in Germany and in other countries. In Germany, firms that do not meet the employment target are fined the equivalent of that target in salary terms. If they fail to meet the target in the next year the fine is doubled. The money recouped goes into training and the provision of access for disabled people. If we operated such a system I am sure that many firms would say yes to employing people with disabilities. I accept that it is not as straightforward as that, but we should encourage the enforcement as well as the provision of such employment opportunities.

I hope that we can get rid of some of the bogus excuses for non-employment or lack of promotion. The other day I met someone with a visual disability who works on computers in a Government Department—I had better not name it. He cannot get promotion because that would mean working on a different type of computer based on the eighth floor, but he is not allowed to work above the fifth floor as that might be a fire hazard. He cannot get promotion for that reason, which is nonsense. I hope that we can get rid of such problems.

The biggest obstacle to employment is training. People must be trained to take up the vacancies as they occur. The uncertainties affecting training establishments are legion. I have already referred to Diane Wellsbury of SHARE and the problems that it is facing. That organisation has done a great deal for people who have come to the end of the line. It provides them with the opportunity to train, and many people's achievements have been extraordinary. Some have gone to university and many are now working in Government Departments, local government and other firms.

Jasminda is severely disabled with Ehlers Danlos syndrome. She can hardly walk and has little use of her hands. SHARE was able to train her in office skills, and she was approached by the local council who took her on in its housing department. She has now worked there for more than a year and it is the first job that she has had. She is proud of the fact that she now pays income tax—not many of us share that pride. It is a great achievement for someone with her disabilities to pay such tax.

Between 1978 and 1988 SHARE was funded by the Manpower Services Commission. From September 1988 it has been funded by the Training Agency. Thousands of people have benefited from the organisation, but since SHARE joined the employment training scheme it has had to negotiate five contracts with the Training Agency. In

[Mr. Bowis]

theory each contract lasts for 12 months and it is just about to re-contract. All the bureaucracy involved in that hinders the ability of that organisation to provide for people who are desperately in need.

Under the new training schemes the amount of money available has been reduced. The allocation is geared to the number of people looking for training, but among the disabled increased expectation means that many more are coming forward for such training. We should meet that demand. However, the allocations to SHARE were cut by 10 per cent. in March and it is expected that a further cut will be made next year. If there are any further cuts that organisation risks having to close on 31 March 1991. That must not happen. We are dealing with vulnerable people who need opportunities. Training provides such an opportunity and it should be at the forefront of what we offer to people with disabilities.

The arts can provide a precious opportunity—the ability to find oneself. People gain self-confidence and self-respect when they discover that, whatever they cannot do, they can do something artistic. The contribution made to the arts by many people with disabilities is staggering. We are aware of organisations such as the Graeae, the London Disability Arts Forum and its Movin' On festival. Those organisations and events enable people to discover themselves and more support for them would be welcomed.

I am a great believer in participation as the first objective of arts policy. However, we must also enable people to enjoy the arts and it is important to support programmes such as Adapt, which is designed to adapt buildings to enable people with wheelchairs to get in and ensures the provision of hearing loops for those with hearing difficulties.

It is also important to consider how the arts present the disabled to see that a more positive image is shown on soaps such as "Coronation Street", or whatever my right hon. Friend the Minister watches every night. The soaps are extremely popular and it is important that the public should see a more positive image of disabled people.

It is time that the remaining sections of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 were enacted. In the National Health Service and Community Care Bill a complaints procedure has been put in place and surely it makes sense for disabled people to have the right to be represented. The missing sections 1 and 2 of the 1986 Act would fulfil that obligation. Section 3 relates to consultation about the needs of the disabled and written statements about them. Section 7 relates to people discharged from institutions with mental disorders. I appreciate that my right hon. Friend may not be able to say, "Eureka, we can do that today", but I hope that those sections will be implemented soon.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will also refer the legal difficulties encountered by some local authorities in making payments directly to disabled people. Some authorities pay money directly to people to enable them to buy their own care and personal assistance. That gives those people more choice and we should support that. Other local authorities say that such payments are illegal. We must sort that out so that there is genuine consumer choice across the country.

Carers work alongside our disabled fellow citizens. It is estimated that there are 6 million carers for our 6 million disabled. That figure covers those who are aged 16 and over and represents 3·5 million women and 2·5 million men. A quarter of them spend more than 20 hours per week providing care. For the carers caring in their own home, the figure of 25 per cent. for those who spend more than 20 hours a week caring and providing a service goes up to 63 per cent.; 45 per cent. spend 50 hours a week or more doing so and 54 per cent. give up work to care. Therefore, because of the lack of support that they have so often had in the past, it is not surprising that one in 20 carers admit to some form of violence towards their dependant. That shows the pressure and tension that can build up.

I shall quote from a published letter from "Jessie"—I do not think that is her real name—whose husband, Tom, is an Alzheimer's patient. She wrote:

"I didn't know anything about Alzheimer's disease then but I made it my business to find out all I could—and I didn't like what I heard. By trial and error I have learnt to cope although it is a very hard and uphill road. . . From a placid, even-tempered, quitely-spoken man, Tom has changed into a different person. . . looking after the needs of someone with AD is like having a child in the house. They follow you around; if you nip to the bathroom or bedroom, anywhere where they can't see you, they are calling for you. . . The hardest time for me was when he forgot who I was—where did I fit into his life? The same questions over and over again. When he gets so very confused, I sit with him and I take him back down his memory to his childhood and his years in the army.

"I have become very good at hiding my feelings, but no one knows of the tears shed in the silence of the night—the heartbreak of the way our lives have changed."

Being who she is, Jessie went on to say:

"when the morning dawns, I lie and count my blessings and there are so many of them."

There are blessings in caring, but carers have needs. Those wonderful people are, according to the Select Committee on Social Services, saving us £24 billion a year. I do not know whether that figure is acknowledged, but it must be somewhere near the truth. We must do more to help carers through carer's premiums and invalidity care alllowance. Above all, we must provide them with a respite, let them get away occasionally, catch their breath and get their second wind so that they can go back to help. In helping, they are helping us all.

I am grateful to have had the opportunity to put into inadequate words some of my feelings about disabled people. Getting to know disabled people and their organisations has given me a great deal. It has certainly added an extra dimension to my life. They are people with so much to offer us, each other and the world. Their achievements stir our emotions. I hope that in this debate we shall also feel that they appeal to our heads as well as our hearts. It makes economic and social sense to ensure that their disability is not a bar to full participating citizenship. Our task is to enable them to continue to bridge the gap between what they could achieve if they did not have their particular disability and what they constantly astound us by achieving despite it.

I shall end by returning to the beginning of my speech and looking at the little brochure sent to me about a disabled child going to school, using an electronic wheelchair and all that happens to her at school. It describes all the help, support and participation, and the true friendships of the child with other children right the way through the school. At the end it states:

"This school does not yet exist, and nor does the story teller exist as a single person. But everything in it has already happened in a school somewhere, and all the thoughts and feelings have already happened to somebody . . . True integration means . . . acceptance of equality of all people, regardless of ability or needs."

The booklet is entitled "nothing special". When it is nothing special to be disabled because society accepts that one is a full member of the community, when we give support in such a way that ambitions can be met and striven for, then disabled people will have the opportunty that my motion seeks to promote.

10.55 am

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): This is a highly unusual debate. In fact, the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) has achieved an important first, as I cannot remember when there was last a general debate on the problems and needs of people with disabilities that was not held on an Opposition Supply day since the present Government came to power. So I congratulate him on using his good fortune in winning time for a debate, on his choice of subject and on the range and quality of the, at times, moving speech with which he opened the debate. We readily accept, of course, much of his motion.

The House is often at its best in debates on disability, not least because of the success of the all-party disablement group in keeping right hon. and hon. Members so well informed about the concerns of disabled people and their organisations. Like the hon. Member for Battersea I am, therefore, extremely sorry that my right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley), who chairs the all-party group, cannot be with us today. He is honouring commitments made before this debate was announced and his voice will be sadly missed, as will that of the hon. Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam), the group's very hard-working secretary.

The Minister, like his immediate predecessors with responsibility for disabled people, often tells them from the Front Bench how extremely well they have fared under this Government. However, that is certainly not how they and their organisations view the Government's record. They say that almost all the extra spending about which Ministers speak is due not to any improvements in benefits, but to the increased number of disabled people now claiming attendance allowance, mobility allowance, invalid care allowance and other benefits that were introduced before this Government came to power. In fact, the vast majority of disabled people have fared much worse than most other people in terms of their living standards. Their organisations compare the Government's claims about their performance with their consistent refusal to find time for it to be debated in the House.

The dispute about the Government's record is very much one between Ministers and disabled people. They and their organisations strongly refute the Government's claims. They say not only that disabled people have fared worse than other people, but that in a huge number of cases they are poorer in real terms than they were 11 years ago, due to the social security changes of April 1989.

There is not enough time today, or in any single parliamentary debate, for us to review all the restrictions on opportunity for disabled people; but there is one that I must briefly raise at the outset. Barnardos recently arranged a "Parents' Forum" in a Committee Room of the House. Those of us who went were told by the parents of severely disabled young people that their sons and daughters can lose their severe disablement allowance if they enter youth training and then fail to find work. I am sure that they left all who heard them with the feeling that to withdraw severe disablement allowance from young people who try so bravely to triumph over severe handicap is a form of refined cruelty that Ministers must urgently stop.

The savings made by the Government from withdrawing SDA in those cases are very small compared with the £1·9 billion given in a single Budget to the richest 1 per cent. of taxpayers. The present rule is a tax on hope—that of young people who passionately want to exchange the dependence of social security benefits for the independence of gainful employment. All that severely disabled youngsters who receive training—even those who succeed as trainees—can possibly have today is hope.

Unemployment among disabled job-seekers is more than twice as high as among able-bodied people. Only 31 per cent. of all disabled adults of working age work, compared with 69 per cent. of the population as a whole. The ratio for men is even worse; 33 per cent. compared with 78 per cent. The earnings of disabled people who find work are substantially lower than those of non-disabled employees, and the same is true of parents of disabled children. Moreover, the Government's record in terms of jobs offered to disabled people is among the worst of all employers. So the Government's review of employment services for disabled people is of considerable parliamentary importance.

Yet I understand that, at the very moment when this debate began, a press conference was timed to take place for the release outside this House of the outcome of the review. While the Minister for Disabled People may allude here later to a document that has already been given to the press, I must strongly complain to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, about what will be widely seen as contemptuous treatment of this House. A planted parliamentary question for written answer is no substitute for full parliamentary scrutiny. This has already been described to me by people in the media as a shabby manoeuvre to avoid parliamentary questioning. The House deserved a statement yesterday in the normal way, with opportunities to question the Minister about the outcome of the review. As my speech proceeds, I shall return in detail to employment problems.

Meanwhile, I wish to emphasise that all Government policy in relation to people with disabilities, especially young people, should be directed to a single end: to enable them to participate in society on an equal basis with their fellow citizens. That requires the closest possible co-ordination between all Government Departments, but particularly between the Departments of Health, Employment, Education and Science and Social Security. Too often over the past 11 years we have witnessed a total failure to co-ordinate in Whitehall, with Departments thwarting each other's efforts. I offer one example. For severely disabled young people one of the keys to greater independence is to secure personal assistance which is under their control and which will help them do what they want to do when they want to do it. After much campaigning by Members of Parliament and others, not least the all-party disablement group, the Secretary of State for Education and Science announced a new package for disabled students, including a grant of up to £4,000 a year for non-medical support staff—*Hansard*, 19 March, c.

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417. But what will happen when they leave college to seek employment and when their need of personal assistance will be just as pressing?

Ministers continue to sloganise about independent living, but continue to miss opportunities to put good intentions into practice. In another place last Monday, the Government succeeded in defeating by five votes the addition of a new clause to the National Health Service and Community Care Bill which would explicitly have given local authorities the power to make grants to people with disabilities to purchase their own care or personal assistance services.

Ministers have seldom been made to look so inconsistent and crass. They commend schemes that exist, but say that they are advised that these schemes are technically unlawful so they cannot openly obtain information about them, let alone encourage others. Local authorities support voluntary organisations of and for people with disabilities in arguing that this is a power that they should have; but Ministers have the cheek to claim that locally elected people would act unwisely and that the administration of public funds would be at risk. As one of the least welcome parts of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill is the Government's insistence that public money should be thrown at the private sector, it is extraordinary that the Government will not allow modest sums to go to people with severe disabilities who want only to win more control of their own lives. Paradoxically, the independent living fund already acts in this way without ministerial misgivings. If new awards from the ILF are abolished from next April, as is now feared, and if local authorities are not empowered to make direct grants to people with disabilities, all the Government's fine words about supporting the independence of disabled people will be shown to be so much hot air.

The Government have already resisted attempts to give disabled people the same legal rights to an assessment for respite care as they have to services under section 2 of my Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970. A notable recent report by Crossroads—entitled "Caring for Carers"—shows that caring is a full-time job, with only 17 per cent. of carers having some form of employment. The survey also shows that 10 per cent. of carers have no free time at all and 52 per cent. have only between one and five hours each week. Four out of 10 carers said that they were often at breaking point and I am glad the hon. Member for Battersea spoke so movingly in support of that finding.

Crossroads has clearly shown that one of the key demands of carers is for more respite care, especially in the home. To this effect, Peter Large of the Disablement Income Group, a widely respected figure in this House, has pointed out:

> "Where it exists, respite care almost invariably involves moving the disabled person out of his or her home, leaving the regular helper temporarily free of any responsibility for the disabled person. Indeed, the White Paper defines respite care in these terms."

In the recent survey by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, 83 per cent. of adults in the two most severe categories of disablement had not received any respite care in the previous year. The percentages of people receiving such help in the home as night sitting were negligible.

Section 8 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 for the first time gave carers a statutory right to have the local authority consider their ability to provide care. Yet a recent report from the social services inspectorate shows that, two years after the implementation of that section, only one-fifth of councils had a written policy.

The full impact of section 8 will not be apparent until Ministers stop dragging their feet and implement section 3, not least the vital subsections on disabled people, or their carers, who need communication assistance. Is it not utterly disgraceful that this and other crucial sections of the 1986 Act, which was so ably promoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) —with support from both sides of the House—still await implementation four years after they became law? May we now have a clear and definitive statement about the Government's intentions? It was good to hear the endorsement of the hon. Member for Battersea of the now general view that the Government must act now and very urgently.

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will remember that when my predecessor supported what I tend to call the Clarke Act, it was made clear that it would be implemented as and when resources became available. We have now implemented all the important parts of the Act except for sections 1, 2 and 3, and, as I told the House on an earlier occasion during oral questions, we are now consulting local authorities about the implementation of those sections. Local authorities have a crucial role in their implementation and it is important that we have their views and reactions. We have now initiated consultations with them with a view to implementation in due course.

Mr. Morris: I well recall the statements in the House by the Minister's predecessor. None of us, on either side of the House, thought that there would be a delay of four years in implementing crucial provisions of the Act. To govern is to choose; many people will say, not least in the voluntary sector, that there clearly have been resources since 1986 for full implementation of all the purposes of the Act. I do of course, appreciate the importance of the role of local authorities. They need to be consulted regularly and in detail. However, local authorities are themselves complaining strongly about the delay in implementing a statute that is so important for disabled people.

A recent report in *The Times* said that the Secretary of State for Health is preparing the ground for delay in implementing the community care parts of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill. Given the unpardonable rejection by the Government of ring-fencing and the vastly increased burdens that the poll tax has imposed on local authorities, I fully endorse the fears of Crossroads, of which I have the honour to be patron, that without significant resources carers will see no service improvement under the new system. Crossroads argues:

> "Hard-pressed councils have to prioritise need in the face of scarce resources and it is quite understandable that people who are now looked after by a carer will be of lower priority than those living on their own."

Another key component of independent living is social security for which the Minister has direct responsibility. As he knows, his policy statement "The Way Ahead" has been

greeted with dismay by almost all the voluntary organisations of and for people with disabilities. Peter Large has described it as a cul-de-sac and says that ministerial talk of a more coherent system of benefits is "a sign of delirium."

The Government's proposals for the new so-called disability allowance will help only those with mobility or care needs. The Government claim that this reflects the findings of OPCS, but the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation—RADAR—in its response to "The Way Ahead" told the Minister:

"The OPCS report downgraded many conditions which proved to cause significant extra expenses. Although only 18 per cent. of adults reported extra expenditure on food (OPCS 2 Table 4.7) this was, at £6·20 per week, by far the single most expensive item; and expenditure was almost identical in all severity categories (OPCS 2 Table 4.9). Equally the small number of children with digestive disorders cost their parents four times as much as others".

RADAR went on to criticise the Government's total failure to replace the extra help with special diets that was available before April 1987 for people with AIDS. The Royal Association said that restricting help to those with less than six months to live—by the extension of attendance allowance to the terminally ill—is insulting to those whose lives can be prolonged by sufficient help at an earlier stage of their illness. This example of digestive disorders and diets is used by RADAR to illustrate flaws in the OPCS's methodology which have led the Government to ignore the needs of a significant number of people with disabilities.

Is there nothing that the Minister can do to help people who are so demonstrably in the direst need? I ask him urgently to review the scandalous plight of people with AIDS to whom RADAR drew his attention and also to give today the Government's response to the social security commissioners' decision, reported this week, on the important case, to which the hon. Member for Battersea referred, of Simon Crompton, who has Down's syndrome and lives with his retired parents in Tameside in Greater Manchester. It is estimated that the decision in that case could benefit 30,000 other disabled people. What action are the Government taking to identify them, and do they accept the social security commissioners' decision?

Mr. Crompton had been refused severe disability premium, worth £28·20 a week, which is available under the income support system. The Department of Social Security says that the premium is designed for people who live on their own, although the regulations allow for it to be paid in cases where a claimant "jointly occupies" a property with other adults. The case turned on whether this wording implied a stake in ownership or tenancy of a property, as the DSS maintained, or merely a sharing of a property, as Mr. Crompton successfully claimed. He stands to receive almost £2,000 in benefit arrears.

Will the Minister concede that it would be shameful for his Department now to seek to deny benefit to severely disabled people on the grounds that they are living in the same house as elderly parents? Will he now admit that the Government's policy is a complete shambles with wholly inadequate provision in income support, the independent living fund in suspended animation, social services departments unable to give grants to people such as Simon Crompton, poll tax demands that disabled people cannot afford to pay, and "The Way Ahead" offering nothing to the most severely disabled members of our society who wish to live independent lives?

I should now like to turn to three aspects of the employment services for disabled people. First, there is a widely supported demand, not least from the organisations that speak for disabled people, for stricter enforcement of the quota scheme. As less than a quarter of firms satisfy their 3 per cent. quota obligations, and as the employment service has stated that work with disabled people is of low priority, will the Department now enforce the quota system? What will be done about people with disabilities which severely affect their employment prospects and who now languish in job shops with scant, if any, prospect of ever finding a job?

Secondly, will the Government expand the sponsored placement scheme to provide more integrated work opportunities at all levels for disabled people? Voluntary organisations were dismayed by the reply on 12 March to the chairman and secretary of the all-party disablement group, which baldly stated that no new SPS places would be available during 1990-91. That reply is at column *136*.

Will the Minister also respond to the criticisms in the excellent recent report by Mainstream that the subsidy is too low and that SPS employees are disadvantaged by being ineligible for the same benefits and terms of employment as others with whom they work because they are not employed directly by the host firm?

Thirdly, will the Government now belatedly emulate the United States Congress, which has passed the Americans with Disabilities Act? That Act extends to the private sector in the United States the anti-discrimination provisions of the Rehabilitation Act 1973, which have proved so effective in combating discrimination in the public sector and among firms receiving federal funds. Since anti-discrimination legislation has been on the statute book in the United States for 17 years and is now being extended, how can Ministers here possibly claim that it would be ineffective?

We could have led the world in outlawing discrimination, as we did in 1970 when we legislated on access to buildings, if the Government had acted on the report in 1982 of the Committee on Restrictions Against Disabled People, which I appointed as the then Minister in 1979, or had not shamelessly blocked successive private Members' Bills aimed at giving the report legislative effect.

I shall give one example from Manchester of the vital importance of legislation to outlaw discrimination against disabled people. A deaf young woman employed by the Greater Manchester Coalition for Disabled People is unable to enjoy the same employment rights as others because the Department of Employment will provide communicators only for deaf trainees and not for employees. Kevin Hyett, the chairman of the GMCDP, has said:

"The Government provide blind people with readers and disabled people generally with a wide range of high-tech equipment, so you have to say that this is blatant discrimination."

The Government often single out deaf people for special hardship. As in that case, their needs are ignored by the social security system and often their severe disability makes it practically impossible for them to obtain even their basic entitlement. Happily, in another place, an amendment to the Social Security Bill has been passed to allow deaf students to retain entitlement to social security benefits. I trust that the Minister will announce today that

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the Government have no intention of seeking to overturn that amendment when the Bill returns to this House. I urge him unequivocally to do so when he speaks in this debate.

I hope also that the Minister will explain what actions he will take to end the chaos which is threatening employment training schemes run by voluntary organisations. Only this week, I heard that the "Black Country Talking Magazine for the Blind", which is manned by ET workers, has to close because of lack of funds. The Spastics Society, which provided 429 training places, decided on 30 April to withdraw from the ET scheme when the Government altered the terms of the contract. If the society had not withdrawn, it would have faced a deficit of over £200,000 in the coming year. What possible justification is there for that huge tax on voluntary effort?

This morning, the Spastics Society released a valuable report which reflects deep concern about the Government's employment policies. The report says that discrimination against disabled job applicants has not diminished in the past four years. As the Minister knows, the Spastics Society is in the forefront of organisations now demanding anti-discrimination legislation, to which Labour Members are fully committed.

The motion moved by the hon. Member for Battersea pays equal tribute to Government and voluntary organisations. I hope he is now persuaded that he should have been more selective in his praise.

There are very few voluntary organisations of or for people with disabilities which do not have a long catalogue of examples of how the Government continue to cut the ground from under their feet and, while leaving no platitude unspoken, enact policies which reduce the equality and independence of people with disabilities. Yet the House must recognise that independence is the biggest prize of all for Britain's 6·5 million disabled people. It has become the common objective of this House as a whole.

11.22 am

Mr. Gerald Bowden (Dulwich): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) on his success in the ballot and his choice of subject. I came third in the ballot, but I do not resent that fact because of the subject that he chose and because he treated it with such sensitivity and understanding.

I appreciate the experience and commitment of the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), but I do not intend to follow him down the path of the financial and economic resources that should be available to disabled people. I shall look at the wider issues set out in the motion.

When talking about the disabled, we are in danger of confusing several issues. we are inclined to group many diverse talents and limitations. To name the broad categories, there are physical disabilities, mental disabilities and psychological difficulties, from which many people suffer. To consider those people as a cohesive group would be to misunderstand their problems and not recognise their contributions.

We come up against disability either personally or by recognising it in others. I discovered this early in life when I studied law at university. My tutor had been blind from birth, but he went on to hold one of the foremost chairs in jurisprudence. There is no doubt that I learnt much from him about understanding the law and I could in no way emulate the way he understood attempts to contribute in seminars and tutorials. One of the tasks I was first invited to perform—rather than being a chore, turned out to be a happy duty—was to read the law reports and other documents. One simply had to gabble away, but the way in which he anticipated the result before the end of the argument was amazing. Although he suffered one disability, he did not see it as such. A compensating achievement more than ruled out any disability he might have felt.

The motion has given us an opportunity to look at this matter in the broad sense. By considering the challenge that disability brings to those who suffer from it and to those of us who have no obvious psychological, physical or intellectual disability, we have an opportunity to think about where we can bring pressure to bear, place emphasis and give support.

The key concept in the speeches of my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea and the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe was "access". It is clear that those with disabilities in any of the three broad categories that I have suggested suffer because of access difficulties. My hon. Friend the Member for Battersea spoke of the problems of wheelchair access to schools in inner-city areas. We recognise the problems of people who wish to go to the theatre or wish to sit in the House or the other place. We should ensure that there is easy access in newly designed buildings and that, as far as possible, existing premises are adapted so that embarrassment is not caused and obstacles do not exist.

Physical access may be connected with the intellectual or educational access to which my hon. Friend referred. If children cannot get into a school because they are wheelchair-bound, the opportunities that they might enjoy and might properly claim are obstructed. Those two aspects deny people access to opportunities in the wider community. As the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe said, access to independence must be the key for any person who suffers from a disability, allowing that person to fulfil himself and achieve his potential.

My hon. Friend the Member for Battersea has opened up a debate that challenges the attitude of the public and our attitude as individuals. It has presented us with the challenge not to look at disability as an obstruction or inhibiting factor, but to consider the opportunities for fulfilment of those who perhaps have limitations in one sense but have great potential in another. I have visited the Cheshire home and Athan house. When one is in the presence of members of the Southwark branch of Mencap or one sees the wheelchair race in the London marathon, one's attitude to the problems of incapacity and disability is changed.

The problems of a person with a physical disability sometimes come rather closer to home. My hon. Friend the Member for Battersea described the day of a physically disabled person. A year or so ago, while I was gardening, I pricked my hand on a rose and had to have my hand in a sling for a week. I suddenly had a greater understanding of what incapacity and disability meant. I could not tie a tie or a shoelace, I had difficulty doing up buttons and I could not drive a car. I was suddenly made aware of what disability means even in its most trivial form. That gave me even greater admiration for the courage, grit and determination of the disabled who succeed in achieving,

whereas those of us who are reasonably able most of the time and suddenly come up against disability find life difficult.

Disability is a matter of attitude as well as of resources. Resources must be available and properly deployed. However, the attitude of those of us who take an interest in these matters must inform and reflect itself on the rest of the community. Those who, in one sense or another, are regarded as disabled have an important role to play in decision-making. Our debate today offers the opportunity to open up the subject for a wider discussion and for wider understanding. I welcome the choice of topic by my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea.

Royal Assent

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified Her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

1. Property Services Agency and Crown Suppliers Act 1990
2. Greenwich Hospital Act 1990
3. Pakistan Act 1990
4. Agricultural Holdings (Amendment) Act 1990
5. Food Safety Act 1990
6. Australian Constitution (Public Record Copy) Act 1990
7. Computer Misuse Act 1990
8. National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990
9. Bromley London Borough Council (Crystal Palace) Act 1990
10. South Yorkshire Light Rail Transit Act 1990

Disabled People

Question again proposed.

11.31 am

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): I wish to concentrate on a specific aspect of disability. I was especially interested in the speech of the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), who addressed a wide and important range of problems facing disabled people. I shall not deal with those points or with the matters raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) as they have been dealt with adequately already. If the views of the hon. Member for Battersea were shared and acted on by the Government, there would be little, if any, need for today's debate.

As the hon. Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) said, we are all aware that many hon. Members have attempted, through private Members' Bills, to bring these matters to the attention of the Government, but most attempts have failed. Hon. Members have attempted to introduce legislation covering the range of matters raised today but in almost every case the Government have turned their face against the Bill. They have resisted the opportunity presented to them to make progress.

I was fortunate enough to be drawn in the ballot and I attempted to introduce a simple private Member's Bill, the Local Government (Access to Information) (Disabled Persons) Bill. All the points raised this morning are vital. A problem which affects many disabled people is their lack of access not only to buildings, but to information. My simple, one-clause Bill sought to bring to the Government's notice the fact that disabled people were disadvantaged by not having access to information. There are many examples of that problem. We are all aware of the tremendous impact of information technology. Information is power, and information means that one has the knowledge to deal with matters affecting one's life and the lives of others. In many ways, disabled people are deprived of information which could bring a solution to their problems or relieve the problems in their day-to-day lives.

It is only since the creation of the national health service that disability and disabled people have been brought out of the shadows of the pre-war and early post-war period, when in almost all instances the problems of the disabled were ignored by Governments and by society in general. The national health service did a great deal to make us aware that disabled people were people like ourselves who suffered from a disability which often prevented them from leading what would be considered a normal life. Progress has been made in many directions, thanks to the efforts of my right hon. Friend the Member for Wythenshawe and of many other hon. Members who have constantly attempted to draw the Government's attention to the various problems faced by disabled people.

I want the Government to act on the single issue raised in my Bill and I appeai to the Minister to take its provisions on board. That would not be a costly exercise. My Bill sought to make local authorities and other agencies responsible for ensuring that disabled people, such as blind people, who have great difficulty in obtaining information about themselves, about the world in which they live, about their local authority and about the agencies, have access to information. Little or no provision

[Mr. Eddie Loyden]

is made by local authorities to make such information available to blind people or to deaf people who suffer particularly as a consequence of a lack of information.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Is my hon. Friend aware that his private Member's Bill was widely welcomed by disabled people and their organisations? It is still not too late for the Bill to be enacted. I hope that the Minister will respond as helpfully as he can to my hon. Friend's important plea.

Mr. Loyden: I am grateful for my right hon. Friend's useful intervention. I hope that, even at this late stage, the Minister will relent and move away from the attitude adopted by his predecessor. I hope that he will at least consider the Bill, which will not cause financial problems for the Government but will make local authorities and agencies responsible for reporting annually. The Bill is not intended merely to leave the matter as a piece of legislation, but to bring the issue alive. Every year, reports would be produced to show whether local authorities and other agencies were implementing the provisions on access to information for the blind, for the deaf and for other disabled people. That information is vital.

We must remember that disabled people pay their rates and taxes just like everyone else. As ratepayers, we have access to local authority information on a whole range of issues that affect our lives. We can obtain that information reasonably easily by going to the local authority and obtaining a leaflet or some advice. Disabled people cannot make those simple approaches. We must take into account the need for local authorities and other agencies to find ways of providing information to blind and deaf people in particular.

That task would not present local authorities with problems. Information technology provides the means to let deaf people know what is going on when they visit their local council chamber. How many councils provide sign language at their meetings to enable deaf people to understand and appreciate what is happening? The answer is very few. How many blind people are given the opportunity to know what is happening in their council and its committees, which take decisions that affect their daily lives? The answer, again, is that very few, if any, are trying to provide disabled people with access to information that is vital to them.

I came to understand the enormity of the problem when I first introduced my private Member's Bill. I received a video letter from a constituent in his early 20s. I had to find a means of translating that letter, which was in sign language, and I used the resources of the Royal National Institute for the Deaf, which provided me with the translation that I sought. That young man went to the trouble to point out that that was his only means of communication and it made an impact on me. He pointed out that often when he could not hear what was happening on television he asked his parents, who were sometimes annoyed or could not understand him. That may appear, on the face of it, to be a minor problem but it means a great deal to that young guy.

Attempts are being made to provide sign language on television to help deaf people. Now that our proceedings are televised, sign language should be provided, because people regard this place as an important feature of life in this country. It is essential that they should have access to what happens here and in the other place. Sign language should be used so that deaf people can join all those who gain their information from the television.

I was greatly encouraged by the fact that the Royal National Institute for the Deaf and my young constituent went to the trouble to do what they did. I sent a video sign language reply to his message which was a simple one. He asked, "Have you forgotten our problems of communication and information? Are you aware of them?" I knew then that the video letter was the only means of communication that that young man had. We should consider that most seriously because he is one of many thousands of people who are affected.

I hope that the Minister will take on board the points made by the hon. Member for Battersea and my right hon. Friend the Member for Wythenshawe. I appeal to him, even at this late stage, to reconsider my simple, one-clause Bill, which would bring a great deal of comfort and pleasure—and, information being what it is, a great deal of value—to those who, by reason of their disability, are cut off from vital sources of information.

11.44 am

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): I welcome the opportunity to take part in the debate. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) on his good fortune in winning the ballot and on his excellent choice of topic. I am delighted to be able to be here today, and I am only sorry that the Liberal Democrats have not seen fit to attend this important debate. They go on at length about how much they care for the disabled, but not one of them was here at the start of the debate and, to the best of my knowledge, there is not one here now. I suppose that they may all be sitting there en masse but if they are, they are invisible as usual.

It is a sad fact that many people today pay no heed to the problems of the disabled unless they themselves are disabled or have relatives or friends who are. Those facts bring home to ordinary people the great needs of the disabled. I have a relative who suffers from multiple sclerosis. Another relative, who died recently, suffered a major stroke and lived for 10 years after it which I gather is quite unusual. He was a man of very strong constitution. He found that he could just about cope with his disability although, unfortunately, he had lost the ability to read and write. He managed by using talking books, watching the television and conversing with others. But he found particularly difficult a little operation of which most people would think nothing: he could not cut his toe nails. That caused him more anxiety and difficulty than almost anything. Often, people find that they are able to deal with most things and they find it difficult to ask for help with an everyday operation such as that.

Also on a personal note, my father suffered from Alzheimer's disease for several years. It is a truly horrific and terrible disease. My mother did sterling work looking after him and I take this opportunity to pay tribute to Dr. Bennett, the local doctor, and to Rose Fortune, the district nurse in the area of Inverness-shire where my parents lived. They were both marvellous in looking after my father. Personal contact with disability brings home to one how important the subject is and one perhaps gets some idea of the problems that the disabled face.

My hon. Friend the Member for Battersea had done his research well and covered most of the subjects that I wish

to mention. I congratulate him on that. He has done extraordinarily well. In my brief intervention in his speech, I said that many prospective employers are not prepared even to consider someone if he has a disability of some sort. I do not know why they should do that, but they are doing themselves out of people whose brain power may be much better than theirs. I plead with employers to widen their scope when they want to fill job vacancies. They should consider the claims of disabled people because they can do those jobs very well.

My hon. Friend the Member for Battersea referred to the difficulties of getting to work. He also referred to the achievements of many notable disabled people. I can think of many examples of disabled people who have achieved a great deal. For example, Nelson won the battle of Trafalgar with only one arm and only one eye. That was a great achievement. The French may not have thought so at the time and they probably do not think so now. Sir Douglas Bader was legless when he flew Spitfires in the battle of Britain. Professor Stephen Hawking has already been referred to. I briefly dipped into his book "A Brief History of Time" and quickly out of it again. That book requires the summer recess to do it justice.

Some great composers also suffered disabilities and in that regard I think of Delius. I am not necessarily convinced that he was a great composer, but some people think so. Nevertheless, he found ways of overcoming his illness and he wrote music. Beethoven was so deaf that when he attended the first performance of his ninth symphony he was completely unable to hear it. He did not know when it finished and his friends had to turn him round so that he could see the cheering and applauding crowd.

My hon. Friend the Member for Battersea mentioned Itzhak Perlman. I remember attending a concert at the Royal Festival hall some years ago at which Mr. Perlman performed Mendelssohn's violin concerto. That was a notable occasion and one of the concerts that has stuck in my mind. It was a great performance by Mr. Perlman, who followed the violin concerto with Bruckner's seventh symphony which made the concert even better. We must also think of Jacequeline du Pré, that great cellist and a wonderful music maker. Tragedy overtook her, but she rose above it and passed on her talents and knowledge to young musicians in her wonderful master classes.

Disabled people in wheelchairs take part in the London marathon. From time to time I have thought that I might enter the London marathon, but I unthought it pretty quickly. The prospect of pounding around 26 miles is a little too much for me. However, I pay tribute to the people in wheelchairs who take part. It is incredible that they do so well.

We have recently debated Bills on abortion. I hope that such legislation does not lead to circumstances in which a baby which shows signs of being disabled before it is born is automatically aborted. That would be disgraceful. I have spoken to people born with disabilities who have told me that it is the only form of life or view of themselves that they have known. They believe that they have a right to live their lives in whatever form they were born.

My hon. Friend the Member for Battersea also referred to building design. At election time we visit polling stations which all too often are in places that have no access for the disabled. Often polling booths are set up in small village halls or in odd corners here and there. Disabled people cannot get into those places. It is fundamentally important to our democracy that all people should have the right to vote, and it is wrong that some may be put off exercising their democratic right simply because they cannot get into a polling station. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister will consider that point.

Many buildings were not designed with the needs of the disabled in mind. That applies not simply to access to buildings, but to lifts. Someone in a wheelchair might be able to get into a lift, but be unable to reach the buttons to get to the required floor. The designers must bear in mind small things like that when they design buildings and the services in them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Battersea has already mentioned trains. It is very difficult to adapt a train to the needs of the disabled once it has been built. However, if a little thought was given to the design in the earliest stages, every disabled person who wanted to travel by train would know that he could do so. Occasionally disabled people may decide not to bother even setting off on the journey because they know that they will not be able to get on the train. A little thought would go a long way.

Buses and conductors have also been mentioned. These days we have those horrible things called OPOs—one-person operated buses. We often see people struggling with babies or shopping trying to get on to them. The disabled have no chance of getting on. Buses should be designed in such a way as to allow the disabled to board them. The fare-paying public would be willing to pay a little extra to have a conductor. The modern double-decker buses in London are not a patch on the old Routemaster which was one of the best buses ever designed or built.

A pavement is something which most hon. Members simply walk along. If a paving stone is sticking up a little, one might trip over it, utter an oath and walk on. The incident is quickly forgotten. But for disabled people, particularly the blind, such a paving stone could cause a crashing fall. Very often there are holes in pavements. The utilities come along and dig them up. That is fair enough; they probably have to do that. But more often than not, the hole is left inadequately guarded. There may be only a couple of cones on either side of the hole or a couple of rods stuck in the ground with a little sticky tape wound round them. The assumption is that most people will see the cones and ribbon and will take avoiding action. But a blind person cannot see the cones, ribbons or rods. Blind people have fallen into holes and hurt themselves seriously. It only needs a little thought. It is not very difficult to erect something slightly more rigid so that a blind person can knock against it with his stick and thus be warned of the obstruction.

Parked cars also constitute dangerous obstructions. If people park their cars on pavements there may not be enough room for a person in a wheelchair to pass and he may be forced out into the road. Blind people cannot always anticipate such obstructions. They will walk into parked cars or catch themselves on wing mirrors and hurt themselves. Again, it is a matter of a little thought, not only by those who are responsible for the design and layout of roads and pavements but by those who park their cars there. They see a gap, park their car and do not notice —they probably do not want to notice—that they have blocked ramps that were specifically constructed to enable someone in a wheelchair to get over the kerb. All too many of us are remarkably selfish. I appeal for a little thought for those who are less fortunate than we are.

[Mr. Hugo Summerson]

All too often those of us who can see do not spot dog mess on the pavement. A blind person has no chance at all. The first that he or she knows about treading into something revolting is when he or she get home and smells it. By that time they have trodden it into their carpet. That is horrible. Many thoughtless people let their dogs out at the start of the day. Some dogs are almost latchkey dogs; they know that if they return at 6 o'clock their owners will be back to let them in. They spend the rest of the day running about. I am sure that you would rapidly rule me out of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, if I spoke at length about a dog registration scheme. Nevertheless, such a scheme would cause people to look after their dogs better. If people looked after their dogs better, that sort of incident would be less frequent.

Some organisations in my constituency are doing marvellous work. ARMS—Action for Research into Multiple Sclerosis—has a facility that I have visited several times. It has all sorts of technology to help people who suffer from multiple sclerosis. One machine is almost like a diving chamber in which people can breathe pure oxygen at a higher pressure than normal. They find that helpful. Dial-a-ride has already been mentioned. I take this opportunity to take a swipe at London Regional Transport's regionalisation proposals. Dial-a-ride is presently organised on a local basis, and that is how local people want it to remain. They want to use it to visit local shops and visit friends locally. The vast majority do not want it to go miles away—they want it specifically for local activities. I hope that LRT will reconsider its proposals.

Dial—not to be confused with dial-a-ride—is devoted to the needs of disabled people and the resources that are due to them. Whitefield school in Walthamstow has acquired an excellent reputation for looking after children with all types of disability, especially autistic children. The parents of autistic children have great difficulties.

I congratulate my hon. Friend. This has been a marvellous occasion to discuss the disabled and the opportunities that should be open to them if people gave a little more thought and care. That message should go out from the House today.

11.54 am

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): The motion pays tribute to people with disabilities. I shall mention the achievements of one of my constituents, Melvyn Wall, who lives at Delves road, Killamarsh. Two years ago, he had a foot removed, and subsequently both legs were amputated below the knee. He now has artificial limbs and does his best in the circumstances. The motion pays tribute to

"people with disabilities and to the dedication of individuals and organisations that support them."

The two organisations that support Melvyn Wall at the moment are the Sheffield Area Limbless Association and the Mosborough citizens advice bureau. The motion welcomes

"the measures taken by the Government, by local government".

North-East Derbyshire district council is to be complimented on moving Melvyn Wall from a house on a hillside, because it was impossible for him to move around and about, to an old person's bungalow—although he is only 44—on flat ground opposite a supermarket and a newsagent. When he looks out of his window and sees that there is hardly anyone in the supermarket, he does his shopping. Because of his disability he cannot stand in a long queue waiting to be served. The bus stop is also nearby, which would add considerably to his mobility if it were not for the Government's action in removing his mobility allowance. I have mentioned that matter previously. If he had the mobility allowance, he could involve himself in activities within the community, just as he did before his legs were removed.

Melvyn Wall's home is only two miles from the Rother Valley country park. A disabled person needs to be able to transfer by bus or taxi to reach the artificial lake at the centre of the park. If Melvyn could get there, he could spend the day moving slowly from seat to seat around the lake, as he often did when he was able bodied. However, that is beyond him because it has been decided that his mobility allowance should be taken away.

Melvyn Wall occasionally visited Sheffield, which is nearby, but he has been able to do so only once recently. He has depended on his brother collecting him and taking him in his car. He used to watch local cricket matches at Killamarsh junior school. He now finds it difficult to move out of his house and get around readily and easily. Many activities are beyond him. Even to visit relatives he is dependent upon others collecting him.

In the current circumstances, Melvyn Wall cannot afford a holiday, which would be of considerable benefit to him. It takes him an hour or so to do what I found to be an eight-minute journey to the post office. It is then impossible for him to walk back up the hill, yet it has been decided by the Department of Social Security that Melvyn Wall is quite able to get around.

Reference has been made to Douglas Bader and his achievements. Melvyn Wall has achieved much. His financial circumstances mean that the ordinary requirements of life are beyond him.

At one time, he worked in opencast mining and, before that, he was a farmer. He used to be quite interested in gardening. Luckily, the council cuts his grass, but the remainder of his garden is looked after by his 80-year old neighbour, out of the goodness of his heart. Melvyn cannot employ him to do the sorts of work that, otherwise, he would find beneficial. I hope that the Minister will carefully consider the case that has been put to him several times by myself, by the citizens advice bureau at Mossborough and by the Sheffield Area Limbless Association, which is well aware of the difficulties and problems that Melvyn faces.

If we do not deal correctly with disabled people and give them the right to be fully and actively involved in society, we do not just damage and harm them, we damage and harm society. There are many people with considerable abilities who could contribute towards the well-being of communities, but who are kept away from jobs, social activity and involvement with us. We would be better people if we associated with them in terms of their abilities—which are quite normal abilities—and had some understanding of their capacity to overcome their considerable disabilities.

It has already been mentioned that the televising of the House should provide some form of signs so that deaf people could benefit. I have spoken about the poll tax in many areas, but the meeting that I remember most was held in a deaf club in Chesterfield. A signer stood by my side. The full involvement of the deaf audience, the way

that they discussed the issues through the signer, and their interest in the debate were quite astonishing. People who did not have access to information about the poll tax had the opportunity to discuss it with someone who had served on the Standing Committee that considered the poll tax Bill. That was of considerable benefit to me, as well as being a valuable meeting for those who attended. Involvement with disabled people is beneficial for us, as well as for them.

I wish to bring a second case to the attention of the House; it concerns Ken Davis, a constituent of mine who lives in Clay Cross. He has been involved in a campaign to maintain access for disabled people in the centres of towns that have introduced pedestrian areas—which might be a great boon for able-bodied people, but which cause considerable problems for disabled people who are excluded from taking their vehicles into those areas.

The hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) mentioned the abuse of the orange badge scheme. However, we must remember what it is used for and the fact that many disabled people are dependent on its operation. Therefore, any action on that scheme must ensure that those who are entitled to use it are given a full opportunity to do so.

Mr. Bowis: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. My point was that some people who are not disabled use the orange badge, which gives the whole scheme a bad name. We should pursue such people and make that abuse a criminal offence. Those to whom the hon. Gentleman rightly referred could then use the scheme to obtain access to exactly the places he mentioned.

Mr. Barnes: Disabled drivers are dependent on the scheme as it currently operates. They often have great difficulty in handling situations in the middle of towns.

The campaign has been running in Chesterfield—a neighbouring constituency of mine—which has a fine town centre and a fine market with cobblestones. The cobbles create a problem for disabled people, but it is an even greater problem if they are excluded from the area by what might be considered a very progressive scheme for able-bodied people.

Ken Davis felt so strongly that he disobeyed the byelaws and had to appear in court. In fact, he wanted to go to prison to highlight the campaign. He did not go to prison because someone paid his fine, against his wishes. He still does not know who that person was.

That led me to table a number of written questions about disablement to the Minister. One of the central problems is that of disabled people who have to appear in court. Of course, there is also the question of facilities in prison if a disabled person ends up there because of his actions.

I was sent *Prison Report*—the quarterly review of the Prison Reform Trust. It had published an article by Baroness Masham called "Disabled access to the gaols". She said:

"One young man I came across while visiting a young offenders institution could not turn his wheelchair round in the cell because it was so narrow. He was allowed to spend his sentence in the hospital after he appealed to me, as a member of the Board of Visitors, for help. The prison staff, however, felt he would feel more 'normal' in a cell. One can imagine the utter frustration he felt at not being able to turn his chair —he became a prisoner in more ways that one".

Baroness Masham suggested a number of provisions within prisons so that proper access facilities would be available for disabled prisoners so that they could live as normal a life as possible.

Disabled people are as varied as able-bodied people. Some may be imprisoned for offences that we may criticise, and they will serve their sentences. However, some highly principled people may be in prison because of stances that they have taken on certain issues. Ken Davis is one such person, and there could well be many more because of the Government's unwillingness to consider disability and severe physical handicap in setting poll tax rebates. A number of people might pursue their protest against, or inability to pay the poll tax to a stage where they become open to court action. There cannot be an attachment of earnings because they have no earnings to attach. The bailiffs cannot be sent in because they do not have furniture that they can take. They only have furniture that cannot be taken because it is essential to their needs. The only avenue left for many disabled people who have not paid their poll tax might be imprisonment.

I hope that the concern of Ken Davis and those who campaigned with him about pedestrian areas will be seriously considered. It is not adequately taken into account in Government documents such as "Getting the right balance"—guidance on vehicle restrictions in pedestrian zones—which seeks to deal with that issue. It seeks to deal with the problem by giving guidance on vehicle restrictions in pedestrian zones.

The Government are given some praise in the motion, yet they have been given many opportunities to assist the disabled. It is not just a matter for the Department of Social Security. I served on the Standing Committee on the 1989 Employment Bill, on which the question of dismissal notices arose. The Government decided in their wisdom that instead of being given written notice of the reason if one is dismissed within six months, the period should be extended to two years.

The Opposition tabled an amendment providing for disabled people to receive such notification at whatever time they were dismissed, because of their special circumstances. Mention was made of the problems that the disabled have in finding work and because of the improper operation of the quota provision. A disabled person might find himself removed from a job because of the pressure that it imposes, but even if he is dismissed for reasons that may be entirely beyond his control and which have nothing to do with his disability, he still needs a dismissal notice for his own benefit and to confirm to potential employers the reasons why he had to leave his previous job.

The London information and advisory service for disabled people on arts and entertainment feels that legislation should include a stipulation that once a year, employers should receive a visit from the Disability Advisory Service, for the purpose of inspecting access facilities, identifying possible adaptions to help the disabled, and reviewing progress with the employer's recruitment policies and practices. Perhaps one of that service's first visits should be to the House of Commons. Other right hon. and hon. Members have experience of meeting deputations of the disabled and of trying to take them to Committee rooms, when the greatest difficulty is encountered. One wonders also what arrangements there are for disabled people wanting to enter Strangers Gallery,

[Mr. Barnes]

or even approaching the building or standing outside it. It would be appropirate for the House to get its own priorities right, to serve as a marker for others.

12.22 pm

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): I thank you for calling me, Madam Deputy Speaker. I apologise to right hon. and hon. Members for not having been present at the start of the debate as I had to deal with urgent constituency matters. None the less, I have received reports from my hon. Friends of the excellent speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), and I add my voice to those who have congratulated him on his initiative with a carefully thought-out motion. He may have spoken for a record amount of time for a Friday morning—79 minutes—but I am sure that it was pure gold all the way. I shall certainly read the whole of my hon. Friend's speech in *Hansard* to catch up with all his points, although I am aware of the main ones and of some of the ideas that he advanced.

This is one of those Friday debates in which the House often comes into its own in terms of common sense and a high degree of wisdom because party issues are set aside. I pay tribute to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) for his work over many years and for the expertise that he has shown us all. In naming him first, I pay no less tribute to my own right hon. and hon. Friends and to my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People. He is a politician of great compassion, he knows a vast amount about his subject, and he has done a great deal of work on behalf of the Government. That shows that the Government themselves attach great importance to the problems confronting the disabled, as do all civilised members of society. There is a feeling that, as the British Rail slogan goes, we are getting there, but one must inevitably add that it is happening only gradually.

My interest in the subject stems from being a member of the old board of governors of the royal national orthopaedic hospital in Stanmore—both the country and the town hospital—and president of its league of friends. I am also chairman of the Save the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital Action Group, so I had the privilege of gaining, as an amateur, a great deal of knowledge about various mental and physical disabilities.

The problems confronting the disabled are enormous, and the demand for improving provision is, by definition, limitless. Government must order things in accordance with competing priorities for public expenditure, and the same is true of the legitimate use of private money. The irony and frustration is that as one proceeds along that complicated road, the demand for a 100 per cent. quality of life for the disabled, so far as it can be achieved in everyday living and working, rises exponentially.

For example, we are much more used these days to buildings being equipped with ramps—automatically in the case of new buildings, in accordance with Government requirements in respect of public buildings, with the private sector following suit. However, many disabled people complain to me that at the top of the ramp there is often a forward-opening door that they somehow have to open and then get through in their wheelchairs. If ramps are installed for the benefit of wheelchair users, they should be supplemented with electric doors—though they are more expensive and need special maintenance. A new sports centre being constructed in this country is, because of budget cuts, unable to incorporate electric doors. One of the most difficult tasks for a person in a wheelchair to perform is getting through a door. Everything else in that sports centre is fantastic and marvellous, yet there is that example of society trying to grapple with budget problems and limitations.

Demand for improvements is being made not only by the articulate lobbies for the disabled of which many right hon. and hon. Members have experience in their own constituencies and to which we pay tribute, but by the public at large. We should inculcate consideration for the needs of the disabled early in the education process. I regret that when I was at school I was not brought up to work and play alongside the disabled, so that it would become for me a matter of routine to know almost instinctively the assistance that they need. Often, the mentally and physically able person unwittingly adopts a condescending attitude towards the disabled. We all do that. On how many occasions do we, on meeting someone in a wheelchair, shout at them as though they were deaf as well? The techniques and the information need to be put into people's minds at a young age. The most adaptable person is the child. In that way, children will treat disabled people normally, and not condescendingly as though there were something strange about them. The "Aren't I good and gracious because I am dealing patiently with you, a disabled person, although I am a busy important person" attitude drives disabled people mad. I would put able-bodied schoolchildren in wheelchairs so that they experience the problems of trying to get about in one.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson). He knows that access to and in stations is a nightmare for disabled people. The costs of rebuilding and adaptation are enormous. Even if it were possible to get disabled people on to the platforms —many stations and tube stations have long flights of stairs—they face the nightmare of getting on and off the train. How can a guard keep the train waiting longer on the off-chance that a disabled person may be trying to get on? These are huge problems.

I reiterate the plea—Ministers have justifiably become thoroughly sick of hearing it because I have been making it for so many years and I therefore apologise in advance —that the royal national orthopaedic hospital must be saved. I believe that the Government are committed to doing that. Complex discussions and negotiations about its inclusion in the relevant future structure of services will take place. Its work is fantastic. There is no other word for it.

Many institutions throughout the country pursue similar work. You will understand, Madam Deputy Speaker, why I am so intensely proud of this fabulous institution and what it has done. If hon. Members doubt that and say, "Yes, yes, we have heard all that before", I invite them to visit the hospital either with or without me —preferably without me because I shall drive them mad by going on about it all the time while they go through the corridors and wards and see the work done there, particularly on spinal injuries, implanting metal pieces into broken limbs, and so on.

My right hon. Friend the Minister has a standing invitation to visit. I would even tempt him by saying that if he comes soon, we could arrange for a Nicholas Scott plaza to be named or whatever he wants.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Or a Nicholas Scott avenue.

Mr. Dykes: Or a Nicholas Scott avenue. There are various possibilities and it would be worth while. I hope that the Under-Secretary of State for Health will come shortly. He has made it clear that he will. It is a vital national institution for many people. Over the years, we have been inundated with letters from all over the world.

A cloud hangs over the hospital. There is an erosion of morale and a lack of confidence because of the closure of certain facilities. I know that the hard-faced bureaucrats in the Department—they must be hard-faced because if they were sentimental they would make bad decisions—do not like gardens outside hospitals. They think that gardens are too expensive. They like to see rationalisation and square concrete buildings which are easy to administer and pay for. In reality, this hospital deserves the support of society, like others such as Stoke Mandeville, for which the Jimmy Saville campaign has done so much.

Mr. Summerson: May I invite my hon. Friend to turn his attention to another institution—the House of Commons? My hon. Friend will be aware of the scheme for tax-exempt payroll giving to charities which the Government introduced recently. Is he aware that only a tenth of hon. Members use it and give to charity in that way?

Mr. Dykes: I note what my hon. Friend says and thank him for his interesting point. I am sure that more hon. Members will note it when they return on Monday.

My hon. Friend mentioned multiple sclerosis in his excellent speech. It is one of the worst of the terrible diseases and disabilities, mental and physical, to contemplate. The staggering everyday heroism of individual cases moves us all to tears. Spasticity is a different condition. I recall a moving part of the biography of the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), the former Labour Chancellor. He and his wife invited a young boy who was completely paraplegic and spastic to No. 11 to have a look round. The young man became famous for writing poetry and won a special prize from the Spastic Society. That formed the theme of a later story.

My hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow mentioned the case of Jacqueline du Pré, who attended the equivalent of my multiple sclerosis unit in Harrow. Once again, one must pay tribute to her courage.

It is also important to record the difficulty of able people to appreciate the horror—I am not sure that "disease" is the right word—and the terrible affliction of MS for which there is no-known cure. Treatment can, to some extent, appease MS but that depends whether the pattern of the disease is horizontal or growing. In the latter stages of the disease, Jacqueline du Pré displayed amazing courage which moved us to make greater efforts to help those with it. I understand that the Government are under pressure on all their budgets, entitlements and requirements, particularly on health, but I hope that the Minister will take on board the need to use more public money in research on MS. I know that considerable research is now being undertaken and presumably there will be a breakthrough one day.

I know that the national health service was a little ambiguous about the use of oxygen cylinders, but I am pleased that the Government are positively encouraging their use. There are still people who believe they are not the right way to go about it, but they provide great physical relief. For that reason the local unit at Harrow is doubling in size. Local schools have raised staggering amounts of money—the money has come mainly from sixth form colleges, but other schools are also involved. Such fund-raising shows that society wants to get involved and does not want to shut away those suffering from MS and other diseases. Society has a psychological need to be involved to help people with that terrible affliction as well as other disabilities.

I know that my right hon. Friend the Minister is also psychologically committed and I wish him well in his future work. He will understand when I say that it is not just private effort that is needed, but Government help to fund the research that will find a cure.

12.36 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I am pleased that we are having this debate this morning. I apologise for being absent for part of it, but I had to receive some important guests who are now in the Gallery.

The debate centres on the question of society's attitude to people with disabilities—the language people use emphasises that. I know that it is unwitting, but many people drop into the vernacular and talk about disabled people. Those people are not disabled as people, but are people with disabilities and there is a big difference. We should always try to use the term "people with disabilities", especially as the effects on many can be mitigated or overcome with different attitudes or support. It is clear that society's attitude towards people with disabilities are still wanting. Consider the number of people with disabilities who suffer unemployment through no fault of their own, live in inadequate or unsuitable housing, and have difficulty travelling round and pursuing their careers.

I shall add one example to the many that have been quoted. A good friend of mine, Nabil Shaban, who is a fine actor, performed the part of Ayatollah Khomeini in a Howard Brenton play about "The Satanic Verses". My friend has also give a number of good performances on television. Two years ago he was offered the part of Micro Man in a Christmas show on Granada television. He was then taken off the show; it was thought to be a bad idea to have someone with such disabilities appearing on a children's programme because it might upset children. That was an absolutely disgraceful decision. I was pleased to join Nabil and a number of his friends in a demonstration outside the offices of the Independent Broadcasting Authority to demand that that decision was reversed. Nabil was demonstrating not for himself, but for all actors with disabilities of all types and the attitude adopted towards them by television companies and commerce.

It is right to talk about the media image of people with disabilities. Often people with disabilities appear on television or radio programmes to talk about other people with disabilities. Why are not the television announcers

[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]

people with disabilities? Why do advertising agencies in general go for the young, fit and mobile to promote their goods? We must include those people in society. I understand the points made about education, and I favour as much integration as possible. We must be careful that the future of special schools is not decided solely on financial grounds, but on the grounds of the greatest benefit for children suffering from disabilities. If children with disabilities are offered places in what one would call ordinary schools, a couple of factors must be borne in mind. First, as the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) rightly said, there must be full disabled access throughout each of those buildings. We must not wait until someone in a wheelchair arrives at the college before tackling the problem.

A constituent of mine who is fully wheelchair-bound tried to get into a college. We thought that we had secured her a place on a suitable course and then found that she could not enter the building, apart from the ground floor. She did not see why she should have her lectures in the staff room because she could not get upstairs into the lecture theatre where the other students went. She was right. Why should she be treated in that way? There must be an acceptance of the need for full facilities.

Where there are hearing, sight or mobility-impaired children in a school, there must be sufficient allocation of resources to that school to ensure that they are not left out of events and are given support and individual tuition where required. If not, integration becomes integration for ambulant and able-bodied children but not for those with disabilities. Integration becomes its opposite and those with disabilities become separated from the rest of the school.

It is sad that although many local authorities have worked hard to try to improve facilities for those with disabilities, build better and improved housing and encourage the movement of people to ground floor accommodation where appropriate, far too often they have insufficient resources. My authority has just been poll tax-capped, as have a number of others, and people with disabilities will suffer because of the cuts in local authority expenditure. Similarly, the enormous cut in house building means that there are fewer places for people in desperate need of converted flats. The sale of council and housing association property means that the possibility of good housing for people with disabilities is rapidly diminishing, which is serious. We cannot keep saying, "We admire what everybody is doing", if the Government are not prepared to provide the necessary resources for local authorities to carry out the policies required.

I shall concentrate mainly on mobility and public transport. Clearly, those who suffer from disabilities of any sort find it extremely difficult to get around—that is fairly obvious. Their position is often made much more difficult because of simple factors such as the design of pavements, kerb let-downs and pedestrian crossings, and the difficulties of crossing roads. There is also a problem with the provision of vehicles and public transport. An interesting and important debate is being conducted in London about the provision of facilities by London Regional Transport and local authoritis.

The chairman of the London Dial-a-Ride Users Association, Keith Armstrong, who is a good friend of mine, has done an enormous amount of work on the subject. When Parliament was lobbied the other week, hon. Members were treading over themselves to get outside the building to be photographed with people entering in wheelchairs. It is just as well that they were being photographed outside the building because those in wheelchairs could not have come inside to take part in a proper lobby.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) said, it is absolutely disgraceful that in a building, in which legislation is passed about employment facilities and access to buildings for those with disabilities it is impossible for people in wheelchairs to get around. They can do so only via a circuitous route round the top of the car park and through Star Chamber Court. Only if their chairs can be squeezed into the lift, can they then get into the gallery to see and hear debates. Exactly the same applies to other parts of the building.

It is high time that those responsible for the administration of the House stopped pussyfooting round and ensured that all the necessary alterations are done immediately to allow full access to all with disabilities. We need braille signs and easy access ramps throughout the building. It smacks of hypocrisy that Parliament of all places does not have access for people with disabilities. We cannot go on like this; no one will take seriously what is said here about disability if people with disabilities cannot get round the building.

Keith Armstrong also said:

"Because buses and trains are mostly inaccessible to anyone not fully able bodied, we have to rely on Dial-A-Ride as our bus service. With insufficient funds, Dial-A-Ride can only offer on average, one trip every eleven weeks to our users —we are therefore demanding sufficient finance for Dial-A-Ride to enable us to offer every user just one trip a week. A modest demand, compared to the variety of journeys normally available on buses and trains for most people."

Keith is right. Although some local authorities take great pride in their provision of dial-a-ride and in the pioneering work done in setting it up—not least in Islington, where we have a good service which is a great inspiration to many, run by people with disabilities who manage the system to make it work as well as it can—those services are grossly underfunded. The dial-a-ride lobby asks for much wider provision of facilities.

The London Committee on Accessible Transport sent out a circular on 7 June, only three weeks ago, containing this proposal:

"That further work be undertaken to adopt a strategic approach to various transport schemes in London, and so as to draw the various funding agencies together. In this context, consideration should be given to the suggestion that members of Dial-A-Ride schemes who would be entitled to concessionary fare permits should be permitted to use them to obtain free travel on Dial-A-Rides."

At the moment fares on dial-a-ride are quite high. The committee is asking for interchangeability between London Regional Transport's concessionary fares and dial-a-ride. That is an excellent suggestion.

I hope that the Minister will assure us that his Department is prepared to offer sympathetic assistance in this matter, if necessary by leaning on the Department of Transport, which is the Ministry responsible for LRT. I hope that he will also assure us that the concessionary fare scheme is not about to go under. Every time LRT puts up its fares someone has to pay, and the money comes from the London boroughs, some of which have been poll tax-capped and thus find it increasingly difficult to meet

these bills. It is crucial that we keep the concessionary fares scheme in London; without it, pensioners and people with disabilities will suffer a great loss of mobility.

Recently, a policy statement emerged from the London Regional Passengers Committee about the provision of transport for people with disabilities. Section 9, which deals with overcoming disabilities and which warmly welcomes the growing public and political awareness of the problems of transport for people with walking difficulties, for the visually or hearing-impaired, and for people pushing wheelchairs, states:

"But, even given the requisite resources and political will, many years will elapse before full accessibility to London's public transport system becomes a reality. In the interim, parallel 'para-transit' systems such as dial-a-ride and taxicard will have an essential part to play. At present they are desperately under-resourced, and able to meet only a fraction of the suppressed level of demand. If only one trip a week for each subscriber is still far beyond the capacity of the dial-a-ride service, then to offer its users the freedom to travel with the same ease and frequency as passengers on conventional public transport systems may seem an ambition wholly incapable of attainment. Nevertheless, the Committee believes that nothing less will satisfy the aspirations of those who are dependent on these services, and that a determined effort must be made to enhance the scale of their provision."

Such a determined effort means first examining the funding arrangements of LRT. One problem is that a financial regime has been imposed upon London Regional Transport and it has to make a return on capital. No other public transport system in Europe has to make such a return and none has the slightest intention of doing so because the philosophy in other parts of Europe is that public transport is essential for a civilised city.

London fares are high and the service is inadequate. In some cases, because of the obsession with a return on capital rather than the provision of service, the service is downright dangerous. As a result, everything must be carefully costed and simply because of the costs involved there is resistance to providing the service necessary for disabled people. It should be accepted that those with disabilities should be able to travel openly and freely on the public transport system. To bring that about we need a change in bus design.

I am a great admirer of the Routemaster bus, which is probably the finest bus ever made. However, although it is by no means the worst bus to which to gain access, it requires modification. The Volvo is probably the worst bus to get on and off because there are several steps at the door. The Routemaster should have a lower step at the back to make it easier for disabled people to get on. If all the thought that goes into designing buses such as those in the Careline range was put into the general design of buses, we would have a much better system.

The buses used at airports to take people from aeroplane to customs and immigration have low steps and it is easy to get in and out of them. I timed the loading and unloading of 60 ambulant people on such a bus at Heathrow. It took one and a half minutes to fill the bus and one and a half minutes to empty it. Surely it is possible to use such buses to transport disabled people who would find them easier to get on and off? There seems to be a resistance by the bus industry to provide such public transport. Perhaps the Department should put pressure on the industry to overcome that resistance.

There is a badly publicised but nevertheless enforced policy by London Underground Ltd. that those in wheelchairs or people who are not ambulant cannot go on the deep tube lines. Such people are not allowed on the Picadilly, Victoria or Northern lines and that presents a major difficulty. Disabled people who want to travel round London and who do not have a car must use the bus or the tube. At busy times it could take an hour or more to get a bus from Finsbury park where I live to central London. That journey would take just 20 minutes on the underground, but disabled people are not allowed to use the deep lines.

The journey from Finsbury park to here by tube and bus entails going down about 35 steps at Finsbury park station. If the traveller wishes to get a bus at Leicester square, he has to get off the tube there, walk up the steps and then take the escalator. It is almost impossible for disabled people to do that. Our underground system should not deny access to such people.

I was one of the people who blocked the London Underground (Victoria) Bill promoted by London Underground Ltd. I did so because I thought that LRT was paying insufficient attention to the need for people in wheelchairs to move between Victoria underground station and the British Rail station there. I warn LRT that if it brings forward a Bill for the construction of a Chelsea to Hackney line, many of us will block it unless it contains detailed provisions for disabled people. We will do that to encourage London Underground to come forward with serious proposals about mobility on the system. There is no point in bringing in a Bill for a line that will move people rapidly round London if consideration is not given to those with disabilities.

Underground stations now have the notorious mechanical rottweilers, otherwise known as ticket barriers. Their introduction was ludicrous because they are a danger to people with disabilities, people pushing prams or pushchairs, people carrying heavy shopping and those who have difficulty in walking. People get trapped by them every day. Why cannot we adopt the system that operates in Paris and in other cities where there are no barriers at exits but only at entrances? It is ludicrous that one has to get a ticket to get off the train as well as on. Clearly, if one has a ticket to get on a train, it is possible to get off it. We could easily get rid of all the barriers in zone 1, which would ease passenger movement and make travelling much safer.

A person who uses a wheelchair and who wants to travel on InterCity or other British Rail services is well advised by British Rail to book a seat. The seat can be taken out and the wheelchair manoeuvered in. I understand the difficulties with that operation, but it means added difficulties with wheelchair-bound people in moving around the country. We must think about these matters more, and transport organisations should be encouraged to do much more.

The most recent edition of "Transport Innovation" includes a petition for accessible buses. It gives a good example of the pressure that has been put on British Rail and London Transport. "Transport Innovation" states:

"700,000 people in London . . . are barred from using public transport due to thoughtless design. Of these, 20 per cent. cannot use buses, 33 per cent. cannot use the tube and one quarter cannot use British Rail."

Many people are therefore prevented from travelling on those modes of transport. I hope that there will be some improvements.

I am not filled with great hope. I have quoted extensively from journals the views of those representing

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people with disabilities. The "London Transport Annual Business Plan 1990-91"—a glossy document—devotes just one column on one page to "Facilities for Disabled Passengers." It states:

"On the Underground, features such as improved stairs, better handrails and more seats on platforms will be included wherever possible in new and modernised stations. Both new and refurbished Underground trains will also include better handrails and improved passenger operated door controls.

Particular attention will be given to the needs of passengers with sensory handicaps. Improved audible information, clearer signs and better lighting are of particular benefit. The 'bus stopping' signs and the installation of dot matrix indicators on Underground platforms are of great value, and hearing-aid users benefit from the installation of 'induction loops' at all station ticket office windows."

I agree with all that—it is splendid. I wish, however, that the plan went further and that I had more confidence that London Regional Transport will introduce the measures with the necessary speed.

The Association of London Authorities produced an interesting 10-point charter on "Accessible Transport in London". I do not want to detain the House long, but this is an important element in transport. Point 1 states:

"London needs a strategic transport authority, accountable to representatives from all boroughs, administered, financed and controlled by them."

That is essential. As I said, the problem with LRT is that it is given a commercial set of targets which are impossible to marry up with the needs of London people and the social needs of London as a whole. We need a different attitude in the administration of transport.

Secondly, the charter says that existing forms of conventional transport must be targeted towards improvements, such as shelters, seating, grab handles, colour coding on vehicles and information signs. I am glad to say that, by and large, London Underground Ltd. has largely taken that on board. I hope that it will be done quickly. I hope, too, that guard dogs for the blind will be allowed to travel on deep-level tubes. Unless I am mistaken, blind people are asked not to take their dogs on deep-level underground trains. That is extremely unfair and unnecessary. Obviously, there is a difficulty with the use of escalators, but it could be overcome if there were sufficient staff at stations to assist people with guide dogs.

Point 3 refers to the planning of new public transport vehicles to take account

"of the needs of disabled and elderly passengers."

Fourthly, the charter states:

"Funding of the London Taxicard Scheme should be continued".

It should be continued because it is necessary to provide mobility. Fifthly, the charter refers to the expansion of Dial-a-Ride as a whole and states:

"There are now 29 Dial-a-Ride schemes throughout London, which are funded by central government through London Regional Transport. The budget for 1989-90 is £7·6 million for 29 separate schemes. Approximately 50,000 Londoners are members of Dial-a-Ride schemes. The current level of funding only permits an average of one trip per user each fortnight . . . 200,000 Londoners are eligible to be Dial-a-Ride members, but cannot be served because the demand already outweighs available resources."

That means that 200,000 people in London are denied mobility because they cannot get on the dial-a-ride schemes which are insufficiently funded and cannot, therefore, provide the necessary service.

Point 6 of the charter is important. It would not require a lot of money, but is a question of attitude. It advocates the prohibition of pavement parking, which is a menace throughout London. Many people thoughtlessly park their car on pavements because they are going to buy a packet of cigarettes or a newspaper from the newsagent. They do not think about the difficulties for people in wheelchairs who want to get past, for those pushing children in prams or for people with sight difficulties who, although not necessarily completely blind, may bump into the cars. I have frequently had disagreements with builders who have wantonly dropped piles of bricks on pavements. That is extremely dangerous. People should think about the dangers and there should be strict enforcement of the legislation on pavement parking. The enforcement of the legislation on the obstruction of pavements should be as strict as that on the obstruction of roads.

My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East spoke about pavement surfaces. Cobblestones may look attractive, but they are a menace for people trying to negotiate them in wheelchairs. Something should be done about that. There should also be dropped kerbs and textured pavements so that people with sight difficulties know when they are getting near the edge of the pavement.

Point 7 of the charter refers to the expansion of transport services to provide "equal transport opportunities" for disabled Londoners. Point 8 says:

"The shop-mobility scheme should be viewed as part of a transport network which enables disabled and elderly people to make full use of their local shopping facilities."

Point 9 says:

"Local authorities should operate a central brokerage scheme to ensure full use of accessible Council vehicles by local residents and groups."

That is important. Local authorities often have good vehicles for transporting people with disabilities, but they are in use only during the seven-hour or eight-hour working day and they are often not available to other groups at weekends. Such vehicles are a public asset and should be as readily available as possible at weekends. That proposal should be carried out. Point 10 of the charter refers to support for the orange badge scheme, despite some of the abuses suffered in recent years.

Running through all 10 points is a question of attitude. Finance is relevant, but equally relevant are the management of social services departments, transport schemes and other facilities. I am not happy that London Regional Transport proposes to appoint a committee if the Dial-a-Ride Users Association does not agree with its strategy and does not make nominations to the committee. Dial-a-ride users are the best people to manage the dial-a-ride scheme. They understand the difficulties of the schemes and are the best qualified to manage them. All transport undertakings should have places reserved on the management board for representatives of organisation of people who suffer from disabilities.

We pay a great deal of lip service to the problems of people with disabilities. There is far too much talk about charities to help them. We should move far more towards the idea of the right to mobility, the right to work and the right to independent living, with sufficient publicly financed resources to make those rights available. Those who suffer from various disabilities do so through no fault of their own, but because a great misfortune has befallen them. It is up to the rest of society to grant them the independence and normality of living that we expect for

ourselves. I am grateful for this debate today because it has at least given an opportunity for some of the points to be put forward.

1.3 pm

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) made a thoughtful and knowledgeable speech. He will not expect me to follow him on his many points about transport in London. However, I want to underline the importance of two of his general points. The first was about attitude and terminology. He advocated the use of the term "people with disabilities" rather than the term "disabled people", which is too often used. He also made the point, extremely well, that the House should respond to the needs of people with disabilities who come to lobby their elected representatives.

I apologise to my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) for not being here for his speech. As you may know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the First Scottish Standing Committee, which is considering the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill sat rather late last night and put some of our programmes a little behind. Nevertheless, I warmly congratulate my hon. Friend on the terms of the motion and I understand that he made an excellent and comprehensive speech on a subject which is of great and increasing interest to the country.

As I am a Scottish Member, it is perhaps appropriate that I should pay tribute to the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) for all his work on the private Member's Bill that he successfully steered through the House during the previous Parliament.

The debate has concentrated to a considerable extent on access—in particular, access to transport facilities. My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) summarised the position correctly when he said that we have made progress—that is undoubtedly true—but that we have a great deal further to go.

I pay tribute to British Rail in Scotland for the genuine efforts that it has made. It has improved access to Barrhead station in my constituency for people with transport handicaps. A long campaign was conducted by local people. I should explain that Barrhead is a fairly substantial town about half an hour away from Glasgow with a very good rail service, so access to the station is important to the community. The campaign was conducted throughout with a great deal of good will on both sides, and access for those with transport handicaps has been substantially improved.

In addition, new stations are being built in the Greater Glasgow area as part of the reopening of stations programme, which is encouraging generally. I am particularly encouraged by the fact that ScotRail is to open a new station at Dumbreck which is about five minutes away from where I live. I recently went to look at the proposed provision. A great deal of thought had undoubtedly been given to the design of that station which I do not think would have happened many years ago.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East was right to refer to practical problems. It is all very well to have a proper ramp, but if there are difficulties with the door at the top of that ramp, many of the benefits will be taken away. The local authorities are facing those difficulties. My constituency covers the whole of the Eastwood district council area and part of the Renfrew district council area. Both councils are concerned about the matter and Eastwood district council has received an award for its particularly well-designed council building, the Carmichael hall.

Progress has also been made with attitudes and that theme is clear from this debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East made an important point about attitudes in schools and that was underlined very well by the hon. Member for Islington, North.

We have been talking about access to transport facilities. The hon. Member for Islington, North referred in particular to dial-a-ride and other facilities. I want to ask my right hon. Friend the Minister about the design of taxis, a matter which has been raised with me by my constituents. I understand that alternative designs of taxis are available and local authorities have powers to insist on designs that are helpful to those with access problems. I understand that Edinburgh district council is ensuring over a period of time that its taxis are better designed. Clearly we cannot move on that problem overnight because there is a difficulty with the taxis that are currently being used.

Taxis are not as important as buses and trains when we consider public transport as a whole. However, many disabled people who perhaps live away from established bus and train routes must depend on taxis. Therefore, the design of taxis is important.

We should all recognise that people with disabilities of whatever form consistently depend on other people. They depend on friends, relatives and neighbours to enable them to continue to live within the community. We are all aware of friends, neighbours and relatives who have given up a great deal to care for people with disabilities. The Government have received many comments from carers and their organisations which make it clear that extra resources must be allocated to those people. This week I had an opportunity, with the hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy), to discuss the matter with the new secretary of the carers group in Scotland.

The Government decided to help carers before the publication of "The Way Ahead". I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Minister and his colleagues on the important changes that were announced last October. They have been welcomed by many people involved in caring and by the relatives and friends of people with disabilities. The changes include the introduction of a carer's premium and income support and housing benefit for people receiving invalid care allowance. The invalid care allowance earnings limit is to be raised from £12 to £20 a week. Invalid care allowance, as I understand it, will become available for the first time to many carers as a result of the Government's proposals to extend attendance allowance to the under-twos and to the terminally ill. A family with one parent staying at home to care for their severely disabled baby could have an increase in benefits of more than £65 a week as a result of the Government's changes. I congratulate my right hon. and hon. Friends on the way in which they have responded to representations.

There should be as much assistance as is possible and reasonable for disabled people who want to achieve independence and want to go into the normal labour force. The lack of earned income is often a major cause of the gap between the average income of people with disabilities and that of the rest of the population. My hon. Friend the Member for Battersea mentioned certain figures. Office of

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Population Censuses and Surveys statistics show that only about 31 per cent. of disabled non-pensioners are in the normal labour market. There is a widely perceived need for a benefit that will correct that problem.

The Government have responded by introducing the new disability employment credit from April 1992 to make it easier for disabled people to take up jobs. It will help disabled people on low earnings. Disability employment credit is not a completely new idea, because it works in much the same way as family credit, which helps families on low earnings. I congratulate my right hon. and hon. Friends on what they have done to reduce disabled people's worry about what would happen if they tried to go into the labour force, were unsuccessful, and were subsequently temporarily worse off. That can be a problem. I do not claim to be an expert on the details of the various benefits and allowances, but, as I broadly understand the matter, the benefit system has been changed to eliminate that worry.

I hope that hon. Members will understand that I may need to depart for Scotland before the end of the debate. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea on introducing this important debate. As so often happens on a Friday, the debate is an opportunity to contribute constructively and in a non-partisan way. I have no doubt that many people will find our proceedings of considerable interest.

1.18 pm

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): I am grateful for the opportunity to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), I apologise because I shall shortly have to go back to my constituency. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister will forgive me.

I agree with every word that my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood said, especially about the role of the carers, including relatives and neighbours, being fully recognised at long last. My right hon. Friend is not just the Minister for Social Security, he is the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People. That shows a very welcome trend.

We should certainly not apologise for our record. Our spending has increased substantially. It is now about £8 billion, whereas a decade ago the amount was very much smaller and probably could not even have been separately analysed.

My right hon. Friend has been kind in our correspondence about the Guild of Disabled Homeworkers. Its members operate from the enterprise aid centre at Stag house, Woodchester, near Stroud in my constituency. The organiser is Mr. Francis Halton—a man of exceptional ability who has given much assistance to fellow disabled workers. It might be of interest to my right hon. Friend if I quote one or two sections from the guild's annual report. Thanks to my right hon. Friend, our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister wrote to the guild, as a result of which the annual report begins:

"The Prime Minister shares your concern that the initiative of disabled people needs to be rewarded and encouraged."

The report then states:

"This recognition of the need for the work of the Guild in a Downing Street letter confirming a prospect of grant aid was most notable among many expressions of moral support which brightened the Guild's difficult and troubled 21st birthday year."

That also put the year into perspective by reviving memories of the bad old days when the guild's founders reported to previous incumbents of No. 10 that many local authorities and charities were exploiting disabled people by taking for themselves rewards that those who used initiative and skill in making saleable items at home were not allowed to earn. We must remember that at that time the disabled were limited to earning £1 a week before loss of state benefit. Before the coming of this Government, social services and charities bought the items as cheaply as possible, sometimes paying less than the cost of the materials. Sometimes they charged commissions, and then resold for profit or reward that they kept for themselves as payment for services.

The guild states, in its encouraging report:

"To relieve the distress caused by this regressive trading of years ago the guild volunteers set out to provide free marketing for disabled people and thereby give them fair access, which they now receive, to the rewards and the encouragement of the enterprise."

Later in the report, the guild further discussed the benefits of the free markets. As the earnings limit has now been raised from only £1 a week a decade ago to about £30 a week for many disabled people, the guild's volunteers have this year travelled further round the country than ever before giving free market displays and finding approval of their cause everywhere. Indeed, at Alexandra palace in London the free market exhibition was visited by thousands of professional carers. The general approval was underlined by the number of offers to assist in setting up a guild enterprise aid centre in or near London. I hope that that can be done.

The exchange of letters with my right hon. Friend related to the premises occupied by constituents. They are first-floor premises, so the stairs are a problem and there is no possibility of installing a lift. The guild described that in its report as a "premises crisis". It has also had a demand for an increase in rent. Its small work force is attempting to cope with an increasing flood of orders from throughout the country—much of it from charities and social services departments. It is now likely that the guild will lose its spacious headquarters, and a more affordable and accessible replacement will be needed.

It might assist the House if I explained the nature of the services provided by the guild. Its aid service continues to prove useful and the free markets have established their viability under experienced management. They have become well known for attractive displays of imaginative and well-made products at reasonable prices. I and my wife have visited the guild's premises on several occasions and can confirm that. The free material service continues to thrive with a plentiful supply of surplus materials willingly given and readily used to boost members' rewards. Both those services have helped to eliminate shoddy work by allowing slow workers to take more time and care.

One guild member has designed and developed new products and tools for making worktrays that are then fitted to wheelchairs. That project alone offers great possibilities for helping paraplegics and others, but unfortunately it is short of initial funding.

My right hon. Friend may be interested to know that there are 117 members of the guild in the Stroud area, which shows the considerable contribution that it makes.

He will be aware through our correspondence that the guild, because it is well organised, looks to the future with confidence—but faces the one difficulty of finding new headquarters.

Because of my right hon. Friend's comments, increased monetary support is in prospect, but it is important the guild relies only on building up its own strength. That means that the front-running volunteers must generate more support from distant members and their friends, by finding ways for them to share more fully in the charity's work, including fund raising. The report concludes:

"If the Prime Minister's reported concern becomes official policy"—

in view of recent announcements, we can say with certainty that it will—

"The revolution started by the Guild will be complete in the foreseeable future. This can be expected to mean that the initiative of disabled people, which was fair game for exploitation only a decade ago, would at last be allowed unrestricted access to the rewards and encouragement of free enterprise."

I hope that the guild will continue to thrive. I referred to its one main problem. It is fashionable to criticise local authorities, but I received considerable help from Stroud district council and in particular Mr. David Ashley, its director of planning, leisure and tourism until he entered into well-earned retirement a few weeks ago. His successor is also helping me. Mr. Ashley wrote to me last December saying that he had met Mr. Halton to ascertain precisely the guild's requirements for premises. He said that when he visited its headquarters, he learnt much more about the organisation and its history—and he, like me, was impressed by its efforts and products. He pointed out that the guild receives goods made by disabled people all over the country which are then sold in the free market, and that the guild makes no charge to the vendor for that service. He added:

"This enterprise obviously offers the disabled person working at home an outlet for the products, which were extremely well made and reasonably priced."

I confirm that that is true.

In 1976 my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister again took an interest in the guild. It has been greatly encouraged by that interest over the 21 years of its history —or at least over the past 11. As a token of the guild's appreciation, Mr. Halton wrote to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister recently:

"Since your office wrote to me on January 12 1976 that those disabled persons who wish to work should be encouraged to do so, much has been done by your Government to improve the lot of disabled people generally."

I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Minister should have a share of that praise. He will receive an additional slice of praise if he will just look into the one small issue that I have raised.

The guild has been promised assistance for 1991, but given its problems with premises, it needs assistance preferably within the next few months. It may be that if the guild takes a lease on new premises, it will have to pay a form of premium.

I have described at length the work of the guild, and I am sure that none of us doubts its value. The guild has a temporary crisis. My right hon. Friend the Minister has been most kind and generous with his time in his exchange of correspondence with me, and is well aware of the problems to which I have referred. I should be grateful if he would keep them at the forefront of his mind.

1.28 pm

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): We have had a good debate with little acrimony across the Floor of the House. Most hon. Members, no matter what their position, have spoken with the interests of disabled people in mind. I shall seek to reflect that in my remarks.

I pay the warmest possible compliment to my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), whose constituent I happen to be, on choosing this subject for debate today. I pluck at random three particular points from the motion. First, he pays warm tribute to the achievements of people with disabilities and to the dedication of individuals and organisations that support them. I am sure that I carry the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) with me—he was the first person to hold this office—when I say that one of the most rewarding aspects of the job is to meet the individuals who suffer from a disability of one sort or another and those who care and organise support for them. It is inspirational. At least once a week I try to get away from the piles of paper at the Department of Social Security to visit disabled people and those who care for and support them. It is much the most rewarding aspect of my work in Government.

Secondly, my hon. Friend said that wherever feasible the services that disabled people receive should be decided after consultation with the disabled people concerned. They should be involved in the process, not treated with condescension as objects of pity, and delivered services. They should be actively involved in the process of decision making. I shall return to that in a slightly light-hearted manner later.

Thirdly, my hon. Friend recognised, as we all do, that whatever progress has been made—substantial progress has been made in the past 20 years, embracing Governments of both parties—there are still too many obstacles confronting disabled people in various aspects of the lives that they would like to lead and have a right to lead. Those obstacles are being removed progressively and so long as I hold this office, I shall do my best to ensure that further progress is made.

I take the point of my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) about the Guild of Disabled Homeworkers. As he said, we have been in correspondence about it. I have noted his remarks and shall have another urgent look at the matter.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea for choosing this subject and for the elegant and compassionate style in which he introduced it. It has been a wide-ranging debate. I say in no partisan sense that this is the first debate in which I have taken part as Minister for disabled people rather than Minister for the disabled. I know that the change in my title does not go as far as the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) would like, but it is a question of getting the title on the notepaper. We have struck a balance.

I am extremely glad that at last we have managed to get away from the condescending term, "the disabled". I have received several letters from individual disabled people and organisations for disabled people that have warmly welcomed the change. Some people may think that it is rather a trivial matter, but for many disabled people it is an important step and a recognition of their status. We

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want to underline the crucial fact that people with disabilities are first and foremost people and individuals, who happen to suffer from a disability.

Some people outside Westminster believe that the Minister for disabled people has an executive role across the whole of government. Would that it were so, but it is not. My job as Minister for Social Security and Disabled People is largely concerned with benefits for disabled people. I like to think, as I know that the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe did when he held this office, that one has a role to encourage, cajole, bully and snap at the heels of other Departments to ensure that in developing policy initiatives they never forget the needs of those in our society who suffer from a disability. I pursue that role as actively as I can.

Before I comment on the debate, I publicly apologise to the staff at the orthotic research and locomotor assessment unit at Oswestry, which I should have been visiting this morning. Alas, it is the second time that I have had to postpone a visit to that unit. It does splendid work. In 1981 it won a Design Council award for its swivel walker and it is now working on the development of parawalkers. I hope that I can make good my omission today by visiting that unit in the near future.

My hon. Friend the Member for Battersea said that we should not be too sombre when we talk about disabilities —there is an awful tone that sometimes creeps into people's voices when they talk about disability. I have been able to visit various places and have seen the steps taken by children suffering from cerebral palsy or by accident-injured teenagers. We who are able-bodied, temporarily at least, may consider such tiny steps trivial, but when one sees the sheer joy and sense of achievement felt by those disabled people, it is immensely rewarding. We should not be sombre, but we should be concerned to do our best to ensure that public and private policy is as well tuned to their needs as possible. We, too, should share some of the joy that those people are able to achieve in life.

A number of important points have been made in the course of the debate and I shall seek to deal with as many as possible. There are a range of matters that interact in terms of the quality of life that disabled people are eventually able to enjoy. Today my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment has published a consultative document called "Employment and Training for People with Disabilities". That follows his Department's review of services for people with disabilities. The review will carry forward a number of themes that have been established in the past decade. It aims to maximise the participation of people with disabilities in the mainstream non-specialist services, particularly the training programmes. It welcomes the flexible approach that the newly established training and enterprise councils, the TECs—can take in that regard. It looks to improve the quality of the specialist services for disabled people through assessment, counselling and rehabilitation and to draw better on the contributions that the voluntary and private sectors can make.

In essence, the document is about increasing the opportunities for severely disabled people to be placed in firms alongside the non-disabled. It looks to strengthen the promotion of good practice to employers. It is a substantial document that I have not yet had the opportunity to study in depth.

I am sure that hon. Members who have taken part in this debate will want to look carefully at my right hon. and learned Friend's proposals. For the purposes of the debate, I shall summarise the main proposals. The document considers legislation and particularly the requirement that employers employ a quota of registered disabled people equal to 3 per cent. of the work force. The document analyses the weaknesses of the present quota system and also considers the weaknesses of the alternative approaches that have been advanced. At the same time, however, the document acknowledges that the retention of the quota may be necessary, at least for the time being, to prevent the wrong signals being sent to employers and others. The document invites comments on those specific proposals.

Mr. Alfred Morris: The Minister is summarising a document that hon. Members on both sides of the House will feel that they should have seen. I have just been handed a press release of today's date issued by the Department of Employment. It states:

"The Secretary of State for Employment, Mr. Michael Howard, has today announced in a written reply the publication of a Consultative Document on employment and training services for people with disabilities . . . The Consultative Document reports on a review by the Employment Department of its programmes and services for people with disabilities."

Is it not serious that a consultative document is still unavailable from the Vote Office? Will the Minister urgently ensure that the document, which I understand was released to the press several hours ago, is made available to hon. Members before the conclusion of this debate? It is surely discourteous to hon. Members from both sides of the House that a document of such importance and relevance to the debate has been made available outside the House for some hours while we have still not seen it. I am grateful to the Minister for giving way, but I think that it was important to make that point.

Mr. Scott: I understood that the document would have been made available in the Library and the Vote Office by 11 o'clock this morning. If it was not, I apologise to the House. The right hon. Gentleman will have noticed that investigations are being carried out into what has happened. I anticipated that the document would be available to hon. Members so that as I assessed it they would have the opportunity of commenting on it.

We believe that the best results will be achieved by the effective education and persuasion of employers. The document makes proposals for that. It also suggests that, over five years, we should reach the position whereby most assessment is done by locally based employment department teams covering the whole country. Comments on how such teams could be supported by outside organisations are being sought by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment. Much greater use of voluntary and other appropriate organisations to deliver rehabilitation is also proposed.

The document also suggests improving the departmental specialist counselling and assessment, management and training of staff, and bringing together those whose main concern is people with disabilities into an integrated specialist service. My right hon. and learned Friend has affirmed his intention to move over a period, the balance

of the sheltered employment programme for people with severe disabilities towards the more cost-effective sheltered placements with employers. Of course, sheltered workshops and factories will still have an essential role to play for those for whom sheltered placements are unsuitable.

The document also proposes better use of non-specialist services. Some 15 years ago, help to most people with disabilities was provided through special services. In the 1980s that pattern changed and the advantages of integration are now fully recognised. Full access for people with disabilities is an important feature of youth training and jobcentre services. My right hon. and learned Friend proposes to carry that further and provide better training for those involved in the specialist services, encourage TECs to use imagination to help people with disabilities and introduce audits of non-specialist programmes against the needs of clients with disabilities.

Most importantly, as a Government we are determined to secure the commitment of employers. Whatever legislative framework we put in place, we need effective ways of persuading employers to adopt good practice. The 1980s saw major innovations, including a code of good practice and the establishment of the disablement advisory service. My right hon. and learned Friend wants to carry that further. Proposals and issues raised include better training for the disablement advisory service, greater involvement by the employers' organisations and the introduction of a symbol for employers to use to express their commitment to good practice. That will be discussed further with the relevant interested parties before final details are decided.

Taken together with the proposals announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security in January, in "The Way Ahead" for a new structure of disability benefits, these proposals make an important contribution to the removal of obstacles to personal achievement at work for people with disabilities, to which I alluded earlier. Comments on the proposals are being invited from a wide range of interested parties and decisions will be taken at the end of a six-month consultation period.

My hon. Friend the Member for Battersea mentioned the education of young people who suffer from disabilities. The Education Act 1981 established a new framework for special education in England and Wales; it was implemented in 1983. In essence, it abolished statutory categories of handicap as the basis for special education. The emphasis of the Act is on identifying the special education needs of the child, then deciding the appropriate special education provision he requires to meet those needs.

Special education needs are defined as covering all learning difficulties which are significantly greater than those experienced by the majority of children of the same age. The term also covers any child with a disability that prevents him or her from making use of the educational facilities provided in schools. I do not believe that this is the time to go into great detail about how this policy is being pursued, but in January 1988 there were about 140,000 children with statements of special education needs in English schools.

A balance must be struck. There will always be some young people who will need special education, but I believe that the more we can educate children with special education needs in the regular school system, the better. That is better for the children, because although I admire many of the special schools in this country, some of them tended in the past to be slightly over-protective towards children in their care. Children with special education needs benefit from being in the same classrooms as those who do not have these needs, and from competing with them and achieving with them. It is also better for able-bodied children to come into contact with youngsters with special needs of one sort or another. The policy is working well at the moment.

Mr. Morris: As the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) said earlier, the more disabled children can enjoy the society of non-disabled children, and vice versa, the better it will be for them later in their lives. Society is very reluctant to see the visible problems of handicapped people simply because opportunities were missed in the school years.

Mr. Scott: I totally agree. The right hon. Gentleman has emphasised the point that I, perhaps less eloquently than he, was trying to make. Only 10 days ago I was with a boy of about 13 who suffers from cerebral palsy. His mother had to fight for 18 months to get him into a regular school; the local education authority was determined that he should go to a special school. His mother—a formidable character—dug her heels in, and now he is heading for GCSEs and O-levels. Of course, he will then face other obstacles, on which I shall touch in my speech.

The timetable at the boy's school has to be arranged with him in mind—the school was built in Victorian days, and he cannot cope with the stairs. He has a full-time assistant with him; his computer has to be lugged around the school. I am sure, however, that that happy and well-adjusted young boy has benefited considerably from being in regular school—as have the pupils who have shared lessons with him. They have seen his disability. It is a theme of my job to persuade people to look behind the disability that they see first to the abilities that frequently lie behind it.

Mr. Corbyn: I understand what the right hon. Gentleman is saying about primary and secondary education. A constituent of mine went through a series of special schools under the Inner London education authority throughout his school life. In some cases ILEA did well for him, in others, less so. He has now returned home and it is proving impossible to find day care facilities for him. He is severely disturbed, and is now stuck at home with his parents, one of whom is unemployed. They have great difficulty looking after him. They do not want him to go into a long-stay institution but would prefer him to have a degree of independence at home. To do that, they need the support and respite which day-care facilities and day centres can offer. There is an enormous waiting list for such centres, not just in my borough but throughout London. I am sure that the Minister is also aware of that problem. Can he direct greater resources to such day centres for those who are severely disturbed?

Mr. Scott: A range of day-care facilities is provided by local authorities and voluntary organisations. I have visited many of them. I cannot promise extra resources, but I pay a warm tribute to those who operate in this field. We face problems when young people move from primary to secondary education and have to be integrated into the system. We must also smooth their path to higher education and later I shall discuss what can be done to

[Mr. Scott]

provide them with employment. I would welcome the further development of day-care facilities, some of which are good and some of which are not so good. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will have seen both types of day centre. However, centres have a great contribution to make to the quality of life of many disabled people.

While on the subject of education, perhaps I could speak about conductive education. As the House knows, many British families make enormous sacrifices so that their children, mainly those with spina bifida or cerebral palsy, can travel to the Peto Institute in Budapest for conductive education. I am anxious to see the benefits of conductive education delivered as soon as possible to children here. I would not want totally to separate work that is carried out here from the work that is carried out in Budapest because that is where the whole idea was conceived and developed. It would be increasingly to the advantage of many British families if they could avail themselves of conductive education here rather than having to go to Budapest, where they would face language and social difficulties.

We continue to value the education provided in Budapest, and we are currently finalising an agreement with the international committee there to contribute some £5 million over the four years for the capital cost of a new building for the international foundation in Budapest. In September 1989 I announced our commitment to that new institute and I also said that we hope to supplement the Government's contribution towards Peto with a similar amount of money raised from non-government sources.

It seems clear that conductive education will be brought to this country, primarily because of the action of the several voluntary organisations that are working in this field in a number of different ways. We plan to have discussions with some of those organisations in the near future. I am optimistic that we can produce a joint approach to fund raising which will ensure an acceleration of funds for the new institute in Budapest and for developments in this country based on links with the Peto institute.

I have in my office a marvellous video starring Bob Hoskins and a young lady called Dawn. It shows how conductive education can benefit young people and I shall ensure that anyone who gets in touch with me receives a copy of that video.

The right hon. Member for Wythenshawe paid a warm tribute to the all-party group on disabilities. I also pay tribute to that group. The right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) and my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) work immensely hard on that group. They do not always make my life as comfortable as I would like, but I never cease to welcome their attentions and persuasion.

I acknowledge the importance of carers. The plight—that is not too strong a word—of many informal carers will attract increasing attention in the future. As the House knows, we are introducing a carers' premium within income support in recognition of the work of carers and, of course, invalid care allowance also makes an important contribution. I acknowledge the importance of respite care, which enables the disabled person to go away and gives the carers a holiday. Several organisations offer facilities and encourage the provision of respite care.

The right hon. Member for Wythenshawe said that severe disablement allowance was taken from disabled people if they could not find employment after training. I think that the House will agree that SDA is a benefit for people who are incapable of work and have not paid the national insurance contributions necessary to get invalidity benefit. If we paid it to people who were capable of work but could not find employment after finishing training, it would cut across the basic principles underlying SDA, which we recently brought closer to invalidity benefit. There are, however, arrangements for former recipients of SDA who complete a training course but who, at the end of it, are incapable of work. If they claim SDA within eight weeks of the end of the training, they will requalify immediately. In essence, they retain their underlying entitlement to SDA. So long as they are incapable of work and claim it within eight weeks of the ending of their training, they can continue with their former entitlement to SDA. I hope that that will be some reassurance—if not total reassurance—to the right hon. Gentleman.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) referred to one of his constituents, Mr. Melvyn Wall. I cannot comment on individual cases. The decisions on all these claims for mobility allowance are made by independent adjudicating authorities on the basis of the medical evidence put before them. The basic criterion is that someone must be unable or virtually unable to work. There are no special provisions for amputees. Another notable case recently raised this issue. Inability or virtual inability to work are not the only criteria. When we introduce disability allowance in 1992, we plan to extend the mobility component to a lower level. The benchmark will be lower and it will be a question of whether people are independently mobile. The precise details are still being worked out. We are broadening the scope of what is now called mobility allowance and will be called the mobility component of the disablement allowance.

Mr. Harry Barnes: Some categories of people who are limbless have great difficulty in moving around. They work hard, and Melvyn Wall is one of those people who do not like to swing the lead when people are investigating their cases. He tries his best, but he is in considerable difficulty. Perhaps that category of limbless people should have a special provision. Common sense shows that they have great difficulty when they are virtually or entirely immobile. If the district council had not moved Melvyn Wall from one address to another to make life easier, a case for continuing mobility allowance might have been established. I do not believe that those factors should be taken into account.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Interventions should be brief.

Mr. Scott: I was going to ask the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East to give way to me. I take his point. I am concerned about a number of these cases. I cannot give the hon. Gentleman any promises today, but during our consideration of the new disability allowance, we shall look at assessment and adjudication procedures. We shall note his point.

The next 10 years will see tremendous advances in the way in which disability is regarded. Several hon. Members have made the point that whatever Governments, local government or employers do, it is the attitude of society

towards people with disabilities that lies at the heart of many of our problems. Integrated education and increasing employment opportunities for disabled people will progressively change attitudes in society and I look forward with optimism to the next 10 years.

Once we have completed our policies in 1992, we shall have a more rational benefits system. The new disability employment credit will help people who are disabled and who may not be able to work to the full extent of an able-bodied person to obtain employment, which will be a big step in the right direction. The disability allowance will expand the coverage of the present mobility and attendance allowances. Overall, the changes we announced last October—most of which we implemented in April—and the new arrangement in 1992 will benefit about 850,000 disabled people. That will be a step towards a more rational and coherent structure of benefits.

Unlike the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe, my experience is not that the majority of disability organisations are unappreciative of many of the steps that we have taken. However, many of them are campaigning organisations. I well understand that they want more and that they want it sooner. However, I believe that most people who look carefully at our proposals recognise that we are putting in place the building blocks for an improved structure of benefits, especially as we are shifting the emphasis in the benefit system towards those who have been disabled since birth or early in life and who have not, therefore, had the opportunity to build up contributory benefits, savings and occupational pensions. Those who have become disabled later in life may have been able to build up such funds. Our proposals are a step in the right direction.

My hon. Friend the Member for Battersea urged me to look again at the age limit beyond which people cannot qualify for mobility allowance. The latest estimate of the cost of introducing such a change is about £1 billion, which will probably rule it out. One has to assess priorities and make choices. If I were fortunate enough to have £1 billion, I am not sure that my hon. Friend's proposal is the first choice that I should make. However, I understand that there is concern about this. Anyone who qualifies for the benefit before the age of 65 can continue to receive it for life.

Several hon. Members raised points about adjudication procedures. As I said earlier, I have looked at the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux report. It is fairly anecdotal rather than definitive, but I have looked at it with great care. I shall take account of its views and those of other organisations as we look at adjudication and assessment procedures for the disability allowance and for the disability employment credit.

Benefits are one aspect of the quality of life for disabled people. The delivery of services at local level is also an important aspect. Most of us who have had any experience in this area will recognise that the delivery of services tends to be uneven across the country. However, social services departments are increasingly considering the needs of disabled people and consulting disabled people about their perception of their needs.

I want to tell the House a slightly light-hearted story. I was at Totnes in Devon where a new system has been established for assessing the needs of disabled people and for consulting them about their needs. The social services department approached one elderly pensioner and asked her to say what single step could most improve the quality of her life. She said that if the social services department could deliver a case of Guinness every Monday morning, that would be the best thing that could happen to her. The judgment of professionals may not be so perceptive as we think.

The hon. Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) made a point about the importance of information for disabled people. It is no use having benefits, services and support for disabled people unless they can find out about them and their availability. The Government have supported the development of a data base for the Disabled Living Foundation and are supporting the EC's Helios programme to provide information about aids and services for disabled people.

Hon. Members have also referred to access. I commend to them a recent Film 90 programme about access to cinemas, and how disgracefully bad our record is. Ironically, a constituent of mine in a wheelchair was refused access to the cinema to see "Born on the Fourth of July", although he had telephoned the night before to warn that he would be coming and had been told that arrangements would be made. A cinema showing "My Left Foot", the film about Christie Brown growing up in Dublin, is also inaccessible to those suffering from disabilities. We must encourage the cinema authorities to make cinemas more accessible. My right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts, in co-operation with——

Mr. Corbyn: I agree that cinemas ought to be accessible to people with disabilities, but will the Minister also turn his attention to access to this House and ask the Leader of the House when he intends to bring forward proposals or to implement arrangements to make this building fully accessible to people with disabilities?

Mr. Scott: There are, of course, problems with historic buildings. We all accept that, as does the National Trust. I am not being in the least light-hearted about this, but when I arrived at the building which houses the Department of Social Security and therefore the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People, which had been thoroughly refurbished, I found that no disabled person could get to my office. Something has since been done about that, but we must make those who design, refurbish and update buildings much more aware of the needs of disabled people. I take the point about the Palace of Westminster, but the hon. Gentleman will understand that there are constraints. In any case, I shall certainly raise the matter with my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House.

Mr. Loyden: I welcome the Minister's remarks about the progress that has been made on access to information. Will he consider access to information from the local authorities—which should be the dispensers of information—for the blind and the deaf, through the provision of braille and sign language in their committees and council chambers? That would be very simple and would not be costly to the Government or the local authorities.

Mr. Scott: If the hon. Gentleman is fair and if he looks around he will have to admit that increasingly those facilities are being provided. I am delighted at the experiment to provide signing for deaf people to accompany transmissions from the House. These days, one is increasingly likely to find signing facilities at conferences, including those of the major political parties.

[Mr. Scott]

We need to consider the provision of signing and perhaps the installation of induction loops in theatres, council chambers, and so on. All such moves are warmly to be welcomed because they will enable those who suffer from sensory disabilities to play a full part in our society.

We are making progress on the transport front. I know that the hon. Member for Islington, North feels strongly about that, as do I. We are making substantial progress with London taxis, although the gradual replacement of the vehicles, which will make every taxi accessible to wheelchair users, will take 10 years. About 50 other local authorities have now made the mandatory London system applicable to their areas.

British Rail is making substantial progress with access to trains. Standards for coaches are being looked at on a Europe-wide basis and we expect substantial progress to be made on that, too. I am keen to ensure that house builders design houses——

Mr. Corbyn: Before the hon. Gentleman leaves the question of transport, will he turn his attention to the funding of dial-a-ride systems and the design of underground trains and other transport systems in the capital. As I pointed out, some 200,000 people with disabilities in London are denied any real mobility either because of the inadequacy of the provision on the public transport system or because of the unavailability of dial-a-ride.

Mr. Scott: London Underground is looking carefully at that matter. The most important single factor in the underground's ability to adapt to the needs of disabled people is the presence of escalators. Stations that are only accessible by means of escalators present particular problems. However, I know that London Underground is considering the issue.

I have referred to benefits, services, information and briefly—perhaps too briefly—to access. Over the next 10 years as we see the diminution in the number of 18-year-olds entering the job market, employers will be compelled to seek out the abilities that lie behind the disabilities of the people about whom we are concerned today. The demographic trend will be a very important factor in opening up employment opportunities for disabled people in the next 10 years or so. The determination of disabled people will also be important. They should say, "We are not prepared to be portrayed merely as objects of charity and pity. We have a contribution to make to society and we are jolly well going to make it." Their determination will help to improve the quality of their lives.

I am aware that many disabled people resent the way in which some national charities portray them in order to raise money. So often they are portrayed as objects of pity instead of as people with abilities who, if given half a chance, could make a real contribution to our society. Technology will increasingly make it possible for disabled people to maintain independent living and to gain employment.

The Government want to encourage all that as much as possible. Other hon. Members want to speak, so I will conclude by saying that the services and benefits for disabled people and the changes in society that will benefit them will not suddenly stop and stand still. There will be substantial further progress and the Government will do their best to support that as much as possible. The privilege of being the Minister responsible for disabled people is indeed a real privilege and an inspiration to me. I know that all those who have the privilege of working with disabled people experience the same feelings.

2.11 pm

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): I congratulate the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) on his motion. Almost everyone would want to be associated with the thanks that he offered to people who do so much work, usually, voluntarily and usually unpaid, to care for and provide opportunities for the disabled.

I shall refer briefly to the experiences of the Greater London council between 1981 and 1986. We established a commitee that included representatives of disabled Londoners and of organisations that work with the disabled in London. In a small way we began to approach the problems of people with disabilities in a city like London.

It is important that such a committee should include a major voice from the disabled. In that respect I am not sure whether the GLC committee was entirely successful. Many voluntary organisations do excellent work, but for too many of them it is impossible to find a director or member of the managing body who is disabled. I do not intend that to be a criticism of the people serving on such bodies, but voluntary organisations and local authorities must ensure that they give a voice and power to the disabled instead of relying on other people to speak for them.

The last few lines of the motion introduced by the hon. Member for Battersea call on the Government to remove obstacles facing the disabled to allow them to achieve their full potential. That is the crux of the matter. I have never come across a disabled person who asked me for a special benefit or special advantage over people who are not disabled. Disabled people want to remove the blocks that prevent them from achieving their full potential in society.

When we discuss this matter we inevitably consider some cost or some investment. When the Labour party was in opposition in the GLC, we drew up our manifesto. I chaired the transport working party. We looked at what could be done to help people with disabilities to get round London. Obviously, we went straight to London Regional Transport to find out the cost of converting the London transport system. It was horrendous. Even if we had decided to pledge to make London transport accessible to people with disabilities, the time and the large sums of money involved would have meant waiting a decade or two before we could achieve a change.

The underground was created at a time when people with disabilities were expected to disappear into the background. Work would have had to be undertaken on almost every means of access into the tube system. It would have meant a major capital programme running into millions of pounds by the time it was finished and the virtual replacement of all existing rolling stock. There was no money to do it. Even if there had been, the necessary time scale involved would not allow immediate relief to people with disabilities.

We looked at the most obvious compromise, which involved the private and the public sector, and we obtained some relief immediately. We devised two things. First, we

added support to something that was already in operation, the dial-a-ride system, which we had helped to build into a London-wide network of a small number of mini-vans that picked people up and took them to their destinations. Secondly, and most important, we involved the private sector and created the GLC taxicard system. The GLC would give a card to every disabled person in London. They would then be able to call a taxi on what were then the three main circuits, pay £1 for their journey, and the GLC would pay the rest.

That system represented a tremendous improvement in disabled people's ability to get round the city. It harnessed the existing private sector network. The taxi drivers' response was magnificent, and I regret that the system has not been built on. It is far more effective than any major programme of capital replacement of works and so on. Following the abolition of the GLC, I had hoped that the Government would give some guidance, perhaps by launching a programme to put every taxi on a radio circuit so that more people could enter the scheme. Perhaps central Government funds could have been provided to help London local authorities, many of which find it impossible to balance their books. Labour and Conservative authorities have either frozen their lists or have waiting times, so people with disabilities might have to wait months before they can get their cards. It would be helpful if the Government would step in.

Mr. Scott: LRT now administers the taxicard system. About 750,000 trips were taken last year, so the system is operating effectively.

Mr. Livingstone: I agree that the system is operating effectively, but demand is still building. Many local authorities are caught in problems. They are introducing restrictions and waiting times before people can get passes. That factor should be borne in mind in debates on the annual public spending carve-up, when we argue about the amount of money that is made available to local authorities. The system should be extended throughout the country. It is a basic right.

Mr. Corbyn: My hon. Friend must be aware of the zoning arrangements that have been brought in for dial-a-ride in London and how unpopular they are with people with disabilities because they prevent them from having real mobility around London. Does my hon. Friend agree that it is time to examine the zoning arrangements again so that we may revert to the system that existed under the GLC when there was real mobility all over London?

Mr. Livingstone: I thank my hon. Friend. I spend much time thinking how nice it would be to go back to the GLC —no doubt many of my colleagues will agree. I have not the slightest doubt that the present zoning arrangements imposed on dial-a-ride are unpopular. That brings me back to the point that I made earlier. If dial-a-ride was under the control of people with disabilities rather than being part of the London Transport democracy bureaucracy, I doubt whether it would have come up with such a scheme. I and many hon. Members have written to London Transport complaining about that.

I repeat that we are talking about money. The only time in my life that I have experienced the problem of some disability was when, with remarkable stupidity, I broke my leg in San Francisco. It was just after the last general election. The immediate thought is that San Francisco must be the worst possible place to be in a wheelchair. But because of the very hilly nature of that city, people who depend on wheelchairs have lobbied effectively for years as a political movement and they have browbeaten each mayor or administration into doing something about it. The building regulations in San Francisco make it clear that a public building cannot be opened, whether municipal offices or a cinema, without excellent access for people in wheelchairs.

I was in a wheelchair for about two weeks while in San Francisco. One of the few things that I was able to do was to visit the cinema, and I must have gone a dozen times. There was not one occasion when I had a problem getting in. If San Francisco can do it, London can do it.

I also noticed that there were dropped kerbs on every street, and on every corner. That is a city with a political will to do it.

If we want to give effect to the sentiments of the motion, the Government must step in and provide the legislative framework so that people are forced to comply and create a society in which people in wheelchairs and other people with disabilities can exercise their right.

2.22 pm

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): I am grateful to have the opportunity to contribute to this debate. I shall curtail my remarks because I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) has been waiting to make his contribution.

I join in the congratulations that have been extended to my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) for tabling this important motion. The first line of the motion mentions promoting opportunities for the disabled. The one fundamental opportunity that we appear to be denying the disabled is the opportunity to be born at all. It is significant that my hon. Friends the Members for Battersea, for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), for Stroud (Mr. Knapman), for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson), and for Basildon (Mr. Amess) and, trying very hard for his constituency, my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr.Leigh), who are here to participate in the debate, have also played major and leading roles in the pro-life movement.

I find it hard to reconcile saying that we must spend more on the disabled, that we must take greater care of their needs, that we must recognise them as a special category needing extra help, that there should be no recognisable difference, as far as possible, between their opportunities and the opportunties of their able-bodied fellow humans, and at the same time saying that, before their birth, we create two classes of citizen, the healthy and the able-bodied, who will enjoy protection from the 24th week, and the unhealthy and the disabled who will have no protection at all.

If we create two classes of citizenship before birth, we inevitably create the sort of society and social attitudes that will lead to two classes of citizenship after birth.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): For the last four or five years I have taken Order of Malta Volunteers groups of disabled people to Lourdes every summer. It is not the enormous courage of the disabled people that is so apparent but the good that it does for young, often selfish and privileged people actually to look after disabled people. They should not be swept under the

[Mr. Edward Leigh]

carpet. It is important that the disabled people are among us. Therefore, what my hon. Friend has said is very important.

Miss Widdecombe: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for that contribution. I can only repeat what I have said: two classes before birth must inevitably lead to the social attitudes that will lead to two classes after birth.

We live in an age that makes a god of physical perfection and in which the emphasis is not only on being healthy and active—with which I do not quarrel—but on looking and appearing perfect. We live in an age in which a two-year-old child is removed from a playgroup because he has a severe birthmark that is said to disturb and frighten other children and an age in which women who are already beautiful spend fortunes correcting some minor imperfection while the rest of the world starves.

I recall the words of Celeste Hind, a very wonderful woman, who took her child to Canada for surgery because apparently we in this country begrudge major surgery for children suffering from Down's syndrome. The most distressing aspect for her was the attitude of people in this country, including doctors who said, "Oh dear. How did this one get through the net? Didn't you have the test?" If that is our attitude to the disabled when they are very small or young, that will assuredly be our attitude later.

Those of us who were born in the post-war years grew up knowing people who were limbless, and we respected their condition because they sustained those appalling injuries and deformities while preserving the freedom of our nation. When medicine was less well-developed than it is today, most of us remember going to school with children who had to wear leg-irons after contracting poliomyelitis. We accepted them as normal, as part of society, as something everyday. Today, the emphasis is on physical perfection, not letting such people be born, and on insisting that every last finger and toe is in place and that there are no even minor deformities. That insistence is creating two classes of citizens.

At the same time, we are living in an age in which, thanks to the Government, there are better carers' benefits, better facilities for the disabled, and more awareness of the need to provide access for them. But while we pay all that lip service to the disabled, we are creating a social attitude that says, "It would be very much better if we didn't have those people among us at all." That is fundamentally wrong and exceedingly dangerous.

The decision of the House last week will lead not to a better deal for the disabled but to a much worse one. They will increasingly become not only a minority but one of which we say, "Oh dear. How did they get through the net?"

2.27 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) on the way in which he introduced his motion, and I agree with many of his ideas, but I shall immediately comment on the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe). I was appalled by the decision taken by the House last week to allow abortion up to birth in the case of disability. I am still deeply shocked by that decision, and I wonder how it will work out in years to come. It is quite appalling.

My hon. Friend the Member for Battersea spoke of a wide range of disabilities that exist. In my own family, I have relatives who are blind or deaf—and, as a tiny child, I was taught for three years by a speech therapist in West Ham, and I am grateful for that education.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Under a Labour council.

Mr. Amess: I do not know the politics of the person who taught me, but I endorse my hon. Friend's comments about the importance of speech therapists.

My right hon. Friend the Minister has had some dealings with foot and mouth artists, and it is an experience when one's host uses her feet to eat the meal. I applaud and pay tribute to the work of the organisation concerned.

Five years ago a young man called Andrew Faulkner was struck down by a virus which left him blind. I am delighted to say that he is taking a training course which will lead to his City and Guilds. He is the first British person to benefit from this scheme at a cost of £60,000 over the past seven months. That certainly shows how much the Government are prepared to invest in training such people.

The Basildon disabled sports group is achieving marvellous results. A young man who was in the British paraplegic swimming team, represented us in Seoul in 1988 and won the gold medal for the 50m freestyle. He will represent us in basketball and the national wheelchair competition.

It being half past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Orders of the Day

Private Members' Bills

SEXUAL OFFENCES BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question —[11 May]—That the Bill be now read the Third time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Debate to be resumed on Friday 6 July.

PROTECTION OF BADGER SETTS BILL

As amended (in the Standing Committee).

Order for consideration read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Consideration what day?

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Bill was in Committee for three sittings. The promoters of the Bill made great efforts to find some agreement with the fox hunting fraternity. The right hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Morrison), who has just objected to the Bill, was not a member of the Committee. He knows very little about the Bill. I want it to be known that——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must resume his seat when I am on my feet.

Debate to be resumed on Friday 6 July.

LONDON LOCAL GOVERNMENT BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Consideration what day?

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On behalf of the Member in charge of the Bill, now.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 6 July.

POLL TAX (RESTORATION OF INDIVIDUAL PRIVACY) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Consideration what day?

Mr. Corbyn: On behalf of the Member in charge of the Bill, now.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 6 July.

RAPE IN MARRIAGE BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Consideration what day?

Mr. Corbyn: On behalf of the Member in charge of the Bill, now.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Let me anticipate the hon. Gentleman and tell him before he completes his question that it would not be in order.

Mr. Corbyn: I just want to know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, whether you heard an objection and if so, from whom?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman apparently also heard the objection. We certainly heard it.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 6 July.

TRADE UNION ACT 1984 (AMENDMENT) BILL

[Lords]

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 6 July.

CHLOROFLUOROCARBONS (CONTROL) BILL

[Lords]

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Consideration what day?

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): On behalf of the Member in charge of the Bill, now.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Hughes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I point out to the Government that it would not be impossible for them to agree to this Bill as well as negotiating an international agreement across the river?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Objection has been taken.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 6 July.

RAOUL WALLENBERG (MEMORIAL) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 90(6) (Second Reading Committee),

That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 6 July.

GAMING (AMENDMENT) BILL *[Lords]*

Ordered,

That Standing Committee C be discharged from considering the Gaming (Amendment) Bill *[Lords]* and that the Bill be committed to a Committee of the whole House.—*[Mr. Gale.]*

Committee Friday 6 July.

Mr. Tony Banks: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think that I may have misled the House when on a point of order I accused the right hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Morrison) of having objected to the Protection of Badger Setts Bill. I understand that it was the hon. Member for Devizes (Sir C. Morrison). I would not want all the letters of criticism from people who love badgers to go to the wrong person, so——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Let us move on.

Farming (Lincolnshire)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Wood]*

2.34 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Do you agree that the previous points of order underline the need to end the anonymity of objections to Bills? The right hon. Member for the City of Chester (Mr. Morrison) might have been inundated with the wrong pile of letters, but they can now go to the hon. Member for Devizes (Sir C. Morrison).

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): We keep wasting the time of the House by going over the same course regularly on private Members' Bills.

I should explain to the hon. Gentleman that identifying an hon. Member who shouts, "Object" is no different from the situation that arises when the Question is put to the House and the Chair collects the voices. In those circumstances neither the hon. Gentleman nor anyone else would expect that those, singular or plural, who shouted aye or no should be identified. Perhaps we can now get on. Mr. Edward Leigh.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No. The hon. Gentleman is taking up the valuable time of the hon. Member who has the Adjournment.

Mr. Banks: I am not, as you well know, because the hon. Gentleman will get his half an hour. I shall not delay the House for more than a few seconds.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is taking time out of that half hour.

Mr. Banks: What you just said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) cannot apply to the procedure on Private Members' Bills because the one hon. Member who shouted was not on the Committee and he did not say anything about identifying his intention and——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has been in the House on other Fridays when the same situation has arisen. He must not seek to make a speech and I hope that he will carefully reflect on what I said.

2.35 pm

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): I want to use the debate to draw to the attention of the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the state of the farming industry in my constituency.

Lincolnshire farmers are internationally renowned. They supply about 20 per cent. of the United Kingdom's potatoes and sugar and 10 per cent. of its cooking oil, bacon, poultry and wool. Since the war the Lincolnshire farmers have responded magnificently to the need to ensure that British families have the benefit of a wide variety of safe food at farm-gate prices which are cheaper than elsewhere in the European Community.

Without doubt the county is one of the most progressive, productive and innovative agricultural areas in the world and it is blessed with some of the world's finest soils. Lincolnshire is rightly famous for the vegetables it grows—almost half our domestic vegetable produce comes from the area. The flowers and bulbs of the southern part of the county do much to brighten our homes, but I am proud that north Lincolnshire, which I represent, is the bread basket of England.

Agriculture is vital to the rural economy of my area, creating more than 100,000 jobs in allied industries connected with fertilisers, fuel, food processing, freezer centres and so on.

One of the great strengths of farming in the county is the fact that its farms are still largely family concerns. They are run by people who have the care of the countryside in their blood. Over many years they have contributed much to Lincolnshire. The principal problem confronting the farming industry in that region is the extent to which its economy has been hit. That poses real problems for its future. Unless the decline in farm incomes can be arrested, the result may be many family farms going out of business.

I shall illustrate the problem by discussing a farm that I visited recently as part of my continuing efforts to visit any farmer who wants to see me. J. G. Dring and sons at Legsby near Market Rasen farm 1,200 acres. The farm consists of combinable crops, potatoes, sugar beet and beef cattle. Between 1980 and 1989 expenditure increased by some 62 per cent. for electricity, 98 per cent. for machinery operation costs, 83 per cent. for rates and water charges, 75 per cent. for insurance, 126 per cent. for sprays —but only 2 per cent. for fertilisers—a colossal 148 per cent. for seeds, and a staggering 230 per cent. for medication and veterinary fees. The rise in labour costs has been kept at 70 per cent., but only by reducing staff by a quarter.

Against that one should note that, although sales during the same period have increased by 54 per cent., end-product price increases have been small—wheat, barley and rape rose between 7 and 8 per cent. There was no increase for potatoes, peas and beans. The 20 per cent. increase in cattle has, in effect, been lost to bovine spongiform encephalopathy, although I give full marks to the Minister for standing up so magnificently for British farmers. I wish that that could be said for everyone in this House. That illustrates graphically the problems confronting farmers, and it gives rise to considerable concern.

One effect is the loss of full-time jobs in the industry. J. R. Dring now employs only five regular staff on a large farm of 1,200 acres. Nationally, 23,000 full-time jobs were lost in the five years to 1988. The need to cut costs has reduced farm employment to a level where parts of the industry are short of skilled labour. It has also contributed to a much-reduced entry of trainees into the industry.

An example was given to me by my local branch of the Country Landowners Association. A tenant in north Lincolnshire—a good farmer on strongish land paying reasonable rents—grossed only £3,000 in 1989 and is now on family income supplement. I hope that that gives the lie to the myth of the rich farmer. Many more farmers are likely to be in the same position. A recent *Farmers Weekly* survey showed average farm incomes of only £11,000.

In addition, expenditure on farm infrastructure has had to be dramatically reduced, which produces a knock-on effect on everybody. In 1980 the town of Horncastle boasted no fewer than 10 machinery dealers. By the end of this month the figure will be reduced to just two. Additional imposed overheads have been created due to

Government legislation during the past 10 years, including cost, chemical and spray regulations, and the requirement to record the movement of cattle.

I would not for one moment say that such measures were unnecessary. The problem for agriculture is that, unlike other industries, it cannot pass on the cost to the consumer. Equally, it is unable to pass on any other costs, such as bank charges and wage increases. Most industries can add value to output to meet rising costs. Agriculture can do so only by diversification. At best, that can be exploited only by those who are already sound and have the necessary resources, which many farmers simply do not have.

In 1989 a report of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food showed that the average increase in profit for those who had entered the farm diversification scheme was only £500. The central problem for farmers in Lincolnshire during the past five years or so has been the stagnation in the price of the goods they produce. For example, a farmer received £122 a tonne for milling wheat five years ago, and the price has remained the same. Over the same period, the loaf of bread that the housewife buys, has risen from 39p to 50p. Five years ago, a pint of milk left the farm for 8·6p and the housewife bought it for 22p. Now that same pint leaves the farm for 9·8p and costs 30p in the shops.

On behalf of Lincolnshire farmers I warmly welcome MAFF's recent decision on farm prices, which should add £500 million to farmers' returns for a full year. I pay tribute to the fighting stance of our agriculture Ministers in those negotiations and say "Well done" on behalf of all Lincolnshire farmers.

I also welcome the Government's firm commitment to end disparties between green and market rates of exchange of the pound by the end of 1992. I would like them ended now, but I appreciate that in this, as in all matters, the Government have to convince our so-called partners, who are in fact competitors with many unfair advantages. It is about as easy as persuading a lightweight jockey to add a few pounds to his saddle. But how else can the race be fair?

The recently agreed green pound devaluation will increase cereal support in the United Kingdom by 10·7 per cent. at the start of the next marketing year. That is something for which Lincolnshire farmers and I have been arguing for some time and they, like me, are pleased that the Government have persuaded our European colleagues to take steps towards ending those undesirable discrepancies. Will my hon. Friend the Minister assure me that the Government will do all they can to ensure that the Community sticks to its commitment to remove monetary compensatory amounts by 1992? I need that assurance today, as do the farmers whom I represent.

Nevertheless, the industry in my constituency still perceives disadvantages placed on it as against its European competitors. I shall give two examples of that. Corn sold into intervention in the United Kingdom has to beat 14·5 per cent. moisture, whereas corn sold into intervention by our EC counterparts has to be at 15 per cent. moisture. That increases drying costs. Quite rightly, in the United Kingdom there is stringent checking of chicken stocks for salmonella. By the beginning of the month new fewer than 1,200,000 birds had been slaughtered. Naturally, that increases costs, but there is no such testing in our EEC counterparts.

On the subject of disease, will my hon. Friend comment briefly on the agreement reached recently in Brussels on foot and mouth disease, and on how that agreement will assist companies such as Cotswold Pigs in my constituency to export?

Another problem that the Government should deal with is the monopoly created by the drastic reduction in the numbers of buyers at the farm gate. Not only has that enabled the few remaining buyers to dictate terms, but it has allowed them to inflate their prices to the consumer. That is illustrated by the figures that I gave comparing increased food prices with reductions in farm income over the past 10 years. According to "Euromonitor" no fewer than 15 of the 22 most profitable European food manufacturers are British. Perhaps the balance of trade in this respect has been upset. The Monopolies and Mergers Commission should investigate the activities of five supermarket chains which control a substantial proportion of the retail market. Their power is healthy neither for the farmer nor for the consumer—nor for the rural shops in my constituency and elsewhere which often find it hard to compete. They frequently have to sell their goods at prices much lower than supermarkets can charge for them.

The last major problem facing agriculture lies in the workings of the European Commission. Much concern has been expressed in the country and the county about the proposed nitrates directive. Were it enacted it would have a catastrophic effect on farming in Lincolnshire. No convincing evidence has been found to show that current nitrate levels are harmful to health, and I urge the Government to remain steadfast in their opposition to this ill-conceived European directive. Will my hon. Friend give an assurance today that under no circumstances will the United Kingdom agree to any proposal that imposes a cost on the farmer out of all proportion to the alleged benefits to the environment? Will he ensure, too, that non-agricultural sources of pollution, about which we hear far less, are tackled?

On the subject of the environment, no Lincolnshire Member dealing with farming in the county could pass over the need for strong sea defences. Perhaps my hon. Friend will briefly comment on them and on the resources that the Government will allocate for them.

What the Lincolnshire farmer requires, in the famous cliché, is that elusive level playing field. He is the most cost-effective farmer in Europe; all that he asks is to be allowed to compete with his European counterparts on an equal footing. He realises that it no answer to seek massive subsidies, and as a Member of Parliament representing a largely rural constituency I have never asked for massive subsidies, although I realise that they might have been an easy way out and might have earned me short-term popularity. We in this House know that subsidies only produce distortions and imbalances in the market and act unfairly.

Government policy, and the common agricultural policy, should be to ensure that farmers produce food at sensible prices for everyone and that food stocks are kept at sensible levels. I have mentioned the need for sensible levels because I am conscious that the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations has warned that global cereal stocks are below safe levels and that any adverse weather conditions could affect them. We have seen in recent years how one event in Chernobyl or one small drought in Spain severely damaged the stocks.

Of course, I appreciate that the massive surpluses of the early 1980s had to be dealt with, and they have been. Now

[Mr. Edward Leigh]

our farmers, the most efficient in Europe, should be given an opportunity to earn a decent living in open and fair markets.

This debate is not only about farmers; it is about improving the environment, and only farmers can do that. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister and his colleagues in the Department of the Environment will resist the recent spate of unwanted planning applications by Unigate for large poultry units to be sited across my constituency. The company wants to produce 1 million birds a week. What will that mean for small poultry producers in my constituency in terms of unfair competition? A fundamental part of the Government's agriculture policy must be to ensure that by 2000 we have a viable farming industry and that a family firm such as J.R. Dring and sons is still farming and providing good-quality food for a decent return. That will enable such firms to support a thriving rural economy and will ensure the continuance of the magnificent contribution made by farmers to Lincolnshire life.

2.49 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Curry): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) on his initiative in bringing forward this debate. I know that he does not hesitate to tell his farmers when he disagrees with them. He does not necessarily reproduce the National Farmers Union brief. When he says that there is a real problem in farming, especially in Lincolnshire, which is one of the better endowed counties in the United Kingdom, we have a duty to listen to him. I undertake to study carefully what he has said.

I regret that the Opposition have not had an opportunity to study at first hand what my hon. Friend has said, because there is not one Opposition Member in the House and the Opposition Front Bench is not therefore represented in the debate. No doubt my hon. Friend will point that out to his farmers when the Opposition pretend that they are capable of looking after British agriculture.

I agree that there is a problem about farm income and we should not pretend that things are other than what they are. The farmer's costs are fixed by the market which is free to move, but, by and large, his income is fixed by politicians. That is because of the pricing structure in the European Community and because of the impact of economic policy on the farmer. However, farmers should reflect on what the situation would be if their incomes depended wholly on the market. If farmers were required to produce at world market prices, it would have a severe and immediate impact on agriculture and severe radical restructuring would follow. It would be akin to what we have seen in other industries that have not had a price support mechanism and the limited but certain insurance that the Community has given to farmers.

We know the reasons for the difficulties, but we had to tackle the problem of surpluses. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend for acknowledging that and for defending that policy in his constituency. We had to control dramatically rising expenditure and we have to pursue an anti-inflation strategy. Perhaps that matters more to the farmer than to many other people precisely because of the way in which his income is made up.

We shall do what we can to help. In the livestock sector we have more instruments at our disposal for dealing with sheep and cattle whereas in predominantly arable constituencies we are more limited. My hon. Friend mentioned the green pound. I give him the pledge that he seeks; we will do everything in our power to eliminate the green pound by the end of 1992. He will be interested to know that on Monday the monetary compensatory amount on cereals will fall to 2·5 per cent., which will be the lowest level for five years. The MCA for pigmeat and beef will be zero. We got substantial devaluations at the previous price fixing and what has since happened to the pound has tended to move those further. That is an important contribution to the creation of a level playing field which I recognise as one of the most consistent demands of the British farmer.

By means of the diversification programme, the Government have also sought to assist by set-aside and schemes such as woodland and conservation schemes. I do not pretend that those provide help other than at the margin, because in general terms they will not make the difference between life and death, but they are an attempt by the Government to make available to farmers the means by which they can diversify a little and explore alternative sources of income. They also enable us to take the edge off some of the immediate pressure applied by the application of the stabilisers and European constraints.

My hon. Friend spoke about moisture content. The United Kingdom applies 14·5 per cent. while the rest of northern Europe applies 15 per cent. That percentage is a Government choice and was not imposed by Brussels. We have the option to apply the same moisture content as the rest of the northern European Community. Should conditions in 1990 indicate that we should move to the slightly more relaxed 15 per cent. we shall do so. We have not done so in the past two years because we have had relatively dry harvests and such a move has not been required.

I entirely echo my hon. Friend's comments about salmonella. This is a classic case of the Government taking draconian measures to tackle disease in our flocks, and we are pressing the Commission to produce proposals which will impose a similar requirement on others. My right hon. Friend the Minister mentioned that point to the Agriculture Commissioner at the Agriculture Council, in which we both participated earlier this week. Incidentally, my hon. Friend referred to the notable triumph at the Council meeting with respect to foot and mouth, which is the biggest single animal disease problem. It would be of particular concern in Lincolnshire, where pig production is a major agricultural activity.

My hon. Friend referred to Cotswold Pigs as one of the country's premier pig production units. We have agreed that the whole Community will move towards the slaughter policy carried out by the United Kingdom, Ireland, Denmark and Greece and away from the vaccination policy that the rest of the Community has pursued. That is an example of where British practices will be the norm for European practices. They will give much greater security in terms of disease-free livestock and movement inside the Community. It will give an assurance

that we can export to the world market, knowing that our home base—which will be the whole Community—is able to give greater guarantees that livestock is free of disease.

My hon. Friend referred to the limited number of companies that tend to dominate the grocery sector. Competition is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, and I shall draw my hon. Friend's remarks to his attention. There are some positive aspects which I am sure my hon. Friend would acknowledge. Competition between retailers is fierce and it is fair to say that that is probably good for the housewife. More important agriculturally, those retailers are increasingly collaborating with farmers and farm organisations to require a high standard of production, which is bringing farmers closer to the market place. Recently, I visited Bedfordshire Growers—which I realise is not in my hon. Friend's constituency—which has links with some of the major chains. It is producing high-quality produce in response to demand. Perhaps we should discuss whether farmers would find it easier to form co-operatives that would take them more directly into the wholesaling and retailing sector. The law is somewhat dificient in this respect and needs updating—a matter to which we should perhaps devote our attention.

I endorse my hon. Friend's comments about nitrates. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is a prime negotiating partner in discussions on that matter. When I represented the United Kingdom at the Agriculture Council in May, I insisted that the Council should set up its own group to advise environmentalists on the purely agricultural implications. I was afraid that the matter would run away from Agriculture Ministers and would be settled by other Environment Ministers who do not have a close relationship similar to that which exists between my right hon. Friends the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretary of State for the Environment.

We should have a sensible authority to blend and treat the water. A reading of 50mg per litre taken once in the year should not immediately condemn us to large-scale set-aside or afforestation. That is nonsense in terms of environmental policy. We are co-operating closely with my Government colleagues to ensure that the agricultural point of view is portrayed effectively. We will honour our assurance to pay the closest possible attention to this matter.

Mr. Leigh: Because I did not have time to mention this point, perhaps my hon. Friend will comment on set-aside. It has a part to play in improving the environment. I understand that recently the Commission agreed an increase to £250 a hectare. Without any cost to the Treasury we might be able to increase the generosity of our set-aside procedures. Although my hon. Friend may not be able to comment today, perhaps he will agree to consider the matter.

Mr. Curry: We are preparing the third round of set-aside. We are anxious to enhance the set-aside programme to give it a greater environmental content. That will have implications for the rates. Perhaps my hon. Friend will take my comments as a hint that I shall consider his points.

My hon. Friend mentioned flood defences and I realise that they are important in Lincolnshire. The amount allocated to flood defences has increased by more than £29 million between 1989 and 1992 and the main target is the east coast. My right hon. Friend the Minister is especially anxious that he should not be deprived of a job by the submergence of his constituency, although in the early 19th century, submerged constituencies were represented in the House, thus relieving the hon. Members concerned of any constituency burdens. Lincolnshire will receive the maximum grant rate of 75 per cent. for sea and tidal works. I have discussed the matter with the National Rivers Authority and 20 per cent. of the total grant that we give to it will be targeted to Lincolnshire in 1990-1991.

My hon. Friend will not expect me to comment on the planning problems in relation to chickens. In my role as a constituency Member, I know that planning is the harshest bed of nails on which an hon. Member can find himself impaled. I shall simply note what my hon. Friend has said and draw it to the attention of my colleagues who may eventually be directly concerned in the matter.

My hon. Friend has done a great service to his constituents in bringing the situation in Lincolnshire to the attention of the House. We should remember that Lincolnshire is a relatively favoured county. My hon. Friend praised the production of grain, and the county is one of the bread baskets of the United Kingdom. My hon. Friend also praised the county's record in agriculture. Bulb production, to mention the most spectacular area, is a major national asset. My hon. Friend also mentioned pigmeat production in which Lincolnshire is at the forefront of technology.

While praising the county, we must listen carefully to the problems raised. I will take careful note of what my hon. Friend has said about the concerns of farmers in the county. He will, no doubt, note that the Government are committed to do their best for agriculture. With such a partnership, I am sure that my hon. Friend will continue to represent his constituency outstandingly and that his constituency will continue to make an outstanding contribution to our agriculture.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute past Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 2 July 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SECURITY

Earnings Disregard

1. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to increase the disregard on earnings before income support is reduced.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mrs. Gillian Shephard): We keep the level of the earnings disregards under review. The Government are committed to monitoring them, but we have no plans for change at present.

Mrs. Gorman: I thank my hon. Friend for her reply. Would she consider regarding as disregard the cost that a lone parent bears for child care if she decides to go back into the work force? Does my hon. Friend appreciate that many women who are left to be supported by the state because their menfolk have deserted them would like to go back to work? However, if they lose £1 for every £1 that they earn after the first £15, the incentive for them to be self-supporting is reduced. I know that my hon. Friend would not want to punish such women and I am sure that she would like to give them more of a helping hand.

Mrs. Shephard: I thank my hon. Friend, and in preparation for her question this afternoon I read her ten-minute Bill that, in part, dealt with that matter. My hon. Friend is right to say that many lone parents want to work, and about one third of family credit participants are lone parents.

The Government have built into the social security system several disregards and incentives especially for lone parents. For example, £15 of their earnings is disregarded in income support, they get the same adult credit in family credit as a couple and, from October, lone parents will have a £25 disregard in housing benefit. The major thrust of Government policy is to ensure that lone parents, 95 per cent. of whom are women, get adequate and proper maintenance from absent fathers.

Mr. Strang: If we are moving into the season of pre-election largesse—whether as suggested in the Minister's answer to the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) or in the report in today's *The Guardian*—will the hon. Lady take into account the plight of my constituent Mr. Stewart, about whom she wrote to me last month and who came to see me at the weekend? Mr. Stewart has had no increase in his income since April 1988, when the Government removed his special payments; he is having to pay increased electricity charges, and he is having to pay 20 per cent. of his poll tax. Is there no limit to the extent to which the Government are prepared to inflict real hardship and misery on some of our poorest pensioners?

Mrs. Shephard: Transitional protection was introduced to help those who might lose out under the 1988 social security reforms. A small number of people are still covered by transitional protection and the overwhelming majority of them received an increase this April.

Mr. Strang: For my constituent—not this year or next year.

Mrs. Shephard: The hon. Gentleman will know that I cannot comment on an individual case. I am glad that he pointed out that I have already replied to him.

Claimants (Residential Backgrounds)

2. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if there are any limitations as to the residental background of recipients of attendance and other allowances; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): Attendance allowance is payable to people who live in independent residential care homes. It stops after four weeks for those living in other residential homes if the care costs are met from public funds. Limitations for other allowances vary.

Mr. Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend accept that many elderly people who are of sound mind find it difficult and irksome to live with the confused elderly and those who are deeply ill?

Mr. Winnick: What about the Prime Minister?

Mr. Greenway: The hon. Gentleman speaks for himself. He is somewhat confused and always has been.

Will my hon. Friend consider introducing changes to the allowance system so that people who are on attendance allowance can live not in nursing homes or in institutions but, for example, in private accommodation, where they could pay their way with the allowance?

Mr. Scott: Yes. I understand that my hon. Friend has a constituency case. He has quite properly written about it to the local office manager, who will be replying soon. Some quite complicated calculations have to be made to see whether people would be better off if they moved into private accommodation from residential homes of one sort or another. Individual judgments will have to be made. Within the private residential sector, there is a wide range of types of property and provision.

National Insurance

3. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many standard rate tax payers would be affected by the removal of upper earnings limit for national insurance contributions.

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): If the upper earnings limit for employees' national insurance contributions were removed it is estimated that about 3·3 million people would pay more contributions, of whom about 2·1 million would be

standard rate taxpayers. If the corresponding upper profits limit for self-employed people were also removed, it is estimated that about another half a million people would pay more contributions, of whom about 200,000 would be standard rate taxpayers.

Mr. Bruce: I thank my right hon. Friend for that illuminating reply and I hope that it will be well covered by the media, because these are the Labour party's policies. As we have taken a great deal of time and trouble to remove Labour's tax on jobs—the national insurance surcharge—will we also look at the employers' national insurance contribution, which is running at roughly double the amount that it was in the days of the Government led by my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath)?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend is quite right to draw attention to the figures that I have given. I note what he suggested about the employers' contribution, but there is no upper earnings limit on it, and because of the way in which the national insurance system works and the direct relationship between the contribution paid by employees and the benefits subsequently received, I am not sure that the arguments are on all fours.

Mr. Winnick: When an individual pays both national insurance contributions and tax, to ensure that when he becomes unemployed or sick, the state gives him assistance, how can there be any justification for reducing or taking away unemployment benefit? There is speculation about that in the press. Will it also be mentioned in the Tory manifesto, because the people want to know the truth? If unemployment benefit is to be taken away, how long will it be before pensions are undermined and perhaps taken away by the Government?

Mr. Newton: I am grateful that the hon. Gentleman used the word "speculation". As far as I can see, the press reports to which he referred rest on one pamphlet from one body, the Adam Smith Institute. That is not a Government plan and there is no basis for the hon. Gentleman's suggestion.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Is not it true that, since the Conservative party came to power, most people who pay national insurance have saved over £3 a week on it, but under the Opposition's glorious plan, the people whom the Opposition laud as those whom they want to encourage —those earning between £15,000 and £20,000 a year—will pay £9 a week more? They would not pay that in national insurance; the fraud is that they would pay it in increased taxes. How does that encourage people to work?

Mr. Newton: The answer is that that does not encourage people to work and that it runs exactly contrary to what we have sought to do in reducing national insurance contributions for many, with the aim of encouraging employers to provide jobs and encouraging people to do them.

Mr. Meacher: If the Secretary of State is so concerned about the extra tax on higher rate taxpayers, how does he explain why the Government have increased, for instance, national insurance contributions, which are a tax, by no less than 14 per cent. for those on average or low incomes?

In view of his earlier answer, is the Secretary of State —or is it only the Prime Minister—in favour of the latest crackpot, right-wing daftness of privatising the dole, but still making people pay national insurance contributions so that they are forced to pay twice for the same benefit? If people have paid national insurance contributions, are not they contractually entitled to benefit? If something in the private sector that had been fully paid for were taken away, would not he, or even the Prime Minister, call that stealing?

Mr. Newton: It is perhaps understandable, in view of the events of recent weeks, that the hon. Gentleman should go to such lengths to divert attention from the main point. He referred to higher rate taxpayers. The point is that Labour's plans, as is clear, and is clearer still from my answer, involve higher contributions from many basic rate taxpayers. That is the point that the Opposition have been seeking to disguise because they do not want to let on how many people will have to pay much more to finance the hon. Gentleman's ambition.

Personal Pensions

4. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has as to the number of people who have now joined a personal pension scheme.

11. **Mr. Donald Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are taking out personal pensions; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Just over 4 million people have so far taken out a personal pension.

Mr. Evans: Does my hon. Friend agree that the most encouraging aspect of that figure is that it represents people in all age groups who have provided for their retirement? Does he further agree that it is absolutely disgraceful that the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) should seek to penalise those 4 million people —or probably 10 million people, when one takes their families into consideration? Is not this what the Labour party is all about—muddled thinking, total misrepresentation and, worst of all, patronising people? In other words, we know best.

Mrs. Shephard: To borrow a recently expressed phrase, that is an example of the Opposition's crackpot, left-wing culture——

Ms. Short: This is disgraceful. It is an abuse of Question Time——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Minister is answering the question.

Ms. Short: This is an abuse.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Shephard: What is important about the Government's pension provision is that people now have a choice between remaining in the state earnings-related pension scheme, taking out a private pension and belonging to an occupational pension scheme. The Opposition have made it clear, through the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), that they are totally against that choice and independence in pension provision——

Ms. Short: Will you do something about this abuse of Question Time, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The questions that were asked were in order, and if they were not I should rule them out of order.

Mr. Thompson: Does my hon. Friend agree that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) is muddled, as this is not Prime Minister's Question Time? We are asking specific questions on specific matters. Does she agree that, to use the words of the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), the Opposition intend to steal private pensions from people?

Mrs. Shephard: The hon. Member for Oldham, West has already made clear his party's intentions for personal pensions. Fortunately, the Government intend to continue the policy of choice within pension provision between SERPS, a personal pension and an occupational pension scheme. Clearly, the Opposition wish to threaten that choice.

Mr. Meacher: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is not it an abuse of the House that Question Time is used in regard to Opposition policies, which we shall certainly defend and promote when we have a chance? Is not the purpose of Question Time to hold Government policies to account?

Mr. Speaker: This is not Prime Minister's Question Time and these are not open questions. It is the function of questions on the Floor of the Chamber to expound on policies, and that is what we are here to do.

Mr. Flynn: To return to the question, does not the Minister feel a sense of guilt that she is aiding and abetting what is becoming the fraud of the century now that 4 million people have been bribed by dodgy advertising into taking out pensions? Does not she recognise that they are not pensions—they are risky savings schemes that are about as personal as a can of baked beans? When will the Government respond to the independent voices that are saying that more than 1 million people have been defrauded by such schemes and that most of their future benefits and pensions have already been eaten up by commission charges, administrative costs and the profits of the pension companies? Can it be possible that the Government are about to replicate that calamity by abolishing the dole? Will they give us a categorical denial, other than the arguments that have been presented today, and tell us that it is a product of midsummer madness by the loony right and that none of the Ministers will have any part in that crazy scheme to abolish the dole?

Mrs. Shephard: I was under the impression, although much noise was being made by Opposition Members, that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave absolute assurances about the Adam Smith Institute pamphlet. The hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) repeated the comments made by the hon. Member for Oldham, West to try to scaremonger and to terrify perfectly normal, ordinary people who wish to take advantage of the excellent pension choices that have been made available by the Government. It is a disgrace.

Community Care Grants

5. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the budget for community care grants in the latest financial year for which figures are available.

Mr. Scott: The community care grant budget for 1990-91 is £63 million.

Mr. Welsh: Community care grants are essential to integrate people back into the community. How will cuts in grant affect that integration? How will the grants enable people to obtain suitable housing in order to allow them to return to the community? What is the Minister's view about the role of housing providers? Will they be an essential partner in community care schemes and planning or merely an afterthought?

Mr. Scott: The budget for community care grant has not been cut but increased for the current year. I hope that as we develop our policies for care in the community, which we aim to introduce in 1991, there will be increased co-operation between social services departments, which will be involved increasingly in the provision of community care, and local housing departments so that proper arrangements can be made for those leaving institutions.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend will know that community care grants are available only to those on income support. Many who would benefit from them receive invalidity benefit or other benefit and are therefore disqualified. Will he sympathetically consider extending the grants to other members of the community who would benefit from them?

Mr. Scott: I shall consider my hon. Friend's suggestion. There are administrative advantages in limiting community care grants to those who are on income support, and there are resource implications, but I have noted my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. Alfred Morris: If the social fund is so successful, why are so many disabled people now trapped in the jaws of loan sharks? Would not it much reduce dependence on community care grants if the Government quickly accepted the social security commissioners' decision, which was reported last week, in the important test case for severe disability premium of Simon Crompton, of Greater Manchester, which is estimated to benefit 30,000 other disabled people? What action is the Minister taking to identify them?

Mr. Scott: We are considering the implications of that judgment. The fact that loans under the social fund are interest free is likely to remove people from rather than hand them over to the loan sharks.

Pensioners (Income)

6. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by how much pensioners' total incomes have risen *(a)* since 1979 and *(b)* between 1974 to 1979.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I am pleased to be able to tell my hon. Friend that while pensioners' total net incomes rose by only 3 per cent. in real terms between 1974 and 1979, they rose on average by more than that in each year

between 1979 and 1987. In total, they rose by over 31 per cent. in real terms in this Government's first eight years of office.

Mr. Davis: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. As it is fashionable to quote the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) today, I am sure that she is aware of his comments in the Chamber on 30 January, when he said that the important consideration is the increase in pensioners' average income over the course of a Government. If my calculations are correct, we have done six times as well as the previous Labour Government. Does my hon. Friend therefore agree that a strong and proper pensions policy depends on two pillars—first, the strength of the economy, which enables us to pay proper state pensions and, secondly, a healthy economy giving a proper return on pensioners' savings? On both counts we outperform the poor performance of the previous Labour Government and the poor promises of a would-be Labour Government.

Mrs. Shephard: I agree with my hon. Friend. It is clear that the successful economic policies pursued by the Government have enabled us to spend £55 billion a year in real terms on social security and spending on pensioners and the elderly to increase by a quarter. To pursue anti-inflationary policies is particularly important for pensioners.

Mr. Frank Field: I accept the accuracy of the Government's figures although, of course, they have not yet been checked by the Select Committee. Will the hon. Lady confirm that for the poorest pensioners the most important thing to look for is a real increase in national insurance benefits? Will she confirm that, under the Labour Government, pensions for that group rose by 20 per cent. and under this Government they are yet to rise by 3 per cent?

Mrs. Shephard: The incomes of the poorest pensioners increased by 19 per cent. in that same period. As the hon. Gentleman will know, the numbers in the lowest quintile decreased from 38 to 24 per cent.

Mr. David Nicholson: Is not it important to look carefully at the differences in income and support between the younger pensioners and other older pensioners, aged over 75? Have not younger pensioners in particular done extremely well with regard not only to income but to home ownership and personal and occupational pensions? Is not it necessary to look carefully at the incomes and the support given to older pensioners who have not done so well with regard to home ownership and occupational pensions?

Mrs. Shephard: My hon. Friend is right. Seventy per cent. of recently retired pensioners have occupational pensions, half own their own homes and 85 per cent. have income from savings. The Government have taken action to help the older, poorer pensioners through the package of measures announced last October, which helped 2·6 million individuals.

Mr. Kirkwood: No one seeks to deny the important improvements in the standards of living that pensioners with occupational pensions and savings have enjoyed over the past few years. Does the hon. Lady accept, however, that it is a great mistake for Government policy to be predicated on the basis of gross public expenditure increases or average pensioners' incomes? Does she further accept that, over the past year, the erosion in pensioners' standards of living because of the difference between the retail prices index and earnings levels has been a constant source of concern for poor pensioners? If the package of measures last October was so successful, why will not the hon. Lady repeat it this October?

Mrs. Shephard: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman implicitly accepts that the October package was a success. Its aim was to target help towards older and poorer pensioners. I am sure that those who are responsible for dealing with those matters will listen to the hon. Gentleman's points when he asks for them to be considered next October.

Mr. Gow: Is my hon. Friend really telling the House and the country that pensioners' living standards have risen faster in each of the past 11 years of the Conservative Government than in the six years of the previous Labour Government?

Mrs. Shephard: That is exactly the case. My hon. Friend puts the matter accurately.

Ms. Short: Perhaps the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) would like to think about the fact that, by comparing five years and 11 years, one gets rather different outcomes. This is another attempt by the Government to manipulate and misuse the agenda of the House. I hope that you will reconsider your earlier ruling, Mr. Speaker, or any democratic procedure for holding the Government accountable will break down. I put it to the Minister—I am sure that she knows this to be true—that, according to the Library, 20 per cent. of pensioners rely entirely on state benefits. The Government have cut state pensions by £13·20 for a single pensioner and £20·70 for a couple. Labour takes great pride in the improvement in many pensioners' incomes due to the introduction of SERPS, which the Government have now cut, resulting in a reduction in the incomes of future pensioners. Labour is proud of the improvements for some but is worried about those who are finding life increasingly hard, many of whom are women. The poorest pensioners are women, and the Government are doing nothing for them.

Mrs. Shephard: The average income of pensioners who receive all their income from state benefits has increased by over 27 per cent. during the life of this Government. If the hon. Lady and her hon. Friends go on threatening and scaremongering about the choice, independence and diversity that the Government have introduced into pensions, they will live to rue the day.

Income Support

7. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the amount within an income support payment which is imputed to cover the 20 per cent. liability for poll tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tony Newton: On average, income support beneficiaries receive the equivalent of 20 per cent. of a community charge of £340.

Mr. Nellist: As the average poll tax is £100 higher than was envisaged when the Government introduced the £1·30 payment per person on income support to cover that notional 20 per cent., why have not the Government

increased the figure to 20 per cent. of the actual average poll tax? In Tory-controlled Windsor and Maidenhead, for example, the poll tax is £449 and 20 per cent. of that is £1·72; the odd 40p may not mean much to a Minister on nearly £1,000 a week, but to someone on income support it means a loaf of bread.

Mr. Newton: The level of community charge varies from place to place. The amount that people have to pay reflects the decisions of their local council, and there is an element of that in respect of income support. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept the figure that I gave in my original answer. The weighted average amount included in income support payments across Great Britain is equivalent to 20 per cent. of what has turned out to be the average community charge across Great Britain after allowing for transitional relief.

Mr. Dickens: Is it not a fact that all people on income support receive the full maximum 80 per cent. rebate on their community charge? Do not those on income support also benefit from transitional relief, which cost the Government £350 million in England alone and which benefits 7·5 million people? Does not that show that we are the Government who care for the disadvantaged?

Mr. Newton: I can confirm that those on income support pay only 20 per cent. of their community charge —the other 80 per cent. is met directly—and that many income support beneficiaries will have benefited from the transitional relief scheme.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is the Secretary of State aware that in my constituency of Workington, and throughout the north-west, there is a disturbing incidence of young people leaving home because of changes in social security legislation and also because their parents will not help out with payment of the poll tax? Was it really the Government's intention to drive young people out of their family homes? If it was not, will they reconsider the legislative provisions which are having that effect?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will know that we have made a number of changes in the way in which the benefit rules operate, in an endeavour—I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security for the work that she has done in this regard—to ensure that the rules, which are sensible, work as well as we should like them to. I ask the hon. Gentleman to recall the history of social security and young people, especially under the old board and lodging regime. The attempt to solve the problems by social security means has aggravated rather than diminished them.

Mr. Stern: To revert to my right hon. Friend's original answer, does he agree that his reference to the Government's taking into account an average community charge of £340 underlines the sheer cruelty and lack of concern for the poorest people implicit in the attempt—shortly to be frustrated, I hope—by Bristol city council and Avon county council to levy a community charge of £493?

Mr. Newton: I agree with my hon. Friend that the core of such problems as are faced not only by those on benefit but by many others whose incomes may be quite modest reflects the irresponsible decisions of many councils throughout the country.

Homelessness

8. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what further measures his Department is planning to take to reduce the problems of the homeless.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: My hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning announced a substantial package of measures on Friday 22 June to deal with this problem. We believe that this is the best way to tackle the issue, rather than through benefit changes.

Mr. Evans: Is the Minister prepared to concede that the Government's legislation, especially in relation to the withdrawal or reduction of social security benefits for young people and the imposition of the poll tax, compounded by their refusal to allow local authorities to build houses for rent, have created the appalling homelessness which exists in Great Britain today? Does she agree that renting a few church halls will not solve the problem?

Mrs. Shephard: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the problem of homelessness spans a number of Government Departments and a number of countries throughout the world. He referred specifically to young people, however, and I remind him that there is no need for any 16 or 17-year-olds to be without an income. They can have a job, remain in education or take a YTS place. We have made a number of administrative changes and we raised the benefit level last July to help that particular group. I fully accept that there were some problems with the interaction between the Department of Social Security and the operation of youth training schemes, but we have done everything possible to put that right. It is surely better for young people to start their adult lives in school, in a job or in training rather than trying to live on benefit.

Mr. Favell: Has my hon. Friend noticed that young people who sleep rough almost always seem to come from the indigenous population and rarely from the immigrant population, who always seem to find somewhere to live? How can that be so? Would not it be unreasonable to provide expensive council house accommodation and flats for young people who merely leave home when others have to save, often for years, to find the accommodation that suits them?

Mrs. Shephard: I have already stated in reply to an earlier question that the Government believe that the best possible start for young people is to take training places, of which there are plenty—even a surplus—available and if possible to live at home. There are special benefit arrangements for those who have to live away from home.

Mr. Nellist: Does the Minister not understand the difference between the roofless and the homeless? While the announcement of a recent package of measures involving opening up a few chuch halls put a roof over some young people's heads, those measures do nothing to solve the underlying problem that thousands of teenagers are being driven out of their homes by the conditions created by the Government, not least through the stealing of YTS allowances and the general cut in benefits?

Mrs. Shephard: I totally rebut the hon. Member's accusations. If larger numbers of young people are leaving home than in previous years, that is also a matter of concern for their parents.

Maintenance

9. **Mr. Ralph Howell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to announce proposals resulting from his review of the maintenance system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We are pressing ahead with the review of maintenance, which is wide ranging, and are examining all areas of the current system to see where reform is required. We hope to make proposals later this year. Meanwhile, there are measures in the present Social Security Bill which address some of the problems that lone parents have experienced with the current system. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office, has recently announced proposals to reinforce payment arrangements.

Mr. Howell: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply and I wish him well with the proposals that he is bringing forward. They are long overdue.

Mr. Newton: I am duly grateful to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Meacher: I shall ask a real question. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the Government's first effort in that direction—the enforcement of payment through attachment of earnings—is merely a pathetic re-statement of existing law? Why is there nothing about the real issues such as the level of awards, which in general is far too low? What incentive is there for mothers to claim maintenance if the Department of Social Security simply claws it back in reduced income support? Do not the proposals have all the makings of yet another Tory ramp of reducing public expenditure instead of giving extra help to those in real need?

Mr. Newton: I really think that the hon. Gentleman might tone down some of the overheated language that he so persistently uses. First, the proposals of my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office, involve legislation and thus can scarcely be simply a re-statement of existing law—*[Interruption.]* Having asked three questions, perhaps the hon. Gentleman will allow me to answer them.

Secondly, as we announced to the House earlier this year, we have already taken action to strengthen the way in which maintenance is assessed and the amount that is expected under the current DSS rules.

Thirdly, the advantage to lone parents is that their position is much better if they are getting maintenance, especially when they enter work, than if they are wholly dependent on DSS benefits.

Mr. Hind: Will my right hon. Friend consider the position of single mothers bringing up children on their own without any assistance from the fathers, particularly when the fathers are known? Does he agree that it would be appropriate to ask those mothers to make applications to the courts for maintenance so that the fathers face up to their duty to support their children rather than leaving the whole burden to the taxpayer?

Mrs. Gorman: You have to catch them first.

Mr. Newton: Yes, and indeed we do. Lone mothers in those circumstances can face a number of practical problems. We are seeking to address those problems in the Social Security Bill—for example, by legislating to make it possible for the Department's own maintenance orders to be transferred to claimants when they leave income support, and by taking powers to enforce a claimant's own maintenance order if it falls into arrears.

Retirement Age

10. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are his current plans for introducing a common retirement age for men and women in relation to the state pension.

Mr. Newton: The Government's position remains as described in the response, published in April, to the report of the Select Committee in another place.

Mr. Hughes: Now that we are beginning to see signs of the Government's programme for the coming year and what the Prime Minister would like in their manifesto for the next election, and as the Prime Minister will be 65 this autumn, may we at last have a clear commitment from the Government to a common retirement age for women and men?

Mr. Newton: I have referred to our response to the Select Committee in another place, and I have no doubt that the hon. Gentleman will have read it. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the Government are committed to the principle of equal treatment, but there are a range of difficult, complex practical issues and I really cannot give the hon. Gentleman the off-the-cuff undertaking that he seeks.

THE ARTS

Museums and Galleries (Charges)

51. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what recent representations he has received calling for access to all public museums and galleries to young people under 18 years to be without charge.

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce): In recent months, I have received a number of letters concerning admission charges in the national museums and galleries which I sponsor. Those institutions which levy an admission charge allow free or concessionary entry to all pre-booked school parties and students. The decision whether to introduce admission charges is, of course, a matter for the trustees and directors of individual institutions.

Mr. Hughes: Is the Minister aware that about 15 per cent. of all museums and galleries in London charge more than £2 for young people's admission and that fewer than 5 per cent. have free admission? Will he state that it is the Government's view that, wherever possible, it should be a museum's or gallery's policy that young people should be admitted free of charge as part of their general education?

Mr. Luce: The decision whether admission charges should be imposed is for the trustees, but if national museums and galleries were to impose charges—about five in the London area have decided to do so—in most, if not all, cases there would be concessionary rates for children. That means that most children would be admitted at half price. There are any number of examples of free admission for school parties. That is an important principle to pursue.

Mr. Dunn: Will my right hon. Friend arrange for all museums and public galleries in this country to hold exhibitions for people under the age of 18 on the history of Labour Governments since 1900, all of which have ended in disaster, especially for those least able to defend themselves?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend has introduced an interesting idea, although I am not sure how many members of the public would bother to go to such an exhibition—we should have to wait and see. It must be stressed that, when admission charges are imposed, it is important for the public to see a clear benefit to the customer. For example, the science museum has free admission on certain days and is open on more bank holidays than before.

Mr. Fisher: Does the Minister accept that the first step to widening access and encouraging children to go to our great national galleries is for those galleries to be in good condition? Does he support the plan of the Arts Council chairman, Mr. Peter Palumbo, to restore the fabric of our theatres, museums and galleries by the end of the century? Does he accept Mr. Palumbo's point that the problem—indeed, the crisis—has been caused by the Government's neglect over the past 10 years? Will he at long last accept what I have been urging him to do for the past three and a half years and have a national audit of all museums, galleries and other cultural buildings so that we know how big is the legacy of debt that the Government are leaving to the country?

Mr. Luce: I look forward to dealing more fully with some of those issues in the debate on Wednesday, when shall answer some of the hon. Gentleman's nonsensical points. Since 1979, the overall real resources of the national museums and galleries have increased by no less than 40 per cent. and for building and maintenance by 50 per cent. In September I announced that £180 million would be made available for the fabric of our national institutions. That is very much in line with the view expressed by Mr. Palumbo that we should get our institutions and their fabric in good shape.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Will my right hon. Friend take a leaf out of the French book in relation to the treatment of museums and galleries and ensure free admission for large families and men or women mutilated in wars?

Mr. Luce: I am sure that the leaders of the institutions in Britain will acknowledge the point made by my hon. Friend, but it is for them to decide what should be done. Some British institutions, unlike the majority of French institutions, do not charge at all.

Photography

52. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether it is his intention to vary the Arts Council's responsibility for photography.

Mr. Luce: No, but I expect the council to review its support for photography as part of its development of a national strategy for the arts.

Mr. Boyes: I welcome the Government's plans for devolution, especially that aspect which permits regional art association photography offices to work closely with the national officer. That will enable all the officers to formulate a coherent national policy for the further development of photography, especially in the context of funding for regional galleries, but does the Minister accept that carrying out those plans will require adequate funding and support from the Minister?

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. There has been a 10 per cent. increase this year over last year in overall resources for the Arts Council to give to photography. I am sure that that will play a part in helping to strengthen photography in Britain.

I cannot let this occasion pass without congratulating the hon. Gentleman on his achievement in producing the book, "People in Parliament", and I congratulate him the more strongly inasmuch as I am one of the people who feature in the book. I also congratulate him on his leading part in organising the remarkably good exhibition of photographs by hon. Members—an exhibition which shows that there are many hidden talents in the House.

Paintings

53. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will make a statement on the public display of paintings.

Mr. Luce: I have been much impressed by the recent expansion of the range of paintings on display in London, including the new Courtauld Institute galleries and the generous loan of the Berggruen collection to the national gallery. There are, of course, many other developments outside London.

Mr. Boswell: My right hon. Friend's answer reveals that the position not just in London but in the provinces is very good. Will he redouble his efforts to ensure by the use of loan paintings and the reserve collection that people who do not live in London can see the excellent pictures available in the metropolis?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend is, of course, right. A special exhibition and travelling unit advises on such matters at the Museum and Galleries Commission. There are now more loans available throughout the country and more objets d'art are outside the cellars and on display, but there is still a long way to go. As for London, I noted the other day that the chairman of the national gallery, Lord Rothschild, said that he believed that London is now the paintings capital of the world. In view of the remarkable developments of the last few years, I am sure that he is right.

Mr. Bidwell: May I draw the attention of the Minister and of the Opposition spokesman, my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher), to the resumption of the exhibition of paintings and art by Members of both Houses? The exhibition opens officially tomorrow morning, but the works are already displayed in all their glory. There are some fine exhibits on show and admission is free. After a two-year gap, there are some splendid contributions this year. Modesty prevents my saying any more.

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for drawing to the attention of the House and the outside world once again the hidden talents available in the Chamber.

Building Refurbishments

54. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what programme of refurbishment of buildings within the responsibility of the Office of Arts and Libraries has been established.

Mr. Luce: I am allocating £180 million over the next three years towards the building programmes of the national museums and galleries which I sponsor. The current year's allocation of £57 million represents a 75 per cent. real terms increase over 1979-80.

Mr. Carrington: Will my right hon. Friend also confirm that the private sector has played a major role in refurbishing and repairing our museum buildings? Will he congratulate those responsible for the major refurbishment work on the facade of the Victoria and Albert museum which is turning out splendidly and rising phoenix-like from its scaffolding? Will he also——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that that is enough.

Mr. Luce: I agree with my hon. Friend about the remarkable contribution of the private sector to the refurbishment of national galleries, including the V and A. By contrast, £5 million of extra private sector money has been made available for the British museum by the Japanese to help open the Japanese galleries. There are several other examples. Most notably, Lord Wolfson has joined the Government in a joint funding exercise to help with the improvement of the national galleries in our country.

Mr. Sheldon: While I am pleased with the reaction of so many of the people with responsibility for some of our public buildings and the arts aspects of them, does the Minister agree that we need long-term funding for many buildings which have fallen into disrepair? That funding is urgently required, not just for the next year or two, but for the next decade or two.

Mr. Luce: I take the right hon. Gentleman's point seriously. That is why I made a speech in York last September about longer-term funding for the fabric of our national institutions, particularly the national museums and galleries. It is for that reason that, with the co-operation of my colleagues in the Government, I decided to allocate £180 million for that purpose for the next three years. I have given an undertaking that it is the Government's task, job and duty to ensure that the fabric of those institutions in particular will be in good shape for the next decade.

CIVIL SERVICE

Retired Civil Servants (Appointments)

75. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service whether he has any plans to revise the rules governing the appointment of retired civil servants to senior positions in companies with whose subject area they have dealt during their public service careers.

The Minister of State, Privy Council Office (Mr. Richard Luce): The rules are kept under review and were last revised in 1989. I have no present plans to revise them again.

Mr. Beith: Does the Minister agree that those rules, which preclude civil servants from taking senior board appointments in companies within two years of their retirement, are an important safeguard against civil servants being suspected, perhaps wrongly, of being influenced while in office by the hope of such appointments? Is not it strange that civil servants are in that position when the Ministers whom they advise, and who frequently neglect their advice, are not subject to similar restrictions and former Secretaries of State for Trade and Industry or for Energy can take appointments in the industries that they have privatised?

Mr. Luce: The position for civil servants is as the hon. Gentleman describes. Of course, it is possible for their appointments to outside jobs to be delayed for up to a maximum of two years. It is not a rule that such appointments are delayed for two years. They can be delayed for up to a maximum of two years. Those rules have been in force for a long time. I am not directly answerable for the actions of Ministers, except for my own actions. However, the position is clear. I agree with the view expressed by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and that expressed by Lord Wilson in 1968, that it should be up to the good sense and discretion of Ministers when they retire. Clearly, they will care deeply about their public reputation. Their talents and abilities, along with those of civil servants, should be available to the nation and the private sector should be allowed to benefit from them.

Mr. Rhodes James: Is my right hon. Friend aware that anxiety about this matter is not confined to the other side of the House and that, in particular, civil servants who have received considerable salaries and pensions must be careful about their relationship with the private sector after they retire from the public sector where they received confidential and important information?

Mr. Luce: I fully acknowledge what my hon. Friend says. I am responsible for propriety, and I am most anxious to ensure that we continue with the highest possible standards. Under the rules, applications are sent to the advisory committee on business appointments and to the head of the home civil service when lower grades are involved. My hon. Friend might like to know that conditions were imposed upon more civil servants who were going to outside jobs in 1989—51 per cent.—than in 1988, when the comparable figure was 34 per cent., and in 1987, when it was 26 per cent. That is a sign that the issue is being treated seriously.

Trade Unions

76. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service when he last met representatives of the civil service trade unions; and whether he discussed conditions of service.

Mr. Luce: I meet the civil service unions from time to time to discuss a range of matters.

Mr. Fisher: When the Minister next meets the civil service unions, will he take the opportunity to dissociate himself and the Government from the report in *The Guardian* today of the thoughts of the right-wing Tory No Turning Back group for a pay-as-you-like or pay-what-you-like tax system? Is not this a typical, desperate last attempt by the Conservative party to flag up its growing unpopularity in the opinion polls?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman's supplementary question should relate to the conditions of service of civil service trade unions.

Mr. Fisher: Does the right hon. Gentleman not understand that the bash-the-taxman idea behind the scheme is deeply offensive to civil servants and will do nothing but lower morale among Treasury civil servants who are collecting taxes on our behalf?

Mr. Luce: I cannot see the direct connection between the hon. Gentleman's supplementary question and the civil service. The production of new thinking and new ideas from all parts of the Conservative party is a sign of how alive the party is and how much it is looking forward to serving the country in the 1990s.

Mr. Aitken: Has my right hon. Friend had time to discuss with the civil service trade unions the concern that they feel about Treasury report No. 2435, which recommends the downgrading of the pay and structure of a number of security officers and investigating officers in the sensitive area of physical security of Ministry of Defence buildings and of positive vetting? Does my right hon. Friend agree that a report which appears to seek to reduce by as much as £2,400 a year the pay of the 350 or so officers who work in this sensitive area is sending the wrong signal to the IRA and others and that there should be careful reconsideration of those misguided proposals?

Mr. Luce: That is a matter which should be drawn to the attention of my right hon. Friends, and I shall do that. I note what my hon. Friend has to say.

Dr. Marek: The Minister can no longer hope for preferment from a discredited Prime Minister and it would do all civil servants a power of good if he stated that the possibility reported in the newspapers of a bash-the-taxman policy in the next Conservative manifesto would be resisted by him. Civil servants at the Inland Revenue are professionals who take a pride in their work and the last thing that they want is a bash-the-taxman policy in the next Tory manifesto. Will the right hon. Gentleman do his best to ensure that it does not appear?

Mr. Luce: When the historians come to judge the 1980s and early 1990s, I believe that they will praise my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister for her remarkable leadership. They will realise how alive the Conservative party was in the 1990s and how much its members were looking forward to serving the country in the future, compared with the sterile members and policies of the Labour party.

Agencies

77. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what assessment he has made of the effect on the quality of public sector services of the establishment of agencies.

Mr. Luce: Improved service is one of the most important benchmarks by which the success of the next steps initiative will be judged. Results from the early agencies are promising.

Mr. Martin: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the quality of service promoted in the next steps programme is wholly consistent with the Government's drive to improve the quality of life in the areas affected by these services for those who work in them and, equally important, for the customers?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend hits the nail on the head. One of the main objectives of the next steps programme and the reforms is to ensure that the service provided to the public by the civil service is strengthened still further and that the quality of the service is even better. As we look to the 1990s, that is our clear priority. Evidence is coming in already that the agencies, ranging from Companies House to the laboratory of the Government chemist, and including HMSO and many other organisations, are providing an improving service and that high priority is given to the customer.

Mrs. Mahon: Does the Minister accept that computerisation of the benefit system has caused great problems for the staff and that, far from staff reductions, the 23 managers of the system agree that staffing levels should be increased? Current problems include giros not being paid on time, specialist benefits not being dealt with and money from the social fund, designed to make crisis payments for cookers and the like, not being paid out on time.

Mr. Luce: That is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services and the hon. Lady will be aware that my right hon. Friend is paying great attention to the way in which we can improve the services through that system. An agency is to be established next year which will strengthen still further the prospects for a better service.

Mr. Soames: Does my right hon. Friend agree that not only the conditions for those who consume the agencies' services but the terms and conditions of the employees have been improved? Will my right hon. Friend give every consideration to the Paymaster General's office in my constituency where the management would greatly welcome an early move in to the private sector?

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. We must, of course, draw a distinction between agencies remaining under the control of Secretaries of State and privatisation. There is increasing enthusiasm on the part of the staff in those agencies—hence their success stories. The potential for staff terms to be improved is considerable as a result of more flexible pay, individual performance bonuses and, in some cases, group performance bonuses.

Civil Service (Conditions of Employment)

78. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service when he next expects to meet the civil service trade unions to discuss changes to the civil service conditions of employment.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher).

Mr. Skinner: The next time the right hon. Gentleman sees the civil service trade union leaders, will he tell them that to get rid of the double standards regarding civil servants and Ministers taking jobs in outside industries top civil servants will be stopped from taking such jobs? That is the best around the problem and would be appreciated by the millions outside this place. A ban on such

appointments should not apply for two years only, and Cabinet Ministers should be treated in the same way. It would also not be a bad idea if every Member of Parliament had one job, and one job only. The moonlighting should be stopped.

Mr. Luce: We are talking about people who have retired from the civil service or retired Ministers. The hon. Gentleman does not do justice to the fact that many of them have talents to offer the country. Just as many Labour ex-Ministers—*[Interruption.]* I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman agrees, but Lord Glenamara, Lord Robens, Lord Marsh and many others, whose talents were available, have served in the private and public sector. So long as propriety is maintained—that is the rule with the civil service—those talents should be available to the private sector.

Ozone Layer (London Conference)

3.32 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Chris Patten): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the outcome of the second meeting of the parties to the Montreal protocol on substances that damage the ozone layer, which the United Kingdom hosted and chaired in London last week under the auspices of the United Nations Environmental Programme and which was opened by the Prime Minister.

I am delighted to say that the agreement reached at the meeting marks a major step forward in the global effort to deal with the ozone problem. The parties agreed that chlorofluorocarbons should be phased out by 2000, with intermediate cuts of 50 per cent. compared with 1986 levels by 1995, and 85 per cent. by 1997. We also agreed that halons should be phased out by 2000, except for agreed essential uses, with an intermediate cut of 50 per cent. by 1995.

Those two agreements represent a substantial tightening of the controls in the protocol. Before the London meeting the only requirements were a return to 1986 production and consumption levels by 1989-90 for CFCs and 1992 for halons, and a 50 per cent. cut for CFCs by 1998-99. Controls on two other ozone-depleting chemicals —carbon tetrachloride and methyl chloroform—were also agreed. Use of carbon tetrachloride will be phased out completely by 2000, with an intermediate cut of 85 per cent. by 1995. Use of methyl chloroform will be reduced to 30 per cent. of current levels by 1995 and 70 per cent. by 2000, and it will be phased out completely by 2005. Neither of those chemicals was controlled under the protocol previously.

Despite that tightening, several countries, including ourselves, would like to have gone further and faster. In particular, a number of countries argued that we should ban CFCs by 1997. We think that this would be a wholly acceptable target provided that there was an exemption for essential medical uses—for example, medical aerosols. We shall be pressing the European Commission to bring forward an amending regulation to provide for this within the Community as soon as possible. We shall be returning to this issue on a global basis in 1992—the parties agreed that there should be a review of the CFC controls then, with the aim of accelerating the phase-out schedule.

We also reached agreement on a financial mechanism under which developed countries will meet the incremental costs that developing countries incur in complying with the protocol, and on the technology transfer that will be necessary to enable developing countries to do so. Governments cannot simply guarantee that technology will be transferred, because they do not own the technology. But provision was included in the protocol so that if a developing country feels that insufficient financial support or transfer of technology threatens its ability to comply with the protocol's provisions it will be able to discuss this issue with the other parties to find a solution.

The outcome of the London meeting is a unique achievement in environmental diplomacy. Never before has the international community reached agreement on this sort of package. It brings together tight controls on chemicals which have previously played a vital role in our economic development, financial support for developing countries, and a commitment to helping those countries adopt and adapt to the new technology that has to be employed in making and using substitute chemicals.

The fact that nearly 60 countries from the developed and developing world succeeded in reaching agreement on this issue, and that the Indian and Chinese delegations both said that they would recommend to their Governments that they join the protocol, marks a new phase in international co-operation on major environmental issues. I believe that, having reached agreement on the ozone problem, we can now move on and try to reach agreement on the other more difficult environmental problems that we face, such as global warming.

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): The agreement reached last week was an important and welcome step towards the long-term protection of the ozone layer. To the extent that the Secretary of State, as chair of the conference, made his contribution to that outcome, he deserves our congratulations, and the Opposition are glad to offer them. It is particularly welcome that China and India have been brought within the Montreal protocol. I am also pleased that the principle of a fund and financial help to the third world has been established.

Does the Secretary of State agree that the agreement, welcome though it is, does not of itself save the ozone layer? Does he accept Dr. Joe Farman's view that the ozone layer will still suffer a further 20 per cent. destruction by the year 2000? Does he agree with the United Nations working group that every 1 per cent. loss of ozone leads to a 3 per cent. increase in skin cancers and a further 100,000 people going blind?

What is the Secretary of State's estimate of the volume of ozone-depleting gases that will be released between now and the year 2000? Does he agree with the Greenpeace estimate that it will represent half as much again as the total amount already released in the whole of recorded history up to the present?

Is the Secretary of State satisfied that enough help has been offered to the third world, particularly in relation to technology transfer? Will he say more about how the fact that that technology is largely privately owned is to be circumvented? While the British Government's offer of £9 million to the fund is welcome, that must surely be seen in perspective. Is not it the case that it represents just one fifth of the amount that the Department of Energy is currently spending on consultants' fees in the run-up to electricity privatisation?

While the Secretary of State clearly did well in his role as chair of the conference—[HON. MEMBERS: "Chairman."] I am replying, and I shall choose my language. While the Secretary of State did well in his role as chair, will he acknowledge that the position of the British Government left something to be desired? I refer especially to the mystery of why we are unable to add our signature to the declaration which commits 14 other countries, including all the other members of the European Community, to phasing out these gases by 1997. Is it really true, as his hon. Friend the Minister of State maintains, that we were simply not asked to sign? If it is true that we were excluded in such a way, is not it a rather wounding insight into our image as a country which is always expected to drag its heels and to act on the side of delay?

What are the special medical uses that prevent us from agreeing to a 1997 phase-out, and how are other countries, which have agreed 1997, managing in that respect? How

[Mr. Bryan Gould]

will we ensure that we meet the deadline? Will building foam containing CFCs, for example, be banned? If so, when? Will the chosen instruments be prohibition, or a price mechanism, as recommended by the Pearce report? What support will be given to the recycling of CFCs and what safe methods of disposal will be adopted?

Does the Secretary of State acknowledge that green consumerism has been an extremely valuable ally in reducing the use of CFCs, but that Government intervention is now required? I assure him that he will have the Labour party's support for any measures that are put in place now.

Mr. Patten: I thank the hon. Gentleman, parenthetically, for his kind parenthetical observations.

It will probably take the next half century to save the ozone layer. Under the previous protocol, it was estimated that chlorine loading in the atmosphere would rise from today's level of 3.5 parts per billion to about 5·9 parts per billion by the year 2040. Under the terms of the new, tighter protocol we are talking about an increase which will peak at just over present levels in 1997, and will then fall towards the year 2040. Levels should fall to about three parts per billion by the year 2040 and continue to fall thereafter. We may be able to achieve a better result, but that will obviously depend on whether we can encourage others to tighten up regulations and targets in the way we would like. Those estimates are on the pessimistic side.

Nevertheless, we expect substantial improvement in chlorine loading, which will fall back to the levels that existed before the hole in the ozone layer above the Antarctic was discovered. We expect a substantial improvement, but it will take quite a long time.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether we were providing enough help. Our contribution to the interim fund for the next three years is based on the United Nations formula. No one at the conference did not welcome the contribution that we were proposing. I have no doubt that after the interim fund ends we shall be considering a further longer-term fund, which will provide financial assistance. We also want to ensure technology transfer as far as we can, but that tends to be a curious portmanteau expression used to describe things which are tradeable. Under the existing aid programmes, technology transfer is encouraged: licensing agreements, technical co-operation and training programmes, and the purchase of patents are all funded by aid.

The hon. Gentleman was wrong in his remark about the United Kingdom Government's position compared with that of the rest of the European Community. Four member states of the Community signed the statement to which the hon. Gentleman referred, not 11. Among those countries that did not sign and do not have their names on the statement to which the hon. Gentleman referred are France, Italy and the Republic of Ireland, which at the moment holds the presidency of the Community. We have no differences with the rest of the Community about wishing to phase out CFCs by 1997.

I suspect that one reason why we were not approached to sign the statement was that I was chairing the conference and trying to provide as broad an agreement as possible. Other member states may have concluded that it would be wrong to press Britain to take a partisan position during the conference. Let there be no doubt that we are committed to phasing out CFCs by 1997, except for special medical uses.

The hon. Gentleman asked to what sort of medical uses I referred. I mentioned medical aerosols in my statement. If the hon. Gentleman knows anybody who suffers from asthma, he will rapidly find examples of medical aerosols.

I could refer to other issues involving toxicity testing and, alas, the fact that no alternative has yet been found for halons for use in aircraft, in manned computer centres or for putting out fires. There is also difficulty in producing enough of an adequate substance for use in refrigerators. However, I will not go into those matters in detail.

The hon. Gentleman is right to say that the Government need to encourage greater recycling. I was delighted when my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside opened the plant that Imperial Chemical Industries has started for that purpose. The hon. Gentleman is also right to say that green consumerism has helped a great deal. I hope that the green labelling scheme, which we are pressing in the European Community, will help in that and other areas. We look to European Community regulations to help the Government to achieve tougher and tighter targets. I shall be asking the next presidency of the European Community Environment Council to take urgent and early steps on that issue.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Will my right hon. Friend accept the congratulations of the House on his chairmanship of the conference? I thank him for his reference to asthmatics, because, being one myself, I am aware that the issue is of great importance to them.

Is not it true that one of the greatest problems of chlorine in the atmosphere arises in European nations that we used to describe as being behind the iron curtain? Will my right hon. Friend ensure that the EEC considers giving assistance with the financial problems faced by those nations in dealing with the industrial problem, which is both great and severe?

Mr. Patten: I was extremely pleased that a number of central and eastern European countries were represented at the meeting in London last week—for example, Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia. The European Community needs to give as much assistance as possible to countries in central and eastern Europe to enable them to cope with their environmental problems, and that includes the depletion of the ozone layer.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): I, too, congratulate the Secretary of State on making such welcome progress in phasing out CFCs and, in particular, on bringing China and India into the agreement. He would be the first to recognise that the crucial element in their agreement is that there should be an adequate transfer of technology. It is on that point that I feel that the position is not yet as clear or as definite as the House would wish. What discussions has the right hon. Gentleman had with companies such as ICI—there are few CFC producers in the United Kingdom—to obtain their agreement to the necessary transfer of technology, either through establishing subsidiaries in the case of India, or through licensing agreements in other cases?

Mr. Patten: The right hon. Gentleman is right, and I thank him for what he said about the difficulties of

ensuring adequate top technology transfer. One important element in the agreement is that it brings together the issues of compliance and of technology transfer in a way that is acceptable not only to developed countries but—and it is slightly more to the point in this context—to developing countries. The Government have had a number of discussions with ICI, just as Governments of other countries have had discussions with their chemical producers. With reasonable good will on the part both of the firms concerned and of developing countries, it should be possible to get round some of the difficulties that the right hon. Gentleman identified.

For example, as part of our aid programme—it was part of an aid agreement that I signed with India last year—we have already done an extremely good study on the costs to India of CFC substitution and ways in which we should set about helping it to meet those costs and deal with the necessary technology. It involves a number of elements, not least how early the Indians can take action, and how much they can do to promote recycling. I have no doubt that companies such as ICI are keen to discuss with Governments such as the Government of India how they can transfer technology in a way that does not discourage them from investment in substitution.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): I join in welcoming my right hon. Friend's statement and the personal commitment that preceded his chairmanship of this important conference in London. I also welcome the fact that both India and China have been brought in, and the opening that he announced for even more rapid progress over the next decade or so.

My right hon. Friend has already acknowledged that the consumer movement played a large part in paving the way to the conference. What advice, apart from the labelling scheme, would he give to consumers, recognising that the responsibility for reducing the use of ozone-depleting chemicals rests not just with Government but with household consumers and buyers?

Mr. Patten: I am grateful for what my hon. Friend has said. It is important to pay tribute as well to the work of the United Nations Environmental Programme in general and to Dr. Tolba, the executive director, in particular. He did an admirable job in moving along the discussion in the past few months and in getting us to the situation in which we could reach agreement last week.

Consumers have helped, through the pressure that they have brought to bear, to ensure the more rapid phasing out of aerosol sprays. I hope that consumers will turn their attention to recycling, for example, of CFCs in refrigerators. They can ensure that, when they replace their refrigerator, if possible, their retailer takes back their old regrigerator and has the CFCs contained in it adequately recycled through one of the schemes.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): The international agreement and the level of it are welcome. It is appropriate that there has been a unique agreement, given the uniquely severe and urgent problem. However, the Secretary of State has failed to achieve his targets, as set out in his press release of 14 June, in which he said that the objective was to achieve the most rapid possible cuts in and consumption and the most demanding timetable for reduction of CFCs. We should have set an example. We should have said that we were committed to a 1997 phase out at worst, or even one in 1995, and even allowing for the exemption on medical aerosols.

Given that many of us feel, like Joe Farman, who discovered the ozone hole above the Antarctic, that the results of the conference were very disappointing, will the Secretary of State look again at the Government's policy of blocking in the Commons the Bill promoted by my noble Friend Lady Robson that got through the other House? Will they introduce in this House in the next Session of Parliament a Bill that commits us to the most urgent possible target for the elimination of CFCs?

Mr. Patten: I hope that we shall be committed, with agreement on the European Community regulation, to phasing out by 1997, with the qualification that I mentioned earlier. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman, while properly stressing the urgency of this issue, should overlook some of the real problems in providing substitution, one of which is adequate toxicity testing. It is simply not good enough, for example, to tell people in electronic engineering who are using solvents that they should use alternatives that have not yet been properly tested. That would not be reasonable. There are other problems, to which I have already referred, relating to halons, and the medical arguments. These are not being paraded as excuses for inaction, but are being pointed to as reasons why we cannot go even faster. Anybody in his right mind would want to get rid of CFCs tomorrow.

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware that it is gratifying that he is receiving accolades from Members on both sides of the House for what has been achieved? Will he say a word or two about the methods of monitoring and enforcement of what has been agreed?

Mr. Patten: Of course. Monitoring and regulation are extremely important parts of the protocol. A special committee will be set up under the terms of the protocol, comprising some of the countries that agreed to it, which will be responsible for monitoring compliance with the protocol. In addition, we shall have our own reporting procedures within the European Community to make sure that we achieve the targets. My hon. and learned Friend is entirely right in noting that one of the major considerations in all environmental diplomacy will be making absolutely certain that, having signed agreements, people keep them. I suspect that that will become an even greater problem when we start discussing other greenhouse gases.

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): I join in congratulating the Minister on the further progress that has been made in the new agreement. Will he answer the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) about the comments of Dr. Joe Farman that, even under the new arrangements, ozone depletion will continue and the ozone layer around the northern hemisphere over Britain and the United States will decrease by 20 per cent. by the year 2000? When we talk about phasing out CFCs by the year 2000, are we not in a similar position to a smoker who smokes 100 cigarettes a day and is told to give up because he risks getting cancer? Should not there be much greater urgency

[Mr. Alan W. Williams]

internationally towards phasing out by 1995 or 1997? Frankly, if we had any sense, we would stop using those products virtually straight away.

Mr. Patten: Although metaphors are valuable in political debate, the hon. Gentleman's chosen metaphor is not wholly accurate. Speaking as a former smoker, I found it possible to go from smoking 30 cigarettes a day to zero overnight, encouraged by the existence of two ulcers. CFCs are rather a different issue.

Although it would be nice to stop any use tomorrow, that is not possible, but we have introduced new and much tougher targets. I hope that when we review those targets in 1992 we shall be able to toughen the ones that we agreed last week still further. I pointed out earlier that the new agreement would mean that chlorine loading in the atmosphere would peak by 1997 and start to fall thereafter. Under the previous protocol we were talking about chlorine loading increasing from 3·5 to 5·9 parts per billion by the year 2040. However, even if we were to stop using CFCs now, we should be talking about the problem for some time in future because of the concentration of chlorine in the atmosphere. It will take quite some time to deal with that extremely important and difficult problem.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the excellent agreement, and, in particular, on the attachment of China and India to it. At a more mundane level, will he bear in mind the importance of continuing to encourage local authorities such as Gedling to look for ways of setting up a system of reclaiming domestic fridges and large industrial freezer units which contain damaging gases which would otherwise be released into the atmosphere?

Mr. Patten: I very much agree with my hon. Friend. Local authorities which have taken the action to which my hon. Friend has referred are to be warmly congratulated. I hope that many more will follow their example, and, as I said earlier, that retailers will do all that they can to promote recycling.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Will the Minister tell us exactly when we will get the Government system of green labelling? If the EEC is still dragging its feet, could not we ensure that all ozone-damaging products are clearly labelled as such when they are sold in Britain and when they are exported so that consumers can move rather faster than the Government and other international groups?

Mr. Patten: I think, not least because of the creation of the single market, that there is a strong argument for a Europewide scheme of green labelling. We have been pressing for that, and I should like to see one agreed and, if possible, established by the end of next year. If we do not make such progress on a Community level, we shall have to introduce our own scheme for this country. It would be better if we had a scheme that applied across the Community.

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): Does my right hon. Friend accept that one of his achievements has been in harnessing the international community to produce an agreement that is more far reaching than many people thought could be achieved? He has confounded and wrong-footed the professional moaners who carp about things being too little, too late. Notwithstanding the monitoring and reporting systems in the agreement, are there any more precise safeguards to ensure that countries cannot backslide on keeping to the agreed deadlines?

Mr. Patten: The protocol provides adequate safeguards on backsliding. As I said to the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), it will be possible for countries that believe that they are not receiving adequate help with technology transfer through the financial mechanism to take the issue back to the other parties under the protocol, which is reasonable.

In the next few years, environmental diplomacy will raise issues of the greatest sensitivity to individual countries. It will draw attention to the different judgments that countries make about these matters and the problems that they face. We shall achieve the agreements that we need only if we start diplomacy without grandstanding or slagging one another off. These issues must be handled with humility on all sides.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): May I take the Minister back to the reply that he gave my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) on the important question of technology transfers? To many, it appears that there is a dangerous loophole in the agreement, because the technology is held by a few multinational companies. Developing countries which understandably wish to promote the development of refrigerator-making industries and so on will have to pay much for that technology, unless they apply to an as yet unquantified fund held by the Commission or the convention.

Will the Minister assure us that there wil be no delay in ensuring a rapid transfer of technology, for example, to allow the Indian Government to promote the building of a new refrigerator plant, which is now planned, using non-CFC material rather than the obviously dangerous CFCs? If this loophole continues, many of the achievements in getting people together will be weakened, if not destroyed altogether.

Mr. Patten: The fund is not unquantifiable. We have agreed on a figure for the interim three-year-old period of $240 million, including resources for India and China. Subsequent commitments to the fund may need to be much more substantial, depending on the progress that we make and on the precise costs of CFC substitution.

As I said earlier, the expression "technology transfer" tends to be used rather loosely, ignoring the fact that when talking about technology transfer one is talking about items which are tradeable, which are sold between one company and others or between one country and others. I suppose that that is a rather confusing concept for some Opposition Members—I do not mean to be offensive—who would argue that the multinationals should be nationalised; socialism is still on one country's agenda. It should be possible, with a modicum of good will, to overcome the problems identified by the hon. Gentleman through licensing agreements and joint ventures. There are plenty of examples of those agreements being funded within our existing aid programmes; I concluded one or two in a more benign past.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have an obligation to protect the business. There is to be a debate on a Select Committee report on aid to eastern Europe. Some of those hon. Members who are rising seek to take part in it, so I shall allow two more questions from each side of the House. We must then move on. Undoubtedly we shall return to this subject.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): My right hon. Friend referred to the fund and will be aware of the comments by the Indian Government about the shortage of funds. He has presided over a major achievement. Will he comment on the size of the fund that will result from his achievements at the conference and on the adequacy of the fund for countries such as India if they are to be able to meet their requirements under the protocol?

Mr. Patten: As I said, the size of the interim fund is about $240 million over three years, but we expect further contributions to a fund after that. Under an aid agreement with India which I signed last year, we have promoted a study of the costs of CFC substitution in India. The distinguished Indian Minister, Mrs. Gandhi, who made a substantial and distinctive contribution to our discussions last week, referred in some press interviews to a cost of $340 million for CFC substitution programmes in India. That is the highest figure suggested by Touche Ross, which suggested in its report that, with earlier action and more recycling it might be possible for the Indians to cope with the CFC substitution problems for $120 million. I guess that somewhere between those figures there is a realistic amount which the Indians will need to comply with the protocol. What delighted me almost more than anything else was the fact that India and China reckoned, at the end of a fortnight's argument and discussion, that they could bring themselves to agree to the terms of the protocol.

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): I acknowledge the contributions by the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State to this historic international agreement on a major environmental issue. I put it to the right hon. Gentleman that the effect of the implementation of the protocol by India and China will be crucial. To many Opposition Members, the right hon. Gentleman's remarks about the transfer of the technology of the production process to these developing countries could have been more robust. Surely we will not allow the multinational companies to drag their feet. The sums of money that will be given to India and China in the short term are relatively small. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman agrees that it would not be acceptable to us if they used that money to buy CFC substitute products from advanced economies.

Mr. Patten: It is worth noting that the substitutes for CFCs were not discovered by politicians and will not be marketed by Ministers who sign agreements. They were discovered and will be marketed by the same multinational companies that are still some of the villains in the Opposition's arguments. I do not see the companies concerned in that light. ICI has behaved with commendable public spiritedness. Like the rest of us, these companies want CFC substitutes to be used to ensure that we can enjoy the benefits of economic and social progress without depleting the stratospheric ozone.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): What measures are in the protocol to deal with the destruction of exhausted air-conditioning and refrigeration equipment in China, India and the countries throughout the far east which have very hot climates? What will happen to the equipment that must be destroyed? Will those measures be funded?

Mr. Patten: As I said, the study on India, which we helped to fund, referred to the considerable progress that could be made by the encouragement of precisely the sort of recycling to which the hon. Gentleman referred. One of the first steps that we must take with all developing countries is to agree on a realistic programme for both CFC substitution and recycling. The potential impact that those countries' economic development could have on the problem if we do not assist them makes one realise how important it is to give them all the help that we possibly can.

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that CFCs are used so widely because of their non-toxic and non-flammable properties? Will he confirm that, while protecting the ozone layer, the Government will make absolutely sure that they protect factory workers and other citizens against possible less safe substitutes?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is quite right. The importance of taking precautions is relevant to CFC substitution, as it is to other matters. The damage that was done inadvertently by the invention, manufacture and use of CFCs, which were initially regarded as a great scientific breakthrough, should make us particularly cautious in respect of the testing that is required for CFC substitutes. That is why I stressed toxicity testing.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Ordered,

That European Community Document No. 10139/89 relating to municipal waste water treatment be referred to a Standing Committee on European Community Documents. —*[Mr. Patnick.]*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I will put together the Questions on the two motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the Rent Book (Forms of Notice) (Amendment) Regulations 1990 (S.I., 1990, No. 1067) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Rent Officers (Additional Functions) (No. 2) Order 1990 (S.I., 1990, No. 1068) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. We all realise the pressure of business, but we have just had an important statement on an issue that affects the future of the planet. Only two more hon. Members wished to ask questions——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I know. It would be very tempting to call all those hon. Members who rise on questions and statements.

Mr. Corbyn: But it was only two.

Mr. Speaker: Many other hon. Members wish to take part in today's debate. Even if I could impose a 10-minute limit on speeches, I should not be able to call all those who wish to participate. The House must accept that it is only fair to give hon. Members who wish to take part in the main debate the opportunity to do so.

[Mr. Speaker]

Two Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen will be making speeches, and if they set a good example to the rest of the House I may be able to call a good many—though perhaps not all—of those hon. Members who wish to participate. Again, I ask for brief speeches.

ESTIMATES DAY

[1ST ALLOTTED DAY, 2ND PART]

ESTIMATES 1990-91

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

EASTERN EUROPE

[Relevant documents: Third Report from the Foreign Affairs Committee of Session 1989-90 on FCO/ODA Expenditure 1990-91 (House of Commons Paper No. 233). European Community Documents Nos. 9090/89 on Aid to Poland and Hungary and 10788/89 and 4542/90 on medium term financial assistance for Hungary.]

Class II, Vote 2

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That a further sum, not exceeding £74,290,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray charges that will come in the course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1991 for expenditure by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on grants and subscriptions etc to certain international organisations, certain grants in aid, special payments and assistance, scholarships, Military aid and sundry other grants and services.—*[Mr. Waldegrave.]*

4.13 pm

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): The Select Committee on Foreign Affairs is grateful to the House for giving us this opportunity to discuss the Committee's third report on Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Overseas Development Administration expenditure, and to focus particularly on matters relating to assistance to eastern Europe. The sections of the report dealing with the know-how fund and support for eastern European economic development will be the main focus of attention. It is worth pointing out, however, that the other issues raised in the report relate directly to what is happening in eastern Europe and to the whole range of other issues of concern to the House, including environmental pollution, which we have just discussed.

Paragraph 7 of our report examines the problems of Foreign and Commonwealth Office staffing, which have arisen because of the need to establish stronger posts and a greater effort in the new democracies of eastern Europe. Some changes in the dispositions and staffing policies of the Foreign Office have already been announced and it is clear that further changes will be needed if we are to meet those pressures.

In paragraph 9 of the report, we return to the subject of visa policy—a perennial problem and a frequent cause of complaint to those who visit eastern Europe, where the granting of visas to the United Kingdom is still too slow and there are too many unacceptable delays. We look forward to a time when the visa arrangements for eastern European countries are abolished. That would have to be achieved on a Europewide basis and I know that Ministers have been examining that possibility.

We considered the role of the BBC's World Service both generally and in relation to its role in the liberalisation processes in eastern Europe. The general view of the House would be that the World Service has performed wonders and that it has played an excellent role in assisting the process of democracy to emerge in eastern Europe and in establishing the work, role and reputation

of this country. I hope that all hon. Members will support me when I say that we hope that the financial problems facing the World Service in trying to catch up with inflation—admittedly, that is a problem we all face—can be satisfactorily resolved so that the highly worthwhile efforts and the very valuable return per pound spent through adequate support for the World Service are fully recognised in future.

The Select Committee considered the Wooding review into how we can encourage east European and Soviet studies in British universities. We expressed some disappointment and unease about the fact that, despite certain undertakings by Ministers, the full commitment to implement the review has not happened and there seems to be a certain amount of buck-passing who should find the funds to push the matter forward to ensure that we have adequate Soviet and eastern European studies in our universities. Above all, the Select Committee considered the work of the British Council and, in particular, its work in setting up offices in eastern Europe and encouraging English language teaching to ensure that English becomes the second language of eastern Europe.

The know-how funds are part of a much bigger jigsaw. The G24 advanced industrialised countries have already pledged about $13 billion in loans and credits to eastern Europe. That includes $2 billion for Poland and Hungary from Japan, $300 million from the United States and an enormous programme of activities, and support from the European Community to which we contribute directly. All that is embraced in the so-called PHARE—the Poland-Hungary assistance for the reconstruction of economies—system of support for eastern Europe. That is a wide-ranging and fast-developing set of programmes ranging from food aid in the short term to meet immediate emergencies in eastern Europe to vocational training, massive projects for cleaning up the environment—which are certainly needed in eastern Europe—raising loans for infrastructure, opening markets in western Europe for eastern European goods and a host of other developments. In addition, there is the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development which is to be located in London.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The right hon. Gentleman has been talking for a few minutes and I had thought that with the passage of time some of his friends from the Select Committee might turn up to listen to him, especially as Mr. Speaker said earlier that quite a number of hon. Members wished to take part in this debate. I do not think that I am mistaken in saying that only one other member of the Select Committee is present to listen to the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell). I wish to address my remarks through the right hon. Gentleman to the Chair. It is a bit odd that in this great debate for the general good and so forth, when we want to talk about the ozone layer there is only one other member of the Select Committee present to listen to the right hon. Member for Guildford. That says a lot about this whole panjangle.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question was addressed to me. The object of these debates is to give hon. Members who are not members of Select Committees and other hon. Members who are not fortunate enough to visit these places an opportunity to express their views. Of course, the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee has also recently returned from eastern Europe.

Mr. Howell: In the first two minutes of my speech I deliberately mentioned environmental pollution, two or three times, in the hope that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), whose views are greatly valued by the House—he is an expert on environmental matters and sought to intervene earlier—would be able to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, and to develop his views at length. Hon. Members hope to hear from him on these issues because his views are relevant to eastern Europe and assistance to it.

All the programmes of assistance pale into insignificance when compared with the gigantic capital needs of eastern European countries. We are talking not about millions or billions of pounds, but about hundreds of billions of pounds, which will be needed to develop and improve the structures of eastern Europe. Those programmes will have to be financed, at least in part, from the resources of eastern European countries. Incidentally, it is encouraging to note that the East Germans already show signs of saving rather than spending their new-found deutschmarks. Other eastern European countries will need to do the same, but they will require large capital resources, which will put a huge strain on the capital systems of the west. If one is a little gloomy, therefore, one can expect rather high interest rates some way into the 1990s as capital is diverted to eastern Europe as the sums involved are absolutely huge.

In thinking about our assistance, we have been focusing on Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, but a far greater problem stands behind them—that of the Soviet Union and what, if anything, can be done to meet the large and rapidly growing needs of that struggling, sinking and disintegrating society and economy. The needs are bottomless. There is an understandable view that the Soviet Union will have to stew for the time being, until it works out its new political order and gets some means of receiving and making use of assistance from the west which many people fear that it does not have at the moment.

I agree with those who say that simply throwing enormous sums of money at the Soviet Union in new loans and grants at this stage would probably be a complete waste and cause only temporary easement before the whole economy continued its downward path to penury.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lanchashire, West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, once the Soviet Union has shown the democratic direction in which it wishes to go, one of the beginnings of help could be the extension of the know-how fund to the Soviet Union, whereby we would use our initiative and managment know-how to encourage the development of private industry and private initiative, which would help to fight the shortage of consumer goods which patently exists within the Soviet Union at present.

Mr. Howell: My hon. Friend is absolutely right—once the Soviet Union shows the beginnings. The first beginning must be some currency and financial reform. In a sense, the Soviet Union needs a major currency union with the rest of the world—that would put it in a position to receive effective assistance from the west—through the creation of a hard rouble, just as East Germany has had a currency union with West Germany and received a hard currency so that it can attract investment and begin to develop. The only hope for the Soviet Union is the development of a hard currency, which would require vast international

[Mr. Howell]

effort and support. That subject is now being considered and ruminated on and possibly mobilised in the International Monetary Fund, the world bank and other circles.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Is my right hon. Friend really saying that it would be possible to lock all the great currencies in the world into some fixed mechanism?

Mr. Howell: I was not dealing with that fascinating aspect of the subject. I was merely indicating the virtue and necessity of a hard currency. I think that my hon. Friend would be the first to recognise that that is the only basis upon which one can begin to get economic growth. and reform. Without a hard currency, there is little hope of the Soviet Union being able to check its downward slide. Much as I should like to discuss aspects of exchange rate policy with my hon. Friend, who is an expert in such matters, my present proposition is no more adventurous than that which I have advanced.

Any western aid to the Soviet Union should be geared to changes of the kind that I have described. The goal is a hard currency. Meanwhile, suggestions by European Ministers of billions of dollars for the Soviet Union may be good rhetoric but will not have much effect.

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, although the Soviet Union has not embarked on the reforms that we agree are desirable to trigger resources, there might be a case for giving it an incentive in the form of limited aid from the know-how funds, perhaps to spread the English language to which he has already referred? Such a move would help the leader of the Soviet Union.

Mr. Howell: I shall deal later with the promotion of English as a second language. Anything that we can do in that respect would be valued in the Soviet Union and everywhere else, not just in a high-minded sense but because it would further the prosperity and interests of Britain. The other country that was in our minds at the weekend was East Germany—the German Democratic Republic.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Howell: Does my hon. Friend wish to ask a question about the Soviet Union?

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Yes. Does my right hon. Friend accept that a great deal of sentimental twaddle is talked about Mr. Gorbachev and what he wants to do for Russia and for the world? Chancellor Kohl wants to invest £20 billion of the money of all of us in Russia to save Mr. Gorbachev. Until Mr. Gorbachev stops trying to improve communism and attempts to change the communist system, stops giving Cuba $5 billion of aid which he does not have and stops spending four times the amount that we spend on defence, why the devil should we give Russia money that it will use to beat us?

Mr. Howell: We do not necessarily want to save any individual politican, whether it be Mr. Gorbachev or anybody else—it is up to the Russians to decide whom they want to run their country. However, it is palpably sensible to encourage reasonably bloodless democratic development in all the Soviet republics. If we fail to do that and leave the Soviet stew to bubble over, creating a chaos of tribal and national wars which will spread to central and eastern Europe, we shall create great trouble for ourselves. I agree, however, that we should not back individuals but should encourage the democratic process as best we can wherever it shows signs of growing.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I agree with much of what the right hon. Gentleman says. Does he agree that many Soviet economists have argued against large quantities of western aid at this stage, if only because it would underpin Soviet institutions which they believe can be removed only by financial disciplines? We should recognise that and, if necessary, delay aid in the hope that in finally allocating it we can determine the nature of those institutions.

Mr. Howell: I agree with the hon. Gentleman, although I would put it a little more positively. Rather than saying, "Let us do nothing until," I would say, "Let us try to work with the many Soviet economists who think that financial reform is needed to see ways in which that reform can be underpinned by western aid." Until something like that happens, there is no point in underpinning or underwriting the present chaos and inefficiency. Money would simply be lost.

I have given way too often. That may count against me on your score board Mr. Speaker, although I hope not too severely. I shall now talk about eastern Germany, which is in the news and which is about to become one vast construction site as the bulldozer and the deutschmark move in. One must marvel at how in three and a half months the German bureaucratic machine has achieved miracles and installed in East Germany an entirely new currency system, entirely new networks of financial control and an entirely new VAT system. In effect, a new official structure is already up and running as of yesterday morning.

Mr. Skinner: And some inflation.

Mr. Howell: It is a fantastic development. Whether it will also produce inflation remains to be seen.

Britain should certainly keep a close eye on East Germany and consider giving it assistance and investing in it. A huge programme is now under way to privatise thousands of small firms and all the large firms, in an effort to break the key log jam—that of private ownership and the problem of who owns the property and title to firms, businesses and real estate in East Germany. A programme has been set up through which a public trustee, the Treuhandanstalt, with an international supervisory board which will include someone from the United Kingdom, will attempt to dispense land on a legal title basis and establish that any land purchased by new enterprises belongs to them and ownership will not be thrown into question. In that matter, the British have been invited to be involved in the most intimate part of the transformation of East Germany and I hope that we can play our part vigorously.

Hope for East Germany turns on achieving the right balance between keeping wages low enough to attract investment without causing strikes, pressures and anger or making immigration to the west resume as people see higher wages over the way, and setting wages too high,

creating massive unemployment as whole industries are wiped out because they are uncompetitive. The Germans must get that balance right. If they do, and as they do, we should be able to help them.

The picture in eastern Europe is of a whole range of new countries striving for a free market, privatisation, liberalised trade and free enterprise. Of course, expectations are miles too high. It is believed that, as in East Germany this weekend, the magic of currency reform and pouring concrete can somehow change living standards, but it will not happen overnight. The House will agree that for our own commercial interests we must be closely involved in that process. Eastern European countries are not faraway countries of which we know nothing but our next-door neighbours in the European land mass.

What are the United Kingdom's interests? What is our role, and how can we strengthen it? The estimates report from the Select Committee attempted to address those questions and gave three categories of answers. The first related to personnel and language teaching. We should recognise that British professional personnel such as accountants, managers, administrators and even, I fear, lawyers are in huge demand in eastern Europe. Perhaps we could export a few lawyers from here. There is a tremendous feeling in eastern Europe that the British professional services can provide the habits of administration and ways for countries at last to get going again as free economies. As we point out in paragraph 42 of the report, there is great demand for British expert consultants to advise on the reorganisation of industries, businesses, utilities, and so on. Here I must declare an interest as energy adviser to a leading firm of British consultants involved in eastern Europe. I declare both an interest and some knowledge that the demand for their services is great.

On the language side, there is a world to conquer. As my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary said, we have the opportunity to make English the second language of eastern Europe. The Russian textbooks and grammars are being carted out of the classrooms and there is a call to bring in English teachers, books and teaching methods. The British Council told the members of the Select Committee that it foresees the need for 100,000 English teachers over the present decade, with 20,000 in Poland alone. It would be crazy not to respond to that demand as vigorously as we possibly can, even if it means switching resources from other areas. As I have said, the first category is people and languages.

The second category is private investment flows, which will follow language familiarity, expertise and administrative and legal reform. There, too, we must play our part. At present, West Germany is leading the pack in almost every country, and especially in East Germany.

The third category is our part in the multilateral support efforts that I have already mentioned. These will be made through the European Community, the European regional development fund, the International Monetary Fund and sensible programmes of debt reduction. We cannot continue with the line that the countries of central and eastern Europe should be asked to swim into the deep water of democracy and free markets while wearing concrete collars of impossible debts. I refer to the debts which were run up in the past by the communist regimes. There is a case for recognising the difference between debts incurred by incompetent communists in the past and the need for those countries to strike out without seeing all their foreign currency disappear in debt servicing at every stage. We must adopt a balanced approach.

I hope—the Select Committee had this hope after considering the issues—that the opportunities in eastern Europe will be fully recognised. In due course we might look to the Government for a comprehensive statement on the United Kingdom's strategy in terms of the fantastic and unfolding drama of eastern Europe. Eastern and central Europe are part of our culture and we can learn much from them. We should not assume too patronising a stance. In other words, we must not assume that the learning is all one way. We have a great deal to learn from the skills, energies and genius that are to be found within the central and eastern European countries. In eastern Europe we are looking at a vast and developing market of about 120 million people, most of whom are highly skilled. As a trading nation, we must be firmly established in that market. I hope that the comments in the report and my comments this afternoon will be of some small help in that direction.

4.37 pm

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): I welcome some of the remarks of the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), but he would not expect me to be in agreement with everything that he has said. I associate myself and my right hon. and hon. Friends with his remarks about the BBC World Service. We are all conscious of the excellent job that it does with only limited resources. It is essential that its resources are strengthened to take into account the important extra work that it will be called upon to undertake.

Any discussion of assistance to eastern Europe must be seen against a backcloth of some of the most startling political and economic changes that have been seen this century, with countries moving from central planning to social democratic market-oriented economies. In eastern Europe there is excitement, uncertainty and some chaos, but everywhere there is hope. Britain, along with other countries that are giving aid, must take account of several developments that are, or will be, common to each country in eastern Europe. They include the creation of pricing systems and mixed economies that are based in part on private ownership and enterprise, the creation of capital markets, movement towards currency convertibility and the opening of internal markets to foreign competition.

We must be sure also, as the right hon. Member for Guildford said, to take account of the differences between the various countries—differences in history and tradition and in how the revolution was brought about in each country. That means that the pace and type of reform and the role of the western donors will vary from country to country.

We have all been shocked by the sight of Romanian orphans dying from AIDS, Soviet citizens queuing for hours just for a loaf of bread and Polish factories poisoning the air and water for miles around. I was glad that, earlier, the Secretary of State for the Environment made particular mention of the assistance that will be given to improve the environment in eastern European countries. The damage to the environment caused by old, inefficient industrial processes has been immense. In Hungary, even if further pollution by chemicals stopped tomorrow, chemicals would still flow through the water

[Mrs. Ann Clwyd]

table for the next 80 years. In East Germany and Czechoslovakia, unsafe nuclear power stations and energy production from lignite—a polluting brown coal—threaten the environment. It is therefore essential that aid responds to the needs of those countries for a better, cleaner and safer environment.

The Labour party is pleased to note that the forthcoming know-how programme for East Germany will include advice from Britain on decommissioning clapped-out nuclear power stations. I sincerely hope—I was pleased to note that the Secretary of State for the Environment also touched on this—that eastern Europe, unlike some other developing countries, will receive only the cleanest and up-to-date technology from Britain. In India, for example, British aid paid for British companies to build power stations without sulphur-cleaning flues. As a result, those power stations are now causing acid rain.

The scale of aid is bound to be considerable, but the resources must be found. The annual report of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe looked at a possible Marshall plan for eastern Europe that would cost some £17 billion for four years. In January, the European Community outlined a programme that would cost about £14 billion a year. It is a tragedy that sums of that order seem to be too big and too challenging for the Government and the Prime Minister to take on board. The pace of change is simply too much for them. The Prime Minister, in particular, is out of sync and out of sympathy with the needs and challenges of the age in which we live.

Mr. Budgen: Is it the Labour party's policy to press for such expenditure? No doubt it would be welcomed in many quarters in Europe and it might be politically attractive in this country. If that is the Labour party's policy, by how much is our contribution to the EEC likely to go up as a result?

Mrs. Clwyd: As the debate develops I shall answer all the hon. Gentleman's questions. If he cares to spend a little money on purchasing the Labour party's new policy document, he will find that the Labour party supports the idea of a Marshall plan. As my speech develops he will also learn about the other things we support, but he will be aware that we are in favour of contributing 0·7 per cent. of gross national product to overseas aid. We intend to achieve that target in the first five years of a Labour Government.

It is a tragedy that the sums of aid needed appear to upset the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen), especially as I shall seek to prove that they need not hit the British taxpayer's pocket.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Where will the money come from?

Mrs. Clwyd: If the hon. Gentleman can contain himself, he will find out.

There are limits on resources and none of us would pretend otherwise. It is imperative, however, that aid, whether in the form of grants, know-how, equity financing, joint ventures or balance of payments support, should be carefully targeted. It should be used to build the structures to ensure that funds are productively used so that loans generate long-term revenue.

It is precisely because resources are scarce that third-world countries are anxious that the ideological political pressure for reform in eastern Europe should not encourage western countries to give those countries aid at the expense of the third world. In short, the aid given to eastern Europe must be in addition to that given to the third world. I hope that the Minister can clarify the position by assuring us that aid to eastern Europe will not be at the third world's expense, not just this year—we have already had some assurances about that—but in the years to come.

It is not surprising that third-world countries fear that more aid from Britain to eastern Europe means less for them because they have seen the Government renege on their aid commitments every year since 1979. Far from meeting the United Nations overseas aid target of 0·7 per cent. of GNP, Britain's contribution has fallen to less than half of that target. If the aid had remained at the level achieved when the Labour Government left office in 1979, the third world would be £8 billion better off than it is today. I am glad to note that the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs strongly recommends that the Government should set a timetable for achieving the UN target. Only by doing so can the Government genuinely demonstrate that aid to eastern Europe is not preventing Britain from meeting its commitments to the poorest countries.

Regrettably, the record of aid to eastern Europe so far shows that the performance of the British Government and British industry is far from impressive. One of the stumbling blocks is the Prime Minister, who, despite her love-ins with President Gorbachev, has been slow to realise the significance of what is happening in eastern Europe. Ideologically blinkered, the right hon. Lady has even had the nerve to criticise West Germany and France for providing credits to the Soviet Union. She seemed to fall in line only after President Bush had had to intervene.

Ministers, led by the Prime Minister, too often view the problems of eastern Europe as opportunities for photo-calls rather than for action. Goodness knows how the embassy in Hungary copes, because, by the end of this year, no fewer than 22 British Ministers, including the Prime Minister, will have visited that country. Not to be outshone, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) has been there, too.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. William Waldegrave): Would the hon. Lady care to remind us about the number of Opposition Members, as well as Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen, who have also been to the embassy?

Mrs. Clwyd: Obviously I cannot speak for my hon. Friends, but I am sure that those who contribute to the debate, including members of the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service, will be ready to tell the right hon. Gentleman about their experiences. I cannot understand why 22 British Ministers felt it necessary to visit the embassy in Hungary.

Mr. Waldegrave: Has the hon. Lady visited that country and others? I hope she has.

Mrs. Clwyd: Unfortunately, the Opposition do not have the Government's budget to make such visits possible. We believe in protecting the British taxpayer as far as we can—*[Interruption.]* I have a suspicion that 20th century grand tours by Ministers are not what eastern Europe needs just now.

It is important to consider the background of the countries to who aid will be given, starting with East Germany. Yesterday there was German economic and monetary union which was historic not only for Germany but for Europe and the world. It will ensure that aid is fast on its way to East Germany. East Germany reckons that it needs 130 billion deutschmarks for investment between now and 1993. It believes that British firms, with the help and encouragement of the Government, could invest in environmental development work, including water and sewage management, in financial services, hotels and transport, for example, in the railways. East and West Germany are anxious that aid and investment in East Germany should come from countries other than the Federal Republic, but it is inevitable that West Germany should carry the main burden.

There is also a firm belief in West and East Germany that the British Government have been slow to help and British companies slow to appreciate existing opportunities. One can but hope that the Prime Minister——

Mr. Tredinnick *rose*——

Mrs. Clwyd: I am sorry, but I shall not give way again.

One can but hope that the Prime Minister, who met the East German Prime Minister last week, will do more to convince British firms that a developing country, which has a hard currency like the deutschmark, presents a unique opportunity for profitable investment. The British Government's know-how scheme for East Germany is, to say the least, bizarre. Although it is not yet under way, it is due to finish when reunification takes place later this year, so it will have a life span of a pathetic few short months.

Some British commentators fear that German economic and monetary union could go sadly wrong, with inflation taking off in Germany. We believe that such fears will prove groundless largely because the markets have already discounted the possibility by raising real interest rates to 6·5 per cent. German economic and monetary union may be going too fast, and its consequences may not be properly understood by the people of East Germany. Undoubtedly, there will be some dreadful results, with up to 25 or 30 per cent. of the population becoming unemployed. But the speed at which aid and foreign investment takes place could be critical in mitigating the damage.

This provokes another problem for East Germans, who must ensure that western capitalists do not rape their country and buy it out for the sale of the century. A warning given by the Organisaton for Economic Co-operation and Development in its publication "Economic Outlook" that eastern Europe risks being asset-stripped by western investors is one that we should all take seriously. East Germany needs productive investment that creates real jobs.

If East Germany is a special case, so too is the Soviet Union, which has special political difficulties and is moving much more slowly towards a social market economy. While the Soviet economy may, at present, be in no state to use the vast sum in aid that it will ultimately need, the immediate provision of credit can obviously help President Gorbachev buy more time for perestroika.

When the Prime Minister returned from a visit to the Soviet Union recently, instead of suggesting a package of aid and assistance, she came to the House and insulted it with an hour-long, condescending and patronising lecture on what a backward country the Soviet Union is—a view shared by some Conservative Members. If reports are true that President Bush is working on guidelines for the United States and other NATO countries, at this week's summit in London, in support of direct economic aid to the Soviet Union, possibly the attitude of the Prime Minister and other Conservative Members will change.

Unlike some other countries in eastern Europe, the Soviet Union can see little prospect of a significant increase in bank lending from the west or raising funds by the use of securities. In addition, it cannot get bilateral aid from the World bank or the International Monetary Fund because it is not a member of either organisation and does not qualify for their assistance. The sooner that Britain and other countries seek to bring the Soviet Union into the orbit of the world's financial communities, the better.

Up to now, the Prime Minister has talked of aid only once structural reform has taken place, which is like ordering someone to build a house and offering to pay for the bricks only when the last roof tile is in place.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark *rose*——

Mrs. Clwyd: No, I shall not give way because the hon. Gentleman has been muttering throughout my speech and I think that we are all aware of his views.

In this instance, the Prime Minister has failed to grasp the fact that the house can be built, indeed may only be built, if the bricks are provided in the first place. By comparison, the Dublin communiqué talks of short-term aid and aid for structural reform for the Soviet Union.

President Mitterrand went public on the Prime Minister's isolation after the Soviet aid package had been opposed by Britain in the discussions. He said:

"Nobody voted for the British proposal."

He was particularly scathing about the Prime Minister's position. He described her objections as

"Britain's penultimate twitch of life."

He added:

"we can always count on her to ensure debates are long and that the decisions taken are always retaken."

He said that she would be defeated when the aid package was considered at a Rome summit in October. Whatever the view of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark), he will be carried along by the tide of events and his views, and those of some of his hon. Friends, will constitute a lone voice crying in the wilderness.

It is my understanding that the Soviet Union will get little help from the new European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, which is being set up in London because there will be special limits on lending to the Soviet Union. Will the Minister confirm or deny that? If it is true, it is a miserable state of affairs. It is no wonder that some bankers and Governments in Europe fear that the rouble will soon cease to be convertible, even in the rouble area. The world will let that happen and see President Gorbachev fail at its peril.

Of the other European countries, Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia are in the process of creating democracies, based on mixed economies and market principles. For both Poland and Hungary, the burden of servicing debt payments presents awesome problems. Poland's debt today, standing at $40 billion, is the largest in eastern Europe. My view, shared by some leading bankers in Europe, is that it will be all but impossible for Poland to

[Mrs. Clwyd]

succeed in its endeavours unless both Governments and commercial banks are prepared to write off some of Poland's debt. Will the Government set out and justify their own views on that today?

Hungary's debt of $20 billion represents the highest per capita debt in Europe. Hungary's position was not helped earlier this year when a clumsy Bank of England report on the debt matrix created a loss of confidence in Hungary's creditworthiness. Partly because of that, Hungary has since had to get help from the Bank for International Settlements to add to its stand-by agreements from the IMF. Will the Minister ask the Governor of the Bank of England, one of the Prime Minister's family friends, to be more careful in future about damaging the prospects for development in other countries?

The present Hungarian Government say they can repay their debts and are not interested in debt rescheduling or debt forgiveness. I hope that their assessment is correct. Hungary has been engaged in economic experiments for 20 years, and this one certainly deserves to succeed.

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Lady is a spokesperson on aid in general and is asking us to forgive the debts of Poland and Hungary—middle income countries. Therefore, she is also presumably asking us to forgive the debt of all the far lower income countries which she often mentions. Am I right? I want to ascertain the extent of the huge expenditure of which she is talking.

Mrs. Clwyd: The Minister will have heard the Opposition advance that argument many times, particularly as there seems to be no will on the Government's part to make debt forgiveness a possibility for many developing countries.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): Have not the American Government recently announced that they are considering favourably the idea of debt forgiveness for Poland? The United States is Poland's biggest single creditor.

Mrs. Clwyd: My hon. Friend is perfectly right, and his point is consistently made by Opposition Members.

Naturally, the Opposition are also pleased about Britain's participation in the Poland and Hungary assistance for economic restructuring programme, which the European Commission is co-ordinating to help Poland and Hungary. We also welcome the food aid given to Poland, and lending through the European investment bank. We also approve of the setting up of the £50 million know-how fund for Poland and the £25 million know-how fund for Hungary, although we have reservations about its operation so far. The evidence, from both the recipient countries and the Foreign Office, seems to be that the know-how fund, particularly for Poland, lacks direction, has been unclear, and has confused the recipient countries.

An article in *The Economist* this month evaluates the fund by stating:

"The most stinging complaint is simple: for expertise read fripperies. The Poles need drains: the know-how Fund has given them seminars . . . Such criticisms find an echo in Poland, where some claim that money is being wasted, extolling the virtues of the House of Lords, or the subtleties of a free press; they point out that they have a long (albeit submerged) parliamentary tradition, and, thanks to Solidarity, no dearth of first rate journalists."

We must not forget that eastern European countries have political traditions and the roots of democracy. Some of the criticisms and comments of the right hon. Member for Guildford smacked of a patronising attitude towards the established background of those countries. Eastern European countries need assistance to get those roots to flourish throughout society, and to get everyone, not merely business men, on their feet.

If eastern European societies are to become truly participatory they will eventually need their own versions of Greenpeace, Oxfam, the British Medical Association, citizens advice bureaux, farmers' associations and even the CBI, along with the many other varied organisations that represent citizens' views and interests.

The Government should not focus merely on business men and politicians—teaching them English and setting up exchanges—but should help to lay the foundations for a broader link between east and west.

The varied contributions made by the British Council, Voluntary Service Overseas and the World Service of the BBC all greatly enhance Britain's contribution to eastern European developments, but the Government are not providing those organisations with adequate funds to take advantage of new opportunities, except by cutting their work elsewhere. The key to providing the most effective aid is listening to voices on the ground in eastern Europe. At present, there is concern that there has been too much political control from London and that the advisory committee has been ineffective. We hope to see improvements in the programme for Hungary, which has scarcely started, but which should soon be up to speed.

The Foreign Office has had some teething problems in getting to grips with its increased work load in eastern Europe. That has led to cutting diplomatic posts in the third world, especially in Latin America and in Africa—a point made in the report by the Select Committee. The Foreign Office has diverted some staff from the Overseas Development Administration to work full time and part time on eastern Europe. Clearly, additional staff are needed at the Foreign Office and the ODA, but not at the expense of the third world.

I do not want to end my speech on a sour note, but I wonder how the Minister of State responds to the scathing criticisms of the know-how fund in *The Times* on 1 May:

"Unfortunately, the Know-How fund does not seem to be connected with a coherent vision of a future Europe . . . So far, £2 million has been spent and there is nothing much to show for it . . . Britain is dwarfed by West Germany, overshadowed by France, Austria, and even Italy, in trade with Eastern Europe."

Changes in eastern Europe perfectly illustrate the need for countries to work together without one dominating another, and for the European Community—I was privileged to be one of the first elected Members of the European Parliament—to develop and extend its borders, as well as the need to recognise that no nation state can go it alone in today's world.

On our television screens we have seen the tearing down of the wall which divided Europe, the opening of Hungary's borders, and the emergence of Vaclav Havel from the long winter which followed the Prague spring. Britain should now be ready to play a role in such new and immensely challenging developments. When we win the next general election, our imaginative and constructive approach will show how limited and blurred the horizons of the present Government are. The Opposition will see aid to eastern Europe as part of the peace dividend which

follows the disappearance of the cold war, the iron curtain and the Berlin wall, and as part of all our hopes for the future of the world.

5.3 pm

Sir Michael Marshall (Arundel): I am glad to follow the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) if only to say that I agree with her about some of the problems of the environment. Hon. Members who have had the chance to see pollution in the Elbe and Danube must recognise the huge task there, which could be a major opportunity for many of our industrial concerns which have special expertise and which could help to resolve such problems.

I regret that the hon. Lady felt that it was necessary to pitch into party political arguments. There is a genuine job of work for hon. Members on both sides of the House to do.

Mr. Budgen: Will my hon. Friend reconsider his remarks? It is obvious from the hon. Lady's speech that there is a vast division between the two sides of the House on this issue. If she wishes to emphasise that difference, she does a service to political debate. It is obvious that the Labour party plans substantial expenditure in eastern Europe. Since that inevitably means that it intends to print money or to increase taxation, it is right that the hon. Lady should have raised the temperature and told us where she disagrees with the Conservative party.

Sir Michael Marshall: I accept what my hon. Friend says about expenditure because, although the hon. Lady said that she would tell us more about it, she did not say precisely what she had in mind.

I wish to try to find a common cause, at least in the scope of the problem and the opportunities that arise for parliamentarians seeking to address this issue. I am sorry that the hon. Lady attacked the Government about the number of Ministers going to Hungary. She should be aware that, through the Inter-Parliamentary Union, 30 hon. Members have visited four eastern European countries in the past six months, and I greatly welcome that. I want to discuss ways in which we can build on this process. If the hon. Lady reflects on that and on the other initiatives taking place, she will realise that, if anything, the Government lag behind in the number of parliamentary links we have with eastern European countries.

I make no apology for referring to the IPU, but it does not have a monopoly. There are party-to-party links with eastern Europe and a range of other activities, including the party funding organisation that is being co-ordinated by my right hon. Friend the Minister with other parties in the House—I hope that he will say more about that in a moment.

In the past six months the IPU has had seminars and fact-finding missions, which would not have been possible in the short time scale leading up to the elections—and which have now effectively concluded with the Bulgarian elections—without the co-operation of organisations such as the Great Britain-Eastern Europe Centre. I am glad to see my hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) present, because he chairs the centre, with assistance from Opposition Members.

I also recognise the work of the Foreign Office, the Central Office of Information, the Clerks to the Overseas Offices of both Houses and organisations such as the Hansard Society, which have all been working in a common endeavour to understand the needs of emerging democracies and to understand how funding—which we must consider when debating the estimates—is related to such work. Also I am glad to be able to pay tribute to Mr. Speaker—in his absence. As you will know better than most, Madam Deputy Speaker, he is especially concerned with Speaker-to-Speaker initiatives in eastern Europe, and, as an honorary president of the IPU, in support for all our parliamentary links.

The factual background is the reason why I picked up the hon. Lady's remarks about the amount of personal contact with eastern Europe. In the past six months, through seminars and exchange visits, 196 Members of both Houses—the vast majority from this House—have been involved in face-to-face and one-to-one discussions with parliamentary candidates or parliamentarians from eastern Europe—a pretty high striking rate. A third of our membership is involved in that process.

In the six months that followed the Berlin wall coming down, there were flying squad visits by two parliamentarians who went to the Federal Republic and the GDR —which are now emerging as a united Germany. It is important that we try to understand both sides of the German viewpoint. We were able to follow their visits through when parliamentarians from the GDR visited us here last month. It became obvious that they were extremely concerned to keep their bilateral links with parliamentarians such as ours, because as they become part of a united Germany they are conscious that outside links may be harder to maintain. We need to deal with the issue of how we can maintain contact with individual Länder in Germany when that process gathers momentum.

Similarly, the visits and the contacts that we have had with Romania, Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria have been followed up with the sending of observer teams for the elections. That, too, has been an important part of the learning process for us all.

The hon. Member for Cynon Valley mentioned *The Times* report on 1 May. It made a valid criticism of the extent to which we have demonstrated a lack of knowledge of some of the countries with which we are concerned in the two-way process.

I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) that a special concern to bear in mind in all this work is the role of the Soviet Union. That is why I was glad that the Select Committee, whose work is so usefully illustrated in the reports, has been part of the parallel processes. When IPU delegations from the Soviet Union and other countries are in this country, meetings with the Select Committee have, almost invariably, been part of the programme of the work of each seminar.

As it is only a short debate, I shall briefly touch on some of the issues that arise out of those exchanges. The need for seminars has been reinforced. Arguments have been advanced about the need for the English language, about the value of the BBC World Service and about our mature media and parliamentary democracy. Those are not items that people would wish to export—and nobody has claimed that—but it is remarkable how people can relate to that. Above all, the interest in the English language is something on which many can feed quickly. The enthusiasm and commitment of so many who have visited this House have illustrated that fact.

The Times article on 1 May, "Where are the British?", made a valid point in expressing concern about the lack of

[Sir Michael Marshall]

British industrial involvement in central and eastern Europe. Anyone visiting those countries will quickly find substantial evidence of American, Japanese, Korean, West German and other European investment projects. That is an aspect that we need to keep in mind. On the other hand, we have shown that political initiatives by both the Government and the House have been first in the field, so *The Times* is quite misleading in suggesting that parliamentary democracy is not exportable. I reject that. It is in the very process of comparing notes and trying to assess our approach to the problems that our work has had value on both sides.

It is perhaps ironic that, at a time when there is a certain amount of excitement about local government finance, our visitors have applauded the superb opportunity—as they view it—to do things on the ground and to have decentralisation. How they go about that is a matter for consideration. No doubt there will be mixed views on the efficacy of the community charge as opposed to other forms of local government finance. The thrust of the exchanges has highlighted an insatiable thirst for political exchange and political dialogue and a need to have a form of parliamentary recognition. That is sometimes underestimated as people come forward in these challenging and difficult areas.

I want to discuss one or two areas that we should think about in arranging our long-term exchanges with those countries. I have mentioned the media and the press, which are of special interest. It is also interesting that the concept of a non-political civil service arouses a great deal of interest among our visitors. It is quite difficult to know how to demonstrate that. However, it is clear that, for many visitors, the opportunity to sit in and observe the work of the Clerks to the Overseas Offices of both our Houses, or to sit with a local government officer, has been a major part of the learning process. That has been highlighted by the one-to-one constituency visits between our parliamentarians and those from other parts of the world. We can reflect only that, perhaps, we have never fully appreciated the way in which our system sometimes gives us advantages in having a particular strength and a particular intimacy. Although others may not use the same system, it is clear that our process of relating to a voter is something that immediately gets their minds working in a way that will assist and, perhaps, be part of their immediate political development.

I shall now discuss the role of the House and of the Government in taking matters ahead. There is a problem with co-ordination. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State has shown great interest in that when talking to hon. Members from all parties. That also reflects the views of my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary. If we move, as we hope, to bi-monthly seminars in 1991 and away from the old concept of the semi-state parliamentary visit to working visits that allow people to get down to the nitty gritty, we need to have some understanding of what is taking place in parallel with that. Within the Inter-Parliamentary Union, a committee of the Twelve-plus—that is, Sweden, Italy and ourselves—is seeking to pool all the information and the intelligence about what is happening throughout western countries in assisting in the process. Similarly, there is work in the Council of Europe and the European Parliament. There are party-to-party links and individual activities by members in all these areas.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister will feel that the Foreign Office could serve not only his thinking but that of the House by holding a conference or seminar —it may be once every six months—at which the various interested parties might meet to take stock and to share common experiences. In making our plans, all of us have experienced a little uncertainty about how far we might be tripping over each other in some of the processes. Although there has been a rush to try to achieve a certain amount of common ground before the elections, there is still major activity that needs some co-ordination and planning. In that sense, I reflect and agree with some of the comments about the need for a comprehensive strategy in considering the way ahead. I hope that we can find work that we can share. I urge the House, in considering the estimates this afternoon, to applaud the work of the Select Committee and the work that the Government are seeking to lead.

5.17 pm

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): It is, perhaps, appropriate that on the day that the two Germanies are sharing a common currency and open frontiers we should be discussing this most central question—the political and economic development of central Europe. The dynamism behind the integration of the two Germanies has been truly staggering.

If we think back to previous debates in the House, few of us would have anticipated the pace of events. Many tributes must be paid, but, above all, the one figure who has shown remarkable foresight and courage has been Chancellor Kohl. His political anticipation of events was important. He overrode the reservations of the Bundesbank about a common currency and, especially, one-to-one personal currency exchange.

I wish to draw attention to one considerable concern that we are not showing anywhere near enough political foresight about—the need for a successful economic transformation to a market economy and a buttressing of the democracies of Poland, Hungary and Czechslovakia. I am fully confident, as I think that most hon. Members will be, that a united Germany will, very rapidly—perhaps in under two years—transform the economy of East Germany, and become a fully democratic member of the European Community and of NATO.

However, if we look even now at the development of Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, none of us can be certain that those three countries, which have made a democratic commitment and a commitment to the market economy, will succeed. It is of fundamental importance to the stability of Europe that those three countries succeed, within a short time, in making that transformation.

There are many candidates for the peace dividend. There is no question but that there will be substantial reductions in defence spending. Those within the Soviet Union will be an important part of its attempt to make perestroika succeed. It is in our interests to hasten the process of conventional force reductions and to increase nuclear reductions. All the NATO countries can also look forward to reasonable reductions in what has been a heavy defence cost ever since the end of the world war. We have contributed greatly to that process.

It is understandable that people will look to an improvement in many aspects of their domestic lives as a result of the peace dividend—whether it is through spending on the health service, the relief of poll tax, or further spending on higher education or training for technical skills. Goodness knows, we need more spending on those sectors. If we are truly buttressing peace, we should be well advised to ensure true democracy in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland.

In the middle 1970s, there was an extraordinary political thrust to buttress the new-found democracies of Spain, Portugal and Greece as they emerged from fascism. That political thrust is now necessary to ensure the success of Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. The European Community has been remiss in not giving those countries the certainty of membership of the European Community. I know that many in Brussels find it suspicious when we talk about enlargement of the European Community because they believe that Britain suggests it as a way to weaken the growth of unity within the Community and its further integration. I can claim a long-standing record of commitment to British membership of the European Community. I believe that, in the immediate aftermath of the crashing down of the Berlin wall and all the epoch-making changes, it was right and natural to look to the strengthening of the Twelve and to ensuring that the Federal Republic of Germany in its unified state was an integral part of the Community.

It is also natural and right to ensure that the Atlantic link remains and that NATO finds increased unity to cope with these challenges. However, it would be a tragedy if the European Community did not also see an extremely important part of its future contribution in Europe as enlargement, at a reasonable pace, to include Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, and also Austria. That prospect, around the year 2000, may be opening up. For all the advantages and the welcome attempts of initiatives such as the know-how funds and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, none will be of such lasting value and permanence as the certainty of European Community membership.

I know that people will raise the spectre of the Community expanding to include Sweden, Finland, Switzerland, Turkey and the rest. We have to be blunt. Some of those countries do not have the same democratic imperatives. Sweden is fully democratic and we can grapple with the problem of Sweden as we deal with the need for European economic space in the EFTA-EC negotiations. Switzerland can look after itself. Turkey is, quite frankly, not a European country and it is time that we said so and were open about it. It is an associate member, but it must not look to full membership of the Community.

Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary need the buttressing of European Community membership. Those who believe in an eventual common currency, the prospect of monetary union, the need for greater decision making as a result of majority voting in the European Community, strengthening of the European Parliament's powers and an increased role of the Council of Ministers should also argue the case for enlargement. It should come not just from this country but from France, the Benelux countries and Germany.

Germany has made it clear that it will take the financial burden of the integration of the two Germanies. It will pay the full price of economic and democratic development in East Germany, with its environmental pollution problems, and will pay a heavy price to the Soviet Union to ensure that the Soviet forces coming out of East Germany are rehoused in reasonable barracks and, in the short term, that there is continued payment from Germany to those troops in their country. I hope that that withdrawal programme will be conducted with the utmost urgency and I am pleased that the Federal Republic has shown its sensitivity in realising that Russian generals have to be able to say to their forces coming out of eastern Europe that they will go into proper barracks and remain in reasonable conditions.

The country that ought to be asked to pay a heavy price for the development of Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia is Austria. That is why it is important to tell Austria that it will come into the European Community after 1993 but that, in that transition, it will be expected to help in the market orientation of those countries, particularly Hungary.

It is reasonable for countries such as France and Britain to jump over East Germany and concentrate their investment and political initiatives on Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. East Germany has help from its fellow countrymen. We should be prepared to see that as, effectively, a responsibility for West Germany and we should go out to the other countries as fast and as quickly as we can. We ought not to be too afraid of the economic doubters. I remember how many people said to us in 1977 that Spain would not adapt and would be a constant drag on the European Community. Given reasonable help, those three countries will succeed as Spain has.

The right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), who contributed positively to the debate, pointed out that, when looking at debt, we should differentiate between that which has been incurred by communist Governments and that incurred since transition. It is unreasonable not to treat the mountain of debt that they inherited from the past on a different basis. Debt write-off, project aid and technological assistance have to be geared tightly towards movement to a market economy.

I agree with much that the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) said. However, there is a danger in her approach, which almost equated the Soviet Union and those other countries. It is that the Soviet Union is so vast and that it has not yet made a full commitment to democracy or the market economy. It is not an echo from the cold war to say that the Soviet Union must be further back in the queue for market and democratic assistance. We cannot give to it and those other countries at the same time.

I would make an exception of the extremely enlightened suggestion of the Dutch Prime Minister Lubbers at the Dublin summit for an Energy Community, which has not received much publicity. The Soviet Union is rich in hydrocarbons—oil, coal, and particularly gas. If Europe really wants to make a rapid movement against environmental degradation and carbon dioxide emissions, nothing would be better than to move into natural gas. A certain supply of natural gas from the Soviet Union throughout Europe would be an immensely stabilising and attractive investment. It would also be a way of ensuring hard currency for the Soviet Union.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Will the right hon. Gentleman clarify one point? At the recent summit, politicians instructed the

[Mr. Brian Sedgemore]

European Commission to go away and find out how the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development could provide investment funds to the Soviet Union and how the IMF and GATT could help out. Is the right hon. Gentleman for or against that proposal?

Dr. Owen: I am not against it, but I draw some comfort from the fact that lending from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development will be spread among the countries of central and eastern Europe committed to and applying principles of multi-party democracy, pluralism and market economics. It is the first time that we have ever so overtly tied aid and bank reconstruction programmes to pluralism, democracy and market economy. I should not want to dilute that at the moment with the Soviet Union. We should hold open the prospect of aid to the Soviet Union, but, to be quite blunt, I do not believe that Mr. Gorbachev has yet accepted anything more than a managed democracy and a managed economy. I see no sign that Mr. Gorbachev has accepted the disciplines of a full democracy or market economy. We would be putting bad money after worse if we poured it into the Soviet Union at the moment. We learnt that lesson with the money that we put into Poland too soon in the early 1980s and we would not do well to repeat the same mistakes.

The proposed energy project is a serious commitment of mutual benefit. There is also a danger that the Soviet Union may move too rapidly into charging its former satellite countries full economic prices for their energy. There are many signs that the Soviet Union wishes to do that and to demand hard currency. If that happens too quickly, those countries will have an added burden for which we shall have to compensate. I hope that the Government will carefully consider the Lubbers proposal and ensure that at the next European Council it is given every bit as much consideration as the proposals by France and Germany for extensive Soviet aid. Such a proposal would give more value to the wider Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals. It has strategic and political significance and would provide the economic underpinning that Europe needs.

Finally, it is not easy to overestimate the value of the investment of the British Council and the BBC World Service. I hope that the remarks of the Select Committee in that regard will be taken seriously into account. I understand that the British Council will have to find the money from its own resources in the next few months and that the know-how fund is being made available for only a short time. It is no good looking at the BBC only in terms of radio. The new medium of communication is television. It is absurd that Cable and Network News and American culture is blasting into every country in the world with considerable facility and skill. The BBC ought to be involved in television news worldwide. It should also carry advertising. The sooner the BBC establishes a worldwide challenge to CNN, particularly in Europe, the better. It is no good thinking that we will get the same value that we have enjoyed over many decades from the BBC World Service simply by relying on radio. We have to move into television very fast indeed. Given the atmosphere of our relationship with eastern Europe, it would be a very good place to start.

5.34 pm

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Such debates are always fascinating. Yesterday there was one kind of Germany and today, it is said, there is another. This time last year we would never have dreamed of the changes that have taken place. It is natural for politicians, particularly leading politicians, to talk about splendid visions, the ideals of what we should be doing and the money that we should be giving—usually other people's.

I agree with some of the comments of the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) about third world aid. It is important that the money that we are dishing out in such huge bucketfuls should not be at the expense of the third world. However, I bring one point of realism to the hon. Lady. It is no good talking about percentages. Socialists are always keen to talk about percentages. Perhaps the Government do not give the right percentage. The socialists might well have given the right percentage, but they gave the wrong sums of money. We are giving greater sums of money and greater real help. It is no good talking about the starving. If our economy were a quarter as good as it was when the socialists were in government, the percentages would look better but money and not percentages fills stomachs.

The Opposition talk glibly about debt forgiveness, but who is to pay for it? We are talking not about a few tens of billions of pounds or dollars but about hundreds of billions. One thing is certain: an individual country can renege on a debt just once, but then it becomes a wasteland of the financial dead because no one in his right mind will ever lend it money again. It becomes a banana republic and people have to give it money because they know that they will never get it back.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: No, other people wish to take part. [HON. MEMBERS: "Give way!"] I cannot refuse that challenge.

Ms. Abbott: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that debt reduction is a complex business, but does he accept that the sums of money that were sent to Poland and South America have already been spent? Everyone knows that the prospect of many of those countries ever repaying their debt is extremely doubtful. It is no help to continue pretending that the money can be clawed back. Debt reduction is complex and difficult, and we have to take it seriously.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: I agree with the hon. Lady that each country and each debt is an individual problem. Hungary, however, is adopting the right attitude, having said that it does not want to rephase its debt because it believes that it can earn its way out of the crisis. It may well be that because Poland has so much moribund industry, as the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) said, we have learnt from what we did in the 1980s in Poland, throwing money into things that should have been obliterated.

The Opposition say that they wish to form a Government at some time in the next 20 years, but if they think that they can give away other people's money and expect the world to become a more stable and healthy place, they are living in cloud cuckoo land. The same

applies to Mr. Gorbachev. At the moment, Gorbachev mania is running around the world in the same way as Mandela mania. So far as I am concerned, what Chancellor Kohl is trying to do involves some of our money as well. Despite what the right hon. Member for Devonport said, it is not all West German money; £2·3 billion of EEC funds is going to the east and £8 billion of the £20 billion that the right hon. Gentleman spoke about so glibly will come from EEC funds. That is our money, too, and it is to be sent on propping up a man who, as they say in the midlands, "can speak good, can't he". He can certainly speak good, but what has he promised? It is clear that he wants not to change communism but to run it better. We in the western world, even the socialists, know that that socialism is dead. Socialist members of the Select Committee realised that when they returned from eastern Europe. Communism does not work for the good of people.

Chancellor Kohl wants to build new Germany and to throw $20 billion at another wasted enterprise. Russia must learn, as East Germany is learning, that to achieve real change will involve some real pain. Two million people in East Germany are about to experience two years of misery, possibly followed by 20 golden years.

We have all seen the pain of communism. It is not that the people are bad or unwilling to work, but the communist regimes that have borne down on them for generations cannot work. We must teach the Russian people that realism plays no part in their lives.

I should like to say something about Germany, but not in a carping sense. There have been three reichs, the last of which was a war reich. I do not believe that the fourth reich will make anything other than a peaceful transition to another Germany, because it is a new Germany. It is no good people always harping back to the war. Anyone who has met Germans knows that they are more tired of wars than us. Anyone who has visited Dresden, which has been rebuilt but where hundreds of thousands of innocent Germans died, knows that the Germans do not want wars.

I am not saying that the fourth reich will be a war-like Germany, but anyone who believes that the new Germany will not be a desperate battleground for this country and other countries is living in a fool's paradise. East and West Germany together will stand astride the world with Japan and America. There will be desperately difficult and challenging times ahead for our trade and industry. Anyone who thinks that East Germany's growth will provide us with huge oppportunities does not understand the German mentality. The Germans rightly want to build Germany into a huge, powerful unit. They say, "Let us not talk about Germans, British or French, let us talk about Europeans". But when the Bundesbank talks about Europeans, what does it mean? Who is to run the world banking system? Surprise, surprise, it is the Bundesbank.

Our manufacturing industry will have to change and receive more Government support than it has had in the past. The Foreign Office must change its attitude to the ambassadors it supports. Our ambassadors—happily, we saw at least one good one while we were away—must place more emphasis on trade expertise. If the Common Market means anything, it means that each country should not waste its money on having its own foreign affairs channel. We want more emphasis on trade and industry so that Britain can at least play its part in competing in Europe with West Germany, East Germany and a united Germany. Challenges and opportunities mean dangers. If Britain is to survive, it will do so not on changing the guard at Buckingham palace and on Sainsburys, but on manufacturing and trading our way out of the problems that we face.

5.45 pm

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Every hon. Member was thrilled to see the cruel and tyrannical regimes toppled throughout eastern Europe; nothing like it had been seen since 1848, the year of revolution.

All hon. Members support the political liberation of eastern Europe, but the House should consider what the immediate economic and social consequences will be. It should also consider the broader picture and the consequences for the rest of the world, particularly the third world, of events in eastern Europe.

I spent last week in eastern Europe with other members of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee. We visited Frankfurt, Berlin and Budapest and met politicians, business men and financiers, including Mr. Pöhl of the Bundesbank, who will sit astride the Europe of the future, like a direct descendant of the holy Roman emperors.

It is hard to escape the conclusion that in the immediate future the big gainer from current events will be West German capital. The short-term consequences for the living standards of ordinary people in eastern Europe look a little bleak and the consequences for the third world could be disastrous.

There is no doubt that West German banks and financial institutions are excited by events in eastern Europe, particularly German economic and monetary union. The word the bankers used time and again was how "emotional" they felt about events—an unusual word for bankers. Huge sums are poised to pour into eastern Europe, particularly East Germany, through Governments, private investment, the World bank, the IMF and institutions such as the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

In rebuilding East Germany, West Germany has the edge if not the monopoly. West German business and finance share a common language and culture with East Germany and have well-established links. The House should bear in mind that the interests of West German capital in East Germany are not necessarily focused on the manufacturing sector and job creation. The keenest interest seems to be in the service and retail sector. Deutsche Bank is poised to take over the East German Kreditbank; Lufthansa is poised to take over the East German Interflug; and Allianz, the West German insurance company, will take over the entire East German insurance industry.

When the ownership problems in East Germany are finally resolved, there will be a bonanza for property developers, because some land in East Germany is seriously undervalued. If, as seems almost certain, Berlin becomes the capital of a unified Germany, there is prime real estate in Berlin ripe for exploitation by Germanic Donald Trumps. Some of the East Germans we spoke to regard the precipitate economic monetary union of West and East Germany as, sadly, a once-and-for-all opportunity for West German business interests to buy

[Ms. Diane Abbott]

East German assets at knock-down prices. Some East Germans described German economic and monetary union as the sale of the century for West German banks.

There will not be, as Conservative Members have said, a huge manufacturing opportunity for British manufacturing industry. At present, Britain's role seems to be to provide an army of accountants or management consultants—a carpetbagger army of consultants.

The paradox is that if we take into account the western blockade which deprived the East Germans of access to technical information, the East German economy was relatively successful. But East Germany was saturated with West German television and became obsessed with access to hard currency and consumer goods. Hon. Members will have seen television pictures of people fighting to get their deutschmarks yesterday. Members of the Select Committee saw in Berlin the queues to open banks accounts, but some East Germans are having second thoughts because of the danger of asset stripping, and East German economists know that GEMU has moved too fast. It is driven by politics rather than economics and runs the danger of creating a money society.

Conservative Members said that there was a possibility of unemployment in East Germany because of GEMU. The politicans, bankers and financiers to whom we spoke said that there would certainly be mass unemployment —perhaps as many as 4 million people—and that as many as one third of the companies were expected to go bankrupt. There are already cuts in support for welfare services such as libraries and nurses, and in support for East German sport. Women with children are being sacked because they are not seen as productive. The market economy will work in East Germany because West Germany has the wealth—the long pockets—to make it work. Even in East Germany, the people will pay a grave economic and social price in the short term. It is difficult to see how the rest of eastern Europe can sustain stable, liberal democracies, given the bankruptcies, unemployment, falling real incomes and the doubling and trebling of prices which are certain to be the immediate result of the introduction of market economies.

By all means let us be euphoric about the introduction of political democracy into eastern Europe, but the social and economic road down which eastern European countries have still to go is difficult. For most of the ordinary peoples of eastern Europe, the immediate result of the introduction of capitalism will be a drop in their real living standards, extraordinary instability and uncertainty.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I rise on a genuine point of information because I do not know the answer to my question. Can the hon. Lady enlighten me? Is the standard of, say, child care provision enjoyed in East Germany higher than that available in West Germany or is it lower? Will the East Germans be able, in time, to look forward to an improvement when the two sides of the country merge?

Ms. Abbott: It is not so much that the standard is higher —provision is much more heavily subsidised in East Germany than in West Germany. Interestingly, women in East Germany have free access to abortion but the rights of the foetus are protected in the West German constitution. Not all forms of social provision and all social rights are necessarily better in West Germany than in East Germany. The quality of accommodation in East Germany may not be higher than in West Germany, but the subsidies are much higher. The women to whom I spoke were frightened as the creches were closing because Government subsidy was no longer available.

It was clear from my visit to eastern Europe that racism was surfacing again, particularly in Germany. The neo-Nazis are resurfacing and there have been attacks on black people and immigrant workers in the streets. There have been demonstrations outside migrant workers' hostels. Jewish cemeteries have been dug up and a memorial to Bertolt Brecht was defaced because it was said that he was Jewish. One frightening aspect of unification which has not been given particular emphasis in this country is the surfacing of the dark side of German nationalism, which involves anti-semitism and antagonism towards migrant workers. Thoughtful East Berliners pointed out that there are 70,000 Turks in West Berlin. They are not guest workers but a settled community. There will be unemployment in East Berlin as an immediate result of German economic and monetary union. What will the East Berliners say about 70,000 Turks holding jobs that they will regard as German jobs? In the short term at least, this must increase racial pressures.

The capital inflows into eastern Europe will be at the expense of the third world, whether they come from commercial or from governmental sources, no matter what Governments may say to the contrary. Mr. Barber Conable, president of the World bank, is on record as saying that private sector investment in eastern Europe will be at the expense of the third world. Despite all the euphoria about the new Europe and Fortress Europe, at a time when living standards are dropping all over the third world—perhaps because of poor government and certainly because of greater third world debt—it would be unfortunate if the House blithely looked to events in Europe and did not consider the consequences for the third world and Commonwealth countries.

Debt reduction has been discussed. Bankers in East Germany are already talking blithely about a 70 per cent. debt reduction for Poland. That is all very well, but if there is to be debt reduction for any middle income country, whether it be Poland, Mexico or Jamaica, the reduction should be equitable. West German bankers told us that there must be debt reduction for Poland because the Poles are very poor. There are people in Africa and central America who are even poorer than the Poles. It would be wrong for the long-term stability of the world if we looked at the issue of debt reduction for Poland in a narrow, Euro-centric way and did not take the issue in its totality.

Despite claims to the contrary, interest rates in Germany must rise once the December elections are out of the way. It seemed clear to me from sources close to the Bundesbank that, to attract the capital inflow necessary to rebuild East Germany and to check inflation, West German interest rates must rise. That will make it even harder for the third world to repay its debt—a debt that is crippling economies around the globe.

In Europe's euphoria about the political changes in Europe, the third world is in danger of dropping off the end of the world's agenda. In what will be traumatic economic times, the House and this country should think about the kind of economic support that we can give the countries of eastern Europe. The exact kind of economic

support is a difficult matter, but it needs to support progressive economic and political changes and not just prop up decaying regimes.

Let us be in no doubt—the market has no magic wand to wave. In the short term, the consequences of the introduction into eastern Europe of a free market will be a measure of political and social crisis that will vary from country to country. Like many hon. Members and people outside the House, I should be seriously aggrieved if the House were to jettison its long-standing connections with the third world and the Commonwealth in the light of current events in eastern Europe. We must help eastern Europe, but we must be mindful of our responsibilities as citizens of the world and of the interests of the poorest communities in the world.

5.57 pm

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): In the interests of time, I shall not take up the points made by the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott), much as I would have been tempted to do so in other circumstances.

I welcome this debate on assistance to eastern Europe. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) on his speech. I speak not only as a member of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee but also as chairman of the Great Britain-East Europe Centre. Hon. Members may not know that the centre was established in 1967 to promote a closer understanding between the British people and the peoples of Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Romania by fostering cultural, economic, educational and social contacts with them. In 1988, the centre extended it activities to include Poland and the German Democratic Republic. It has organised round tables, symposiums and seminars for exchanges of view between people with similar professional interests, whether in the law, medicine, conservation, urbanisation, economics or the environment. It has invited a wide range of individuals from its six partner countries for two-week visits to the United Kingdom, with the people chosen by the centre and not designated by the previous communist Governments. The centre has sponsored young people coming to the United Kingdom for the first time to attend courses and summer schools.

Since 1989, that annus mirabilis for the peoples of eastern Europe, the centre has stepped up the pace of its activities by organising, in co-operation with the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and with the welcome support of Mr. Speaker, a series of seminars on practical aspects of democratic politics and political organisation. More than 80 people from five countries were brought here for the seminars—many of them involved for the first time in a genuinely pluralistic political process. It was a cause of real satisfaction to me and to many of my hon. Friends that some of them became Members of Parliament or even Ministers on their return to their home countries. It was good to know that, with the indispensable financial support of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, it was possible to make a real contribution to the building of new democracies in eastern Europe. I entirely agree with the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), who drew a parallel with the countries of the Iberian peninsula and referred to the role that the bolstering of economic contacts—and, ultimately, after some years, membership of the Community—could make to the progress and reinforcement of democracy in eastern and central Europe.

Perhaps the mechanism of which we in Britain can be the most proud is the know-how fund, set up since the momentous events of last year. The fund, which was unjustifiably criticised by the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd), has been a pioneering model of its kind and is now being replicated by some of our European partners. I hope that its coverage will soon be extended to Bulgaria and Romania—a point touched on indirectly by the Prime Minister in her statement on 1 May following the special European Council in Dublin, when she said that the group of 24 intended to extend their assistance to Bulgaria and Romania. In that context, it would be logical for the know-how fund to cover those two countries as well.

Once again, I should declare an interest as I am a member of the advisory board of the know-how fund and have been able to build up some experience in that way. My experience and involvement have taught me several things. First, a shortage of funds has not been a problem for the countries that we seek to help, as we understand that more money will be made available as new, worthwhile projects are identified.

Secondly, the aid and assistance that Britain has been able to channel to those countries is additional to the resources already allocated to our overseas aid budget. That is absolutely clear, and it is worth putting it on record; indeed, my right hon. Friend the Minister may wish to endorse that point in his winding-up speech.

Thirdly, the fund is engaged in nothing less than helping to provide the people concerned with the skills needed to run a market economy and a democratic pluralist society. For example, the fund has been able to help the Poles by providing them with basic skills in banking, accountancy auditing and commercial law—all of them vital in effecting the transition to a market economy. Equally, we shall be helping the Czechoslovaks with their embryonic policy of privatisation—on which, as I know from a recent visit, they are very keen—and with the establishment of small businesses, which will be absolutely vital to their chances of avoiding mass unemployment.

I recently returned from a visit with a delegation to Czechoslovakia, where I was able to see at first hand the scale of the tasks to be tackled. Sober people estimate that the whole economy of Czechoslovakia is probably 15 to 20 per cent. over-employed. Were the Czechoslovaks able one day to achieve western levels of productivity, the existing level of industrial output could probably be achieved with half the present work force. That is the scale of the problems that confront Czechoslovakia. In other words, Czechoslovakia and all its partners in the now moribund Comecon need to engage in the most extensive economic restructuring. There is much that we in Britain—especially in the private sector—can do to help to bring that about.

So far—with the notable exception of the German Democratic Republic, which is really a special case—British business men seem to have been a little slow to explore the potential for joint ventures, foreign equity participation and all the other mechanisms of economic co-operation. It would be good for this country and for countries such as Czechoslovakia if more firms followed

[Mr. Nigel Forman]

the rather rare example of Barkotex, which has already formed a joint venture in textiles, and Bovis, which has launched two joint ventures in construction.

Certainly British industry and commerce have a lot of ground to make up before they can begin to match the efforts of big firms in other countries such as Bata in Canada, Volkswagen in Germany and Fiat in Italy, all of which are much further advanced than our firms in forging the necessary economic partnerships.

In general, I think that it is fair to say that so far the record of our public sector in providing practical training and assistance to the countries of eastern Europe has been superior to the performance of our private sector in direct investment and joint ventures. For the good of Britain and for the good of the recipient countries, we must hope that such an imbalance will be rectified as soon as possible. Both public and private sectors have a useful part to play in helping to transform the eastern European economies and to strengthen what Ralf Dahrendorf has rightly called civil society in those countries.

I commend Ministers for the timely and effective lead that they have given, especially via the know-how fund, and I urge them to use all their influence within the Community and within the OECD framework of 24 to bring about further practical progress.

In my view—and I agree once again with the right hon. Member for Devonport—it is a vital British and Western interest that the economic and political revolutions in central and eastern Europe should not fail. The fact that they were successful in the first flush of enthusiasm does not necessarily mean that the countries will find it so easy later on. We should do all that we can to assist them in practical and cost-effective ways, preferably concentrating our help on those things that we do best in this country. It is all to easy to make snide remarks about help with the police, local government and the civil service. The fact remains that those are our relative strengths and it is right that we should give them priority in our efforts to help the countries of eastern Europe.

At the same time, however, we should use our influence with the new democratic Governments of those countries to encourage them on the difficult but necessary path to price reform, currency convertibility and much more extensive private ownership, without which their bold and magnificent experiments may not succeed.

6.6 pm

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): Like the hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman), I shall be brief because time is pressing and many hon. Members wish to speak.

I am still euphoric about the events in eastern Europe, and that will, I suppose, affect what I think and say. The glorious achievement of a long-deferred hope remains very exciting, but it lays on us a great responsibility. That responsibility may be difficult to fulfil, but we have a duty to take it on and not to be mean or exploitative about it.

Let me deal first with the Soviet Union—the big one. I do not agree with the position adopted by the Prime Minister in Dublin and stated today by the right hon. Members for Guildford (Mr. Howell) and for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen). We must look seriously at ways of giving Gorbachev economic support and help. I said that first in the Western European Union Assembly in December last year, so it is not a new view.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Why?

Sir Russell Johnston: Because—I shall quote myself, which is always useful—as I said then:

"The price of helping Russia to change must be balanced against the cost of defending ourselves against her . . . It is a time when I believe that boldness, not timidity"

should guide us. It is all very well the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) uttering remarks from a sedentary position, but it is extraordinary to suggest that Chancellor Kohl is anxious to pour money down a black hole. I do not believe that that is the German approach to such matters. Of course there must be prudence and order and care must be taken and I do not believe that the proposals coming from the Germans involve anything other than that—nor am I afraid of the link that the Germans are making with NATO and troops. We must face up to our responsibility to assist the changes in the Soviet Union.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does not the hon. Gentleman understand that GNP in Russia is dropping by 5 per cent. a year? How can giving the Russians £20 billion bolster anything unless there is real change?

Sir Russell Johnston: I am not saying that we should give them £20 billion. I am saying that we should look at constructive ways of assisting their economy.

I was not clear about what the right hon. Member for Devonport said about some sort of accelerated membership of the European Community for Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia; I do not know how that would work. I take the view that the existing Community must sort itself out and give those countries assistance. We must offer them associate status as and when and look to the point at which they can join, but that cannot all be done at once.

Like the hon. Members for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) and for Carshalton and Wallington, I am also a member of the know-how fund advisory board, which has been confined so far to Poland and Hungary, but will probably cover Czechoslovakia. I hope that the Minister of State will refer to East Germany when he replies because we would like to know what the position is with regard to East Germany.

The British Council and our embassies are a little overwhelmed at the moment. They need more people. There is a genuine area of cross-party co-operation in that regard and perhaps hon. Members can help in an organised way. The hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) referred to overlap, and I am still worried about that. It has been suggested that the Council of Europe has a role to play, and clearly the European Community also has a part to play. However, we must consider what is happening. In general, I believe that the progress has been constructive.

My hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) has just returned from a Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee visit to the east. He has stressed that the Hungarians do not want their debt cancelled because they believe that that is unnecessary. That is contrary to the point made by the hon. Member for Cynon Valley.

The context of German reunion must involve faster and more confident European integration. Bulgaria has held its election and has produced the successor Communist party and the Bulgarian socialist party is now in office. That party won what most observers considered to be a reasonably conducted election. One of my party members, Miss Sarah Ludford, witnessed the elections and said:

"Forty-five years of Communist totalitarian Government obviously leave a legacy which cannot be removed in a few months . . . this undoubtedly produced a climate in which a lot of people felt pressurised to vote"—

for the successor Communist party—

"we were told of none-too-veiled threats about loss of jobs and pensions . . . although the vote itself was secret . . . that secrecy may not have given people enough confidence to vote for the opposition."

That is also true of Romania. I was in Romania during the election and I saw almost the same thing. There were then also the awful events when the miners rampaged through Bucharest and the west said, "Hold off. It looks like Iliescu is simply a repetition of Ceausescu." I do not believe that that is true.

In Innsbruck the day before yesterday I was fortunate enough to spend half an hour with the new deputy Prime Minister of Romania, Dr. Severin. I wrote to the Minister of State about that meeting, but he will not have received the letter yet. The Romanians are trying hard to give the opposition a place. The leader of the Romanian Liberal party, Mr. Campeano, is now the deputy president of the Senate, and the Peasants party is also getting opportunities. In the west we must decide whether the Romanians are behaving openly and, if they are, we must help them.

The hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington referred to the collapse of a civil society. Nowhere did that happen to a greater degree than in Ceausescu's Romania. The civilised society had almost disappeared there. However, it is surprising how quickly it can be brought back.

It is important to be prudent. However, we must also be positive and generous. We must not exploit or asset strip. Instead we should try our best to show the acceptable face of democracy and capitalism.

6.13 pm

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): Recently I had the honour to host the first ever conference for Members of Parliament from both east and west Europe, that is, democratically elected Members of Parliament from east Europe and candidates from countries such as Czechoslovakia which had not yet held their elections. The conference was held at Lancaster house and involved nearly 30 Members of Parliament and 80 delegates. I want to thank my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for his support and for making know-how fund money available to the British Atlantic group of young politicians, of which I am chairman and which organised the conference. His help was invaluable.

In my brief speech tonight, I want to share with the House some of the impressions that I gained from the delegates from all the east European countries, including the Soviet Union. I want also to refer to the special position of the Soviet Union and consider what we can do to help. Then I will consider the changes in the European Community which the reforms in eastern Europe are bringing about and the way that those changes are being addressed.

The British Atlantic group of young politicians is a NATO-supporting organisation. Last year it decided that, because there were glimmers of hope and democratic developments in east Europe, the group should try to develop contacts with those countries. As chairman of that group, I can say with some pride that we perhaps anticipated events and our conference at Lancaster house was set up well before November last year.

The first impression that I gained from the conference was that the know-how fund has been tremendously welcomed by all the countries that are favoured by it. It is a great credit to my right hon. Friend the Minister of State and to my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary that they have come up with the package. The delegates from Czechoslovakia and Poland very much hope that more investment will follow the British know-how.

I spent election day in Czechoslovakia in the Civic Forum headquarters. In that country, it is not a matter of pushing at an open door; it is a matter of walking right through the door frame. Those people desperately want British investment because they are frightened to a certain extent of German investment. In the Sudentenland they are particularly worried that too much German influence will come across the border and will damage their independence.

I was in Poland last year and I was aware that the Polish people are worried that the disproportionate amount of West German investment in Poland, and particularly in Silesia, is affecting their independence. That view was confirmed at the conference. There is great scope for British investment in those countries.

Mr. Budgen: Does my hon. Friend agree that the important point about private investment is that it is likely to change the political and economic structure of the recipient country because only by changing will it attract that investment? On the other hand, public investment is more likely to shore up the existing political circumstances and prevent change.

Mr. Tredinnick: I accept my hon. Friend's point, but we must differentiate between different types of aid.

The delegates at the conference also wanted the English language to be the paramount international language in eastern Europe. Anything that we can do to develop and improve the English language in that area will be most welcome. That was particularly evident when I spoke to Czechoslovak delegates. Delegates were also very concerned about the environment. Britain has a great role to play in that respect.

If my right hon. Friend the Minister of State were to consider the problem with visas, he could ease the relations between the countries. We visited the embassy in Prague on a Sunday and saw the embassy staff working overtime to process visas for Czechoslovak citizens wishing to come to Britain. We must review our policy towards eastern Europe. The east Germans and the west Germans have dispensed with all visa controls. We must move ahead and consider doing the same.

It has been said this afternoon that there is a strong argument for not throwing money down the well, putting it down the plug hole or throwing it at ancien régimes. However, the House must differentiate between different types of assistance. An article in *The Economist* this week

[Mr. Tredinnick]

also suggested that we should not repeat mistakes that were made in the past by providing aid to countries which just wasted it.

There is a case for extending the know-how fund, and I shall explain how it should usefully be done. During the conference at Lancaster house, I took great care to spend time with the Russian delegation, because it was the largest from eastern Europe—there were six recently elected Members of Parliament and a member of the Praesidium. Afterwards, I entertained the delegation privately in the evening. I sat next to the Russian ambassador at lunch at the Russian embassy but two weeks ago. It is my conviction that the Russians are anxious to move closer to Britain, and they want to do so for several reasons. First, they still feel a bond between our nations. It pre-dates the 40-year cold war—it goes back to the fact that we were allies in the last war. Secondly, they believe that our nation can deliver reform. Thirdly, they recognise the success of our privatisation ideology.

It is my profound belief that we would be mistaken if we did not extend the know-how fund to the Soviet Union in a specific way. I am not suggesting that all the reforms in the Soviet Union that should take place have taken place, but, when a reformist leadership is under great pressure, the very least that we can do is to offer something so that the Soviet leader can say to the people, "We really have support; it is tangible." We could give help with desperately needed English lessons—that help would not go into the war machine—and we could help with training in western accountancy methods.

I now refer to the pace of change within the EEC and what should be done about it. In his moving speech, the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) addressed the way in which the EEC is looking at eastern Europe. I agree with him 100 per cent., but I go a little further. Not only should Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary be within the EEC, but it behoves the EEC to move much faster to achieve that end. We have just seen the west Germans mobilise a tremendous effort to effect change in their country. In Poland, the Catholic Church built churches as soon as restrictions were lifted. There have been vast changes in the Soviet Union also. The EEC must move faster. It is no good saying that we must wait three or four years before other applications are processed. We must consider setting up some structures much sooner than that.

I am grateful to hon. Members for listening to my speech.

6.22 pm

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): I am glad that there have been at least one or two mentions of the problems facing Romania. I was a member of the Inter-Parliamentary Union delegation which visited Bucharest, Timisoara and Lipova, and many villages in that country. I was able to confirm what our local government officials had said of Romania. There was also a 75-man delegation from the United States. As far as we could tell, in the circumstances, the election was carried out in a perfectly just way. On 20 May, the people of Romania went to the polls in a spirit of freedom. They argued among themselves about the respective merits of the parties. I was accompanied also by the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), and we were of the opinion that, even if there were procedural problems, there was nothing sinister on election day.

I recognise, of course, that there were certain events in Bucharest when miners—party vigilantes—were brought in, and all hon. Members will deplore that. Someone must tell President Iliescu that democracy does not depend entirely on what happens on election day—there must be a spirit of tolerance. Perhaps some tolerance will be imbued by inviting Romanian Members of Parliament to this country to show them that, although we may slander one another across the Chamber, we can have civilised political debate. There must be a price to pay for the lack of tolerance in Romania.

It would be wrong to exclude Romania from the know-how fund or from any other economic and social assistance that we can give. Anyone who has seen the children's hospital in Timisoara knows of the urgent human needs of the children and the conditions there. The floors of the kitchen are swilling with germ-ridden water. There is an urgent need for assistance.

The Government must act alongside Romanian politicians. We know that 20 May was a great day of hope. We recognised that it was the beginning of Romanian democracy. Romanians have never known democracy, no matter what regime was in power.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Wareing: I shall not give way as there is insufficient time.

I remind the Government that, when they consider human rights as a condition of assistance, they must bear in mind that we do not withhold assistance from Turkey. In the estimates, we find that, even after the events in Tiananmen square, the Yue Yang power station in China will consume £3·5 million this year and £47·9 million in future years. I ask the Government to bear that point fully in mind. Country house seminars are one thing, but they are not all that is available from Britain. We need drive on the part of British business to invest in eastern Europe.

I was chairman of the economic development committee on Merseyside county council. I hope that the Government will not advise the Romanian Government on how to dissolve Bucharest city council as they dissolved the Greater London council. That would not be a lesson in democracy.

Some of our small business men went to the Hanover trade fair. We must use the facilities in Leipzig, Zagreb and other parts of eastern Europe. British business is led by laggards—people more interested in asset stripping than in real investment. That is true in this country and wherever British business features in other parts of the world. We want real drive for real investment, which will not only be to the economic advantage of the United Kingdom but will help to restore the lives of many people in eastern Europe. I ask the Government to act alongside Romanian Ministers and talk to them. Of course there will be conditions, but we should not dissolve all aid.

6.28 pm

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): This debate has been based in part on the valuable report produced by the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) and his Select Committee. The debate has been wide-ranging,

consensual, constructive and informed, as was demonstrated by the speeches by the hon. Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick), with his experiences in Czechoslovakia, and by my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing), who pleaded that Romania be not left out of consideration.

As the hon. Member for Arundel (Sir M. Marshall) has said, the Inter-Parliamentary Union has played a large part in building bridges and in providing facilities for hon. Members to see at first hand the dramatic events taking place in eastern and central Europe. We all welcome those changes, although the dramatic nature of developments has revealed some of the darker aspects of the past on the eastern side of our continent. My hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) spoke about that.

Fears have been expressed about the danger that aid to the third world will be sidelined to eastern and central Europe. One sees that trend in the deployment of foreign service personnel, a matter which was mentioned in the Select Committee report. I commend to the Minister the idea of uncoupling aid to eastern and central Europe from the overseas development vote. Perhaps he would consider a separate unit based on the British Council precedent. That would make quite separate the very different areas of the third world and eastern and central Europe. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington said, the third world finds it increasingly difficult to attract private capital. Eastern and central Europe have human and physical infrastructures which make them highly attractive to private capital, some of which is employed in an abrasive and voracious manner.

We must decide how best to respond to the many needs of the eastern part of our continent. There is general recognition that political changes in the past six months must be underpinned by economic changes. That means providing the management and accountancy training which are part of the know-how funds on which the debate has concentrated. The genesis of those funds was in June last year, when the Prime Minister met General Jaruzelski and promised to provide Poland with training and advice on political pluralism and the market economy. Political changes in the rest of the region have extended those concepts.

We broadly welcome what has been done within the ambit of the know-how funds, although we are understandably wary about the Prime Minister's enthusiasm for privatisation, which at times conjures up visions of the Adam Smith Institute careering around eastern Europe organising seminars on the image of Thatcherism or seminars at which Lord Young lectures east Europeans on honesty and transparency in privatisation. Perhaps the Secretary of State for Transport, bless him, could talk about competence in privatisation and how to bring the continental railway system up to the standard of British Rail.

The know-how funds are but one part of an overall package of assistance which includes the Development Bank and the Lubbers proposal from the energy committee at the European summit which was pressed by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen). It also includes trade—are we prepared to open our markets to products from eastern and central Europe? It includes debt reduction and the range of activities which the hon. Member for Arundel and other hon. Members have set out on behalf of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

We acknowledge the way the Government have worked in concert with the advisory body. The Minister said that the Government had learnt from their mistakes in the early operation of the know-how funds. It would be interesting to hear about those mistakes, because the projects which have come forward since that admission by the Minister seem strikingly similar to those which came forward in the first part of the operation.

There are reservations about the implementation of the funds. One concerns the degree of co-ordination and who directs it. Will it be done by the group of 24 or by the European Community? Such co-ordination is necessary if we are to avoid stumbling over one another in the desire to help eastern and central Europe. Questions have been asked about amounts of money. Perhaps the Minister will confirm that about £2 million of the total pledged at the end of May has been disbursed. In the context of the debt and the need, that is small beer.

Some hon. Members have asked about the narrow profile of democracy and multi-party politics that the Government have adopted—a point in relation to Professor Dahrendorf and his social society. There is a need for intermediate bodies because democracy involves diversity and not just bankers and accountants flocking to eastern Europe. Will the Minister say at what point he thinks that East Germany, after yesterday's economic and commercial union with greater Germany, will no longer be able to benefit from the know-how funds? Perhaps he will also talk about the relationship of the funds, if any, to the Soviet Union's enormous needs. That has been mentioned by several hon. Members.

As funds are limited, have the Government considered the know-how funds as pump primers? Companies which will benefit could surely make a contribution to enable Government funds to go that much further. How much liaison is there with business? A major British company to which I spoke says it thinks that the Government have been insufficiently commercial. Perhaps in terms of distribution Britain has had the short end of the stick in that we have been assigned financial expertise, the benefit of the City, while other countries have been assigned areas in which commerce is more evident. I hope that the Minister will confirm that we have not been short changed.

The Minister will be aware of the criticism contained in a recent article in *The Times*. It suggested that France has been more successful in setting up institutions for teaching banking in Poland, whereas the seminars that we have promoted have been of much less benefit. Tourism has many benefits, not only because it employs many people but because it will earn foreign exchange. Yet know-how funds have been directed to only one small tourist project in Cracow. The Minister should look at the claims of tourism.

The Opposition welcome the scheme as far as it goes. It is but a small part of a panoply of measures which seek to cope with the changes in eastern and central Europe. Those changes are wholly unprecedented and are turning a command economy into one in which the market will have a place, albeit in a social context. We are ready to co-operate with the Government but, as I have said, we shall be wary of any attempt to mould eastern and central Europe in the image of Thatcherism. We are reassured by the fact that the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the right hon. Member for Bristol,

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West (Mr. Waldegrave), is in charge of the programme, making it less likely that a narrow ideological vision will prevail.

We stress the need for flexibility. The Government should not take the view that all the countries in eastern and central Europe have the same problems. They should pay attention to each of the countries and policy should be subject to constant review. When there is a change of Government, we shall try to ensure that the right hon. Member for Bristol, West remains a member of the advisory committee. In working with the Government on the matter, our objective is to target aid and assistance as well as possible and to improve its scope.

With all the reservations that I have mentioned, we give a broad blessing to the know-how funds.

6.40 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. William Waldegrave): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson), although I am not at all grateful to him for his unfortunate remarks about me personally at the end of his otherwise admirable speech. On a more serious note, I greatly welcome the tone of what he said.

The introduction to the debate by the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), was exemplary, as was the Committee's report, which was extremely useful to us on a number of counts. I wish that I could say the same for the speech of the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd), which was mildly deplorable. To mock her colleagues and ours for going to find out about the eastern European countries seemed sad. To say that one must listen to the people on the ground but not go to the countries seemed odd. She then spent several billions of pounds and we look for the normal rebuttal from the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) tomorrow.

We have had a good debate with speeches from hon. Members on both sides of the House. The hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) made a good speech. My hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Sir M. Marshall) brought us back to sense. We now have the task of helping the east European countries. We must not impose anything on them. If they are interested in privatisation, it is not because we have sought to impose it on them but because they want to diversify and pluralise their economies. The demand comes from them. They look to us because they have seen us undertake a much smaller but similar task.

The east European countries do not look to us only on economic matters. The hon. Member for Swansea, East said that, as did the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston). The institutional help that we can give to such countries is greatly valued by them. They have come to us to ask for help in setting up non-political civil services, local administrations and police forces. The industrial and commercial aspect of the debate is vital, but it is not the only aspect. The know-how funds were not set up solely as a commercial and industrial support operation. I hope that we shall use them, fairly, as much as we can in the interests of this country to bring business here. The problems posed by the moral and institutional wastelands left by the communists, as well as the environmental wastelands referred to by several hon. Members and the commercial and financial wastelands, are a much more difficult aspect.

The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) made a powerful speech. I agree with him that we must be absolutely clear that if the eastern European countries manage to put their economies and their institutions into free and democratic shape, the Community will welcome them. I take a slightly more pessimistic view than him about the time scale in which that might be possible.

When we compare the transition to democracy in the eastern European countries with that which took place in Spain, it is clear that, although the political rebuilding when a country escapes from communism is similar to that when it escapes from fascism, the economic rebuilding is more difficult. Some elements of a free economy existed under fascism in Spain and Portugal which greatly speeded their transition. That has turned out to be a fact.

The relationship of the eastern European countries with the Community is vital. Opposition Members are mesmerised by the Prime Minister and bring her into their speeches frequently. It is extraordinary how easy I find it not to mention the Leader of the Opposition in my speeches. The Prime Minister is leading the battle, with help from Holland, Germany and other countries, for an open trading system and a liberal trading Community. That is far more important to the interests of the eastern European countries than anything else that we could do. It has turned out that Lenin's old joke about the capitalists selling the communists the rope with which to hang themselves was wrong in every respect. First, they managed to strangle themselves with the rope and then they did not pay for it.

I noticed the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) nod from a sedentary position during the debate when the concept of differentiation was mentioned. It seems absolutely right that there should be differentiation in the jargon. We should try to relate our support to the development of the institutions which the reformers whom we supported in the years of communism sought to build. Those reformers urged differentiation on us. We have not thought it up for ourselves. That is why there is hesitation about giving aid to the Soviet Union, and it is right that there should be. We do not say that we should never offer support, but we should offer support that helps the transition to new institutions and does not simply undermine the forces that are pressing for change. If we simply pay to put consumer goods on the shelves for a year or two, we shall have done nothing to help produce more consumer goods in the long term. We are not saying no. We are saying yes. In the words of my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford, if we can be assured that the analysis has been done and that the money that we put in will help the transition, we shall consider it seriously.

I have referred to the European Community, which has a crucial role to play both as an ultimate target for the eastern European countries and in the meantime in our association agreements to provide markets in which the liberalising economies can sell their goods. Other multinational and multilateral organisations are vital. First, there is the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, which we shall welcome to London with its French chairman. We agree with the Select Committee's

recommendaton that the EBRD should be paid out of the Overseas Development Agency eastern European support line and not out of the multilateral organisations line.

The EBRD will be one of the key institutions. Conditionality will work with it in relation to the Soviet Union at least at the beginning. That has been made clear by its founding members and it is right. It is vital to achieve international co-ordination on the broad thrust of the work of the group of 24. That work is being done for the first time in a wide forum by the Commission of the European Community. That is a considerable step in showing how central the EC is to all the changes taking place. Commissioner Andriessen has done extremely well in the work that he has undertaken.

The hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) made a good short speech about Romania. I agree with him that we should not cut off contacts with the Romanians. On the contrary, we should show them what we mean by democracy, which we criticise them for not yet having established. Before it becomes established as part of the folklore, I emphasise that Conor Cruise O'Brien was wrong to say that I said that President Iliescu was indistinguishable from Ceausescu. I carefully did not say that. I said that it was depressing that some of the methods used were exactly those used by Ceausescu and that that shook us, but we still asked our ambassador to go to the inauguration to show that we recognise the enormous step forward that has been taken by holding an election.

We do not believe that Romania yet meets the criteria for the know-how funds. We hope that we have sent a sharp signal by not inviting it to the first group of 24 meeting. We hope that that shock produces results. We do not want to push Romania out. We hope that the shock will encourage Romania to do things that will enable us to bring it in. I hope that both sides of the House agree with that.

Mr. Harry Barnes: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Waldegrave: We had 40 minutes of speeches from the Opposition Front Bench during my right hon. Friend's debate, so I cannot give way if other hon. Members wish me to comment on their speeches. I am in the hon. Gentleman's hands.

There has been a major operation in the multilateral forums, with the Community at its centre, to respond to events in eastern Europe. As the right hon. Member for Devonport said, the security aspects of changes in eastern Europe are far more important than much of what we laboured to negotiate in the Vienna arms control negotiations, important though those negotiations were. If we have a group of free, democratic, economically successful countries at the centre of Europe, it will do far more for our security than any negotiations about a few hundred aircraft or tanks. That is why events at the NATO summit this week are crucial. The multilateral security negotiations are not irrelevant to the debate.

I now come to what we have tried to do bilaterally. First, there are the know-how funds. It was unfair of the hon. Member for Cynon Valley to quote from *The Economist* only the critical remarks. She quoted the following passage:

"The most stinging complaint is simple: for expertise read fripperies."

In fact, *The Economist* set out the criticisms and then knocked them down. Unfortunately, the hon. Lady did not quote the knocking-down passages. Her research assistant was either idle or unfair. I shall right the balance by quoting the final paragraph of the article. It reads:

"Many of the business men who have brushed with the fund have been impressed. They agree with its view that eastern Europe needs know-how even more than cash, and they generally endorse the fund's decision to make aid conditional upon countries holding free elections and introducing free markets."

The hon. Lady may not like the following passage:

"Why not extend the good idea, several have asked, and apply the same conditions to debt-ridden dirigiste countries in the third world?"

I shall reply to Mr. Boyes, who I do not consider to be one of the leading commentators on these matters, with the opinion of the man who, along with Timothy Garton Ash, is the best writer on eastern Europe—Neal Ascherson. On Sunday 3 June, Mr. Ascherson wrote—I commend hon. Members and the hon. Lady's research assistant to read the article——

"The know-how fund, aware of this, warns its experts not to be too British in their approach. It is a limitation but no other western country anxious to assist infant democracies in eastern Europe has produced anything half so adaptable. Here is the starving man. There is the pig. The British response is to offer him neither a pistol nor a tub of apple sauce but a cooking pot."

I like it.

Mr. Sedgemore *rose*——

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Member has spoken already at enormous length and has delighted us all with a range of sedentary interjections throughout the afternoon.

Mr. Sedgemore: If the know-how fund is beyond criticism, as the Minister is saying, why are staff in the embassies in eastern Europe criticising it so severely?

Mr. Waldegrave: I accept that the know-how fund is not beyond criticism. Indeed, I am about to make some criticisms of it. The hon. Gentleman has produced another example of how he does not facilitate our debates. During the last financial year we spent about £2·5 million on the fund. We were spending money as we were setting up the organisation. I am well aware of the justified criticism that was made—the customer is not always wrong—that it was not always easy to learn how to contact the fund and to ascertain the criteria. Those difficulties arose because we were setting the criteria as we went along. I am willing to believe—this may be astonishing to some—that the fund is not perfect yet. However, it is becoming very much better by the day and more and more satisfied customers are writing to tell me that. As the hon. Member for Swansea, East said, it is in the interests of both sides of the House and of the country generally that we get the fund right. We shall listen to criticism and try to put things in order. The structure of the fund has become considerably better. That is why people like Neil Ascherson write as they do.

The hon. Member for Cynon Valley criticises Ministers for visiting eastern Europe. I shall rebut her argument. One of the purposes of the know-how fund is to involve every Whitehall Department in using British expertise in the round. It should not be the Foreign Office alone that is involved. In some ways the know-how fund is unique.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment has been to each of the countries that are involved with the know-how fund. We have the skills for which they asked and they have been deployed by officials of the Department. The three countries wanted to know

[Mr. Waldegrave]

how to set up small businesses and how to diversify from collapsing major capital-intensive industries into new industries. I pay tribute to my right hon. and learned Friend and his Department for taking on new work and performing extremely well.

The same comments can be made about agriculture. It is necessary for contacts to be made at ministerial level. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has visited several countries. In Poland, for example, there is a scheme worth £50 million which will meet exactly the purpose for which the Poles asked. They want small productive businesses effectively to distribute the food that at present never reaches the shops.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and a team of Department officials have helped, as they were asked, to advise and assist on and with local government administration. That is another example of sensible assistance. Other schemes have focused on police training in Poland and environmental matters. Some of these activities have been almost too big for the know-how fund. The fund, with British utilities, has been undertaking some work, but the big capital spending must come from multilateral organisations such as the World bank and others. We are doing a little where we are requested to intervene.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Are any discussions taking place with Soviet authorities about the transfer of agriculture technology and managerial expertise to improve distribution in the Soviet Union? Would not that be a major contribution to resolving the distribution problems of the Soviet Union?

Mr. Waldegrave: Those who want us to rush at the Soviet Union should understand that that country has not yet asked for anything. It might be polite to wait until it does. If we were to get involved, I would have a personal bias in favour of exactly what the hon. Gentleman suggests. Some of the elements are already in place. For example, ICI has been working for the Soviet Union to try to help that country to develop agriculture, especially in distribution and retailing. I can imagine that a sectoral project would be attractive. I am speaking personally and far ahead of any analysis. I am sure that note will be taken of the hon. Gentleman's suggestion.

I note the views of the Select Committee, whose Chairman is my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford, on the range of projects that should be supported by the fund and on the range of organisations and individuals that should be consulted. The point is well taken. There is no shortage of proposals, and that is partly why we are attracting some criticism. When individuals are turned down, they sometimes write to their Members of Parliament to tell them that it is scandalous that certain projects have been rejected. That is not an unknown phenomenon when dealing with aid. We should do better with our publicity, and any criticism of it is valid. We are trying to bring some thought to bear on improving it. We wish to make it easier for those who have never had any experience of eastern Europe or of aid products to get in touch with the know-how fund.

I note with interest the suggestion of my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel that a general stocktaking seminar should take place in due course—perhaps after six months, for example—to be attended by a range of the organisations involved so as to ascertain whether there is adequate co-ordination. That might be a job for the Great Britain-East Europe Centre, which is so ably chaired by my hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman). The speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton was succinct and right on the ball. The same can be said of the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick), who referred to the problem of visas.

The bilateral programme—I have referred already to multilateral agencies—starts with the know-how fund and then moves on to a difficult job that will take years to complete, which is to shift the general diplomacy of the United Kingdom so that it occupies a rather more eastern-Europe-oriented stance. I think that the Foreign Office has done well already. It has found 60 new London-based or locally engaged staff. That is not a bad record in such a short time. It is not easy to transfer that number of staff so quickly. We are looking for 37 more staff by the end of 1992. At a time of necessary expenditure constraints, we are having to impose some strains elsewhere. Surely it is right to shift these people. As I have said, the Foreign Office is moving.

Mr. Anderson: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Waldegrave: No. I have only three more minutes in which to bring my reply to an end.

We shall ask the British Council to undertake a good deal more, I am certain, on the English language front. I cannot say more than that now. Negotiations and discussions are taking place. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has said, we should respond, with Canada and the United States, to the explicit desire of the countries in question to replace Russian as their second language with English. We shall not do it all ourselves but we must make a contribution. We are doing so already with specific projects through the know-how fund. These projects are aimed at providing English language training for those whom the know-how fund wishes to involve.

The British Council should take the full weight of the major expansion, and that is something that we shall have to consider in future.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Bosworth and the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs said, visas will represent another change in the relations of British institutions and British Ministries with eastern Europe. Like other hon. Members, I am all too conscious of the continuing strain that is put on our relations with eastern European countries because of the pressures that are brought to bear by the application for and granting of visas. We shall do what we can to simplify and to provide a quicker service, but we must examine each country individually and judge separately the case for each country to determine whether, at the right time, we can abolish visas entirely or in part. That would be much the best way of dealing with the problem in general. We must look carefully at the interests of our country before we do so.

Our bilateral help is additional to and separate from the United Kingdom's overseas aid budget for developing countries. The hon. Member for Swansea, East asked that such aid should be treated separately. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development has already said that that aid is a separate item in the ODA budget. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman welcomed that.

The hon. Member for Cynon Valley was right in saying that there is anxiety in the third world about the fact that private capital may go to eastern Europe, but there is nothing that she or I can do about that. The only people who can do anything are those responsible for financial policies in third-world countries who will now have to compete against Europe.

It being Seven o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *interrupted the proceedings, pursuant to paragraph. (3) of Standing Order No. 52 (Consideration of Estimates).*

Clyde Port Authority Bill

Order for Third Reading read.

7 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I seek your assistance as I am given to understand that when the Bill was scrutinised by the Committee on Unopposed Bills, counsel for the Clyde port authority mentioned amendments that were to be made to the Bill in another place. If the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) were to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would I be in order to ask him to outline the proposed amendments apparently to be made in another place?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I can neither anticipate nor comment on what might happen in another place. Tonight we are debating Third Reading and I hope that the House will stick to the normal confines of that debate and comment on what is in the Bill.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Are you aware that the Government have introduced a Command document, "Private Bills and New Procedures"? It is a consultation document, dealing with the private Bill procedure. Are you further aware that, tonight, we shall be discussing a Ways and Means resolution dealing with the levy on port privatisations, which directly affects the Bill now before the House?

I do not wish to detain the House, but given that the Government are about to change the rules and regulations by which we debate private Bills and that there is a money resolution before us that deals with the Bill, has any representation been made to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to defer the Bill pending the completion of the Government's consultation? Given that this Bill is truncated and that it will be followed by a Ways and Means resolution dealing with the same Bill, is not the Bill hybrid? Surely we should seek your protection.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: My answer to the hon. Gentleman is yes and no. Yes, I am aware of the document to which he refers, but the House has yet to debate it and make decisions on it. It will be for the House to decide on any changes that may be made to the private Bill procedure. At the moment we are dealing with the procedure as it is. No representation has been made to me about the hybridity of the Bill.

The Ways and Means resolution does not deal specifically with the Bill, but is of a general nature. When we get to it the hon. Gentleman may seek to catch my eye and comment upon this Bill. He cannot do it the other way round—he cannot anticipate what the House may debate and decide later.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will recollect that we raised the question about the Bill's hybridity on a previous occasion, but tonight I am seeking your guidance on the Government's involvement in the Bill. It is supposed to be a private Bill and the Government should not be seeking to interfere. I find it rather strange, therefore, that yet again the Government have sought to ensure that a three-line Whip operates after the debate on the Bill. That ensures that they have sufficient troops——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That has nothing to do with the Chair.

Mr. Redmond: In view of the obvious Government involvement and further to the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell), would not it be correct to suspend the private business until the report on private Bill procedures has been debated? That would ensure that we had a sensible and sane method of dealing with private business.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a matter for me.

Mr. Bell: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I omitted to mention in my first point of order that when I asked the Lord President of the Council on Thursday whether we could have an early debate on the document dealing with private Bills, he said that there would be no such debate. That is why I sought your protection, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as you are the only one who can protect us from debating a Bill, the basis of which will be subsequently changed by the Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Bill before the House will be dealt with by the procedures as contained in appropriate Standing Orders. The question of future changes does not have any bearing on our proceedings.

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are faced with a strange situation because the Bill that we are to debate will not be anywhere near the Bill that will be enacted, given that I understand that the counsel for the promoters and the sponsor said that the Bill would not be competent unless particular amendments were made. The promoters have given an undertaking that that will be put right in the House of Lords, but that means that we shall not have the opportunity to debate the Bill in the form intended by its promoters and sponsor.

The Government have said that the Bill is private, but they have said that amendments will be made to the Finance Bill to deal with 50 per cent. of the proceeds of the sale of the Clyde port authority. The Bill that we shall discuss tonight is not that which will be enacted. Is that in order?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is not unusual for public or private Bills to go to another place and be amended. If that happens—the hon. Gentleman seems to have more information than me—those amendments will return to the House so that it will have an opportunity to comment on them. It might make sense if we allowed the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), who is in charge of the Bill, to address the House as he might be able to throw some light on these matters.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You are the Chairman of Ways and Means and we all respect that position.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Few ways and little means.

Mr. Haynes: In reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington), you said that you did not know what was going on, but we do. Not many moments ago a broadcast was made about the Bill—the Government have struck a deal on this private Bill. You are the Chairman of Ways and Means, but you obviously do not know what is going on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker *indicated assent.*

Mr. Haynes: I note that you are in total agreement with me, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You are not in the picture and you must be told. The Government are pulling a fast one. The Government have whipped in a payroll vote because of the deal that has been struck. We Back Benchers need protection because that sort of thing goes on far too often. I do not represent Scotland, but I am interested in the Bill because of the unfair way in which the Government have acted.

You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, must take due note of what is going on and I am looking for some action from you. I respect your position and I support you in the many things that you do, but I hope that you will give Back Benchers support now because of the Government's fiddle on the Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, who, as always, gives me much more protection than I can offer him. Every day in this place I find people doing all sorts of things about which I should be informed but which I never learn about except at second or third hand. I suppose that that is part of the facts of parliamentary life. I have no responsibility for what the Government may be doing about organising votes. We should get on.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am sorry, but some of us are confused about this. We all understand perfectly well that Bills are introduced in the House or in another place. As they proceed, amendments are moved, but if, as is suggested, a Bill is to be introduced in the House to which major amendments are, apparently with the agreement of the Bill's sponsors, to be added at a later stage, surely the proper procedure is that the Bill should be withdrawn and the amendments that have been agreed placed on the face of the Bill where we can all see them. If not, it will be a totally unreal debate.

I have no axe to grind. I do not know whether I shall vote against or for the Bill. But in exercising a choice, as we all have to do, we should be able to make our choice based on the facts of the matter and the face of the Bill. If there are deficiencies in the Bill that must be put right in another place, surely the correct procedure is to withdraw the Bill and bring it back later so that we can all see, in the Bill, what is going on. That way, we can make more progress and better sense.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The correct procedure is that laid down in the Standing Orders that we are following this evening. I have told the House that I have no knowledge of those amendments. If they are thought appropriate, they may well be moved in another place, but it is not for me to comment on or anticipate what may happen in another place. If the Bill is amended in another place, those amendments will, under Standing Orders, be returned to this House. Instead of continuing to speculate about possible amendments, it may be more sensible for the House to listen to the hon. Member for Eastwood, who might enlighten the House about what amendments may be forthcoming and their extent.

Mr. Haynes: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. With respect, you keep mentioning the other place, but we are dealing with this place at present, and we are not getting a fair deal. I remember when you sat on the Back Benches, at the Opposition Dispatch Box and at the Government Dispatch Box when you were a first-class Minister, and you know as well as me what goes on in here. We are asking you for help because we need a blockage as the Government are getting away with murder. It is high time that you grabbed the nettle, because we are not satisfied. We always look to the Chair for help and we are looking for help from you. We are not bothered about the other end because the Bill is not there yet. It is in here, which is where we are dealing with it right now. We want you to do something about it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am bound by Standing Orders, as is the House, and I am following the requirements of Standing Orders.

Mr. Worthington: Is it in order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for someone moving a private Bill to circumvent one of the stages of consideration in the House by agreeing to introduce major amendments that counsel for the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) said were essential for the Bill to progress? Is it in order to circumvent a stage of consideration in the House by giving an undertaking of which you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are unaware, as are most hon. Members, so that the Bill may proceed more rapidly through both Houses of Parliament? Is not that underhand?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I thought that I had dealt with those matters.

Mr. Redmond: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I have some clarification? There has been a fair amount of criticism from Conservative Members about private Bills in this place, and we have a classic example now. I stand to be corrected but I believe that when such a Bill starts off, it goes through the usual scrutiny of the Private Bill Office, is advertised and, if unopposed at 2.30 pm, proceeds to its next stage. Would not the proper place for those so-called amendments to be made be in the Committee on Unopposed Bills? Not to do so is to mislead that Committee and the House by seeking to give a defective Bill a Third Reading. Can you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, seek advice from the Clerk at the Table on whether the correct procedure has been followed and whether those amendments should have been made in the Committee on Unopposed Bills? They have not suddenly come to light, and the Government and the Bill's promoters are misleading the House and seeking to destroy your office, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I do not have the detailed knowledge that some hon. Members seem to possess of what went on and what was said in the Committee that dealt with the Bill. I can only tell the House, not for the

first time this evening, that what we are doing this evening is perfectly in order, conforms with Standing Orders and is not an unusual practice. Should their Lordships find it necessary to amend the Bill, they will discuss and decide on their amendments, which will then come before this House. I repeat that I have no knowledge of such amendments, and it is not for me to anticipate what may be said or done in their Lordships' House.

Mr. Bell: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is a valid point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman says that it is a valid point of order. I hope that it is much more valid than some of those that I have had to endure so far.

Mr. Bell: I draw your attention, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to "Erskine May," which states on page 861:

> "If any stage of a bill is proceeded with when the notice has not been duly given, or the proper interval allowed, or if notice is taken of any other informality, the proceeding will be null and void, and the stage must be repeated."

I respectfully submit that the Government's publication of a new document invalidates the proceedings so far, in accordance with "Erskine May", page 861, and I invite you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to suspend the sitting until you have had time to scrutinise the matter carefully.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I thought that I had dealt with that point earlier. The document to which the hon. Gentleman referred and which he held up is not before the House at present. We should get on.

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It arises out of your ruling. You rightly say that you are not officially aware of any amendments to be tabled in the other place. However, if the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), during his opening speech in the next few minutes, tells the Chamber that he is aware that amendments will be tabled in the other place, does not that alter the basis of your ruling?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not in the slightest.

7.17 pm

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

The issue before the House this evening is fairly straight forward. The Bill received its Second Reading on 14 May with a substantial majority. There are no petitions against the Bill; in particular, there are no petitions from the riparian local authorities, which have been—

Dr. Godman: Is it or is it not the case that some hours ago the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) swore an oath of allegiance to the Secretary of State for Scotland in relation to the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill and, in return, was promised the payroll vote tonight?

Mr. Stewart: I am not sure whether it is in order for me or not—*[Interruption.]*—for me to reply.

Mr. Haynes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is a serious matter. I think that you should find out exactly what has happened because I smell a rat here—there is a right fiddle going on. You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, must find out exactly what is going on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The best way of finding out what is going on is to listen to the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart).

Mr. Haynes: The hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) has not answered the question.

Mr. Stewart: I am going to. If it is in order for me to reply to the question put by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), I can assure him that, to the best of my knowledge, Scottish Television carried an interview with me some little time ago confirming that I propose to speak and vote against a possible guillotine motion on the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill. I understand that the BBC is carrying other reports, but there we are.

As I told the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow, there are no petitions against the Bill from the riparian local authorities, which are the obvious authorities to be most concerned about the Bill, and, as it happens, are all controlled by the Labour party. I understand that they do not intend to petition against the Bill in the other place, either.

Dr. Godman: The hon. Gentleman is showing characteristic courtesy in these exchanges. Greenock water front heritage association is likely to place a petition of objection against the Bill in the other place.

Mr. Stewart: I am obliged to the hon. Gentleman, but that does not contradict what I said, which was that none of the local authorities was going to petition against the Bill. The hon. Gentleman may wish to correct me, but I understand that Inverclyde district council has decided not to petition in the other place.

Mr. David Lambie (Cunninghame, South): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) and I attended a meeting yesterday in Kilbirnie, where one of the leading councillors on Cunninghame district council mentioned a discussion which had taken place in one of the council's committees about the Bill? He reported that Cunninghame district council was taking advice, and had not yet decided whether to oppose the Bill. I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North will agree that, at present, the councillors are of the opinion that they should oppose it.

Mr. Stewart: I am obliged to the hon. Gentleman for that information. The point is that none of the local authorities involved has entered a petition in this House against the Bill. There is time for local authorities to petition another place if they so wish, which answers a question that the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow asked me on Second Reading.

I wish not to repeat at length the general arguments of the debate on Second Reading but to move on to deal with some of the points raised, fairly and properly, by Opposition Members since Second Reading.

Trust ports are unusual—they are independent, they are not accountable to anyone, and their powers and sources of finance are limited, which is why the private Bill is before the House tonight.

The Clyde port authority is an historic port of immense importance not only to the west of Scotland but to the rest of Scotland and the United Kingdom and Europe. The situation of the port has changed sharply over the years,

[Mr. Stewart]

partly because of the geographical shift of trade from the west to the east: the increase in the United Kingdom's trade with the European Community—it now accounts for about 73 per cent. of United Kingdom trade—has benefited ports in the east and the south rather than those in the west. Another factor is that we no longer import oil; the Clyde port authority handled some 12 million tonnes of imported crude from the middle east before North sea oil came on stream.

Mr. Redmond: Will the hon. Gentleman be kind enough to draw my attention to some of the alleged defects in the Bill, which may or may not be remedied in another place? If one or two parts of the Bill need tightening up, I should be grateful for an explanation of where they are and how the hon. Gentleman intends to tighten them.

Mr. Stewart: I cannot forecast what will happen to the Bill in another place. If any amendments are made, as the noble Lords are perfectly entitled to do, this House will have the opportunity to debate them subsequently.

Mr. Worthington *rose*—

Mr. Stewart: I have already given way about five times.

Mr. Worthington: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that he has been so badly briefed that he does not know the contents of the amendments that are to be moved in another place which the Counsel to Mr. Speaker says are essential to make the Bill competent?

Mr. Stewart: I am making a perfectly fair and valid point, which is that the other place is entitled to make amendments to the Bill if it so wishes. If it does, the amendments must come back to the House to be considered. Only if no amendments are made in another place will the Bill not come back to this House.

Mr. Worthington *rose*—

Mr. Stewart: I have already given way to the hon. Gentleman on that subject and I should like to get a little further into my speech.

The Clyde faces competition from ports on the Forth, on the east coast of Scotland, and from other west coast ports, notably Liverpool, which is privately owned but has received substantial assistance from the taxpayers, and Bristol, which is municipally owned, and which has received substantial assistance from the local authority.

The reason for the Bill—as we debated fully on Second Reading—is that the authority, like other trust ports, has to operate under the restrictions imposed by the Clyde Port Authority Order 1965. Much of the debate on Second Reading and many of the issues mentioned by hon. Members then and subsequently have centred on the question that the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) and others mentioned on Second Reading: accepting that there are legal restrictions, what has the Clyde port authority been restricted from doing? The hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie asked that in a recent letter to the managing director of the Clyde port authority. I am glad to have his confirmation that my delivery of the letter to the board this afternoon resulted in him getting the reply before the debate.

I shall spend a moment or two giving the House some practical examples of how the restrictions on the port authority's operations have hindered developments that most people would regard as highly desirable.

My first example is the development of the site bounded by Robertson street, Broomielaw and York street in Glasgow which is well known to Opposition Members who represent Glasgow constituencies. It is immediately opposite the authority's headquarters building. As landowner, the authority had the opportunity to participate in a joint development with Glasgow and Oriental Development Limited. Having taken legal advice as a result of uncertainty about its acquisition powers, the authority was unable to proceed with that joint development, and subsequently had to sell the land to Glasgow and Oriental Development Limited, which is now progressing the development without the authority as a partner. The total borrowings of the authority are restricted by statute. Any project requiring major capital investment that would result in the borrowing limit being exceeded would necessitate reversion to Parliament, with all that that entails under present legislation.

Opposition Members will appreciate that many of the projects that may have been considered involve commercial confidentiality. I shall cite a couple of practical examples of how the existing restrictions under which the Clyde port authority operates have inhibited, and do inhibit, its reasonable wish to go ahead with sensible developments. As I said on Second Reading, the authority constantly has to consult Queen's Counsel and consider whether the proposals are intra vires. That, in addition to the burden on management time, is bound to inhibit effective decision making.

As the House knows, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has announced that the authority has planning consent to proceed, in partnership with Tarmac Construction, with a development of about 200 acres of redundant land at Braehead, which is, I think, in the constituency of the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham)—*[Interruption.]* I am wrong; it is in one of the Paisley constituencies and close to the hon. Gentleman's constituency.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): The hon. Gentleman is aware of the concern of the local elected members about the proposal to allow the scheme to go ahead. I hope that I shall have an opportunity to say something about that later. The hon. Gentleman knows that the district council is extremely concerned about that development.

Mr. Stewart: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will have the opportunity to contribute to the debate. He and I, although of different political views, have often co-operated on certain projects. I pay tribute to the hon. Gentleman's support concerning the problems in the Armitage Shanks Tubal works at Braehead.

That development will provide out-of-town shopping, leisure, housing, and commercial facilities. However, under current legislation there are doubts about whether the authority has sufficient powers to manage the development once it has been completed. The Bill would remove those doubts.

The authority wishes to join with other landowners, such as Glasgow district council, to develop land at Yorkhill quay with a consortium to be headed by a new company called Clyde Maritime. It would be a major

scheme costing about £300 million. However, under the 1965 legislation the authority is precluded from investing in that company except by selling out to a controlling interest subsequently. It cannot realise the true potential of its land in that area. Those are examples of the real and practical problems that the authority is currently——

Mr. Lambie: I remind the hon. Gentleman that the Clyde port authority is a ports authority. Can he give me any examples of restrictions on the Clyde port authority's duty as a ports authority? He has given examples of restrictions on the authority as a land developer—an exploiter of an existing asset—but other than the dock labour scheme, which is now abolished, there are no restrictions on the Clyde port authority as a ports authority. Does the hon. Gentleman now recognise that there is no need for the Bill?

Mr. Stewart: I shall mention some of the statutory requirements on the authority, but first I wish to make a general point. Only if the authority can develop all its assets fully will it have the resources to enable it to act as a fully commercial harbour and port authority. It is not in the interests of the authority's port operations for it to be unable to realise fully the value of its other assets.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Stewart: I would rather continue, but as the hon. Gentleman is a Front-Bench spokesman I shall give way.

Mr. Wilson: I want to pursue the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie). I understand the argument that, in order to bring in the money to carry out the river functions, the authority wants to realise its assets. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that a balance must be struck? Does he have any view on what proportion of the CPA's revenue should come as manager of supermarkets, leisure parks and all the other desirable or undesirable developments on its banks? Under a different ownership, at what point would its interest in such activities cease to be to the benefit and begin to be to the detriment of its marine activities—which by that time would be subsidiary and, perhaps, even marginal?

Mr. Stewart: The easiest way to answer the hon. Gentleman's point is to emphasise the new structure, in which there will be a holding company and a successor company. The successor company will take on all the current powers, duties and responsibilities of the authority under statute. It will have exactly the same responsibilities in relation to its port activities as it has currently.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill) *rose*——

Mr. Stewart: I shall give way to the hon. Lady, but then I hope hon. Members will allow me to continue because I have already given way a number of times.

Mrs. Fyfe: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his courtesy. Will the privatised port authority continue dredging in the River Clyde?

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Lady has raised a good point, which was first raised on Second Reading by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars), to whom I always pay attention because I am his constituent. I shall come to the issue of dredging, but if the hon. Lady will forgive me, there is another matter that I wish to raise first because there has been some publicity about it. The hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie is usually the most courteous of hon. Members. I was a little surprised to see the press coverage of his statement when he spoke as a Labour Front-Bench spokesman on employment——

Mr. Worthington: No.

Mr. Stewart: That is what it says in the press release, which has the House of Commons crest on it. I was surprised by his attack on Sir Robert Easton. If the hon. Gentleman was speaking as a Scottish Front-Bench spokesman on employment, I can only presume that that attack on Sir Robert Easton had the full knowledge and support of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), the shadow Secretary of State. That also surprised me a little because Sir Robert Easton is the chairman of Yarrow, the largest employer in Garscadden.

I shall quote what is presumably the hon. Member for Garscadden's view of Sir Robert Easton, as expressed by his junior spokesman, the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie. He said:

> "Why on earth should Sir Robert Easton and his board be able to profit from this sale . . .Why should they be able to put their hands in the till . . . Why should they be able to line their own pockets by deciding how many free shares they should have?"

Sir Robert Easton has as much chance of free shares as does the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie. The Bill provides that the Clyde port authority, a holding trust, will have the power to transfer securities without consideration—that is, shares with an interest-free loan or whatever—to employees of the holding company or any subsidiary thereof. Under clause 14(4), it is empowered to

> "provide for one or more employees' share schemes to be established in respect of the holding company; and any such scheme may provide for the transfer of shares without consideration."

Beneficiaries of employee share schemes can be only bona fide employees or former employees. *[Interruption.]* I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn), who has kindly handed me a letter informing me of his support for the Bill.

Mr. Wilson: The hon. Gentlemen should not believe a word of it. We know that that piece of paper is the latest set of guarantees on the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill.

Mr. Stewart: I am happy to assure the House that the guarantee that I have received is that my hon. and learned Friend will be here to vote at the end of the debate.

Sir Robert Easton and the other members of the board, except for the three executive members, are not employees. Therefore, Sir Robert Easton and the non-executive members of the board cannot get shares on any preferential basis except that available generally to residents of the area.

Mr. Worthington: I draw the attention of the hon. Member to clause 8(3), which provides:

> "Securities required to be issued in pursuance of this section shall be issued or allotted at such time or times and on such terms. . .as the Trust may direct."

The members of the trust will be Sir Robert Easton and the board of the Clyde port authority. Does that not give them the power to allocate securities to themselves?

Mr. Stewart: Of course it does not. As they are members of the trust, they cannot allocate securities to themselves. If the hon. Gentleman does not believe me, he may believe Mr. Tom O'Connor, the former chairman of the local port workers branch of the Transport and General Workers Union, who has written to the managing director of the Clyde port authority. He will doubtless be well known as a stalwart of the Labour movement in the west of Scotland, although I do not know whether he is still a member of the national executive of the TGWU. The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow is agreeing with me. I will happily pass copies of this letter to anyone who wishes one. It reads as follows:

"I was pleased to have the opportunity of discussing at the Board meeting on Tuesday the articles which appeared last week, in the Scotsman and Evening Times. Both those articles, which I understand were based on a press release issued by Tony Worthington, M.P., contained inaccurate and insulting references to the honesty and integrity of the Members of the Board, and I wish to place on record for posterity my most strenuous objection to these defamatory remarks."

I am glad to have had the opportunity to read that letter.

Mr. Wilson: Did the hon. Gentleman check the typewriter?

Mr. Stewart: It is written in Mr. O'Connor's hand.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) asked me, quite fairly, about dredging. This matter has been raised by a number of hon. Members, in Committee and on Second Reading. The Clyde port authority, like every other harbour or port authority in the United Kingdom, has no express statutory duty to dredge the river. The Clyde port authority has power to dredge, as set out in paragraph 16 of the Clyde Port Authority Order 1965, which established the authority. The question is whether the successor company has any authority to dredge the river or whether there would be anything to oblige a successor company to dredge the river if it decided not to do so.

Dr. Godman: I am glad to hear the hon. Gentleman talk about the 1965 order. Paragraph 16 states:

"The ports authority may, from time to time, deepen, dredge or scour and improve the bed and foreshore of the river and upper Clyde within the port in or near any approach to the port."

I have today tabled a new clause to the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill that would make this power statutory. I should like the hon. Gentleman to support the new clause when we debate it in Committee.

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman will no doubt confirm that members of that Committee do not always disagree. I am grateful for the many worthwhile and penetrating interventions that he made to my speech late on Thursday night, which showed a great deal of knowledge about the annual accounts of charity. However, the hon. Gentleman is leading me down another path. I doubt whether his news about the tabling of a new clause will be received with joy and delight by the Scottish Office, but I hope that there will be time to consider it. I am sure that he would be the first to object if the Government introduced a timetable motion that prevented a full and fair debate of the clause.

Mr. Graham: As the hon. Gentleman knows, I was born in Govan and I have always seen the Clyde as a working river. The only way to keep it as such is to dredge it regularly so that ships can use it. Everyone, from one end of the Clyde to the other, sees it as the port authority's duty to keep the river open. Once it stopped dredging, the river would silt up and would no longer be navigable. Does not the hon. Gentleman recognise the concern of Labour Members to ensure that the river remains a working river and that dredging is carried out? The Clyde port authority has always been the recognised body to do that.

Mr. Stewart: Yes. I shall now return to the specific point made by the hon. Member for Maryhill. I was diverted for a moment.

I accept that this is a serious argument. I emphasise that the fact that there is no express duty, neither in this Bill nor in any legislation affecting a harbour authority, to dredge is not the same as saying that either the authority or the successor company should stop dredging. The successor company inherits all the powers and duties of the authority. Clause 4(2) says that the successor authority

"shall . . . be treated for all purposes as if it were the same person as the Port Authority."

Therefore, the successor company is in the same position as the port authority.

The authority has a duty, under paragraph 13 of the 1965 order,

"to take such steps from time to time as they may consider necessary for the maintenance and improvement of the port and the accommodation and facilities (including navigational facilities) afforded therein or in connection therewith".

Therefore, the authority must carry out those steps with the benefit of the port undertaking in mind. If dredging is necessary to maintain or improve the port, the authority should dredge. Exactly the same principles apply to the future activities of the successor company established under the Bill. Nothing in the legislation imposes on the successor company any less onerous obligations in relation to dredging than those that exist for the present authority.

Mr. Sillars: There is a characteristic difference between the future and the present. At present we are talking about a public undertaking which has implicit obligations to the public good. In future we shall be talking about a private company which, at some later date, may claim that Parliament did not impose a specific obligation. There may have been some residual implied responsibility. I am not splitting hairs or words, but that is entirely different from imposing an obligation.

Given that the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) is involved in the drafting and the arguments, can he give us an assurance that there is no reason why the promoters of the Bill would resist an amendment in the other place that eliminated all doubt about the future and imposed an obligation as distinct from some residual responsibility which the successor company could claim was not in the Act and did not necessarily have to be carried out?

Mr. Stewart: I shall not speculate on what might or might not happen in another place. I was not claiming that I had been involved in the technical drafting of the Bill. The hon. Member for Govan, who is my Member of Parliament, is quite right to say that I am involved in the argument.

Mr. Redmond: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I have an assurance from the Chair that the Bill is technically correct and that no technical

amendments will be made? If we pass the Bill, it is important that it is technically correct. If it is technically defective, we should question whether the Clerks have given it sufficient scrutiny.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Bill is in order. It would not be before the House if it were not.

Mr. Stewart: May I return to the point raised by the hon. Member for Govan——

Mr. Redmond: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am sorry to delay the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), but may we take it that all the technical details necessary to make the Bill presentable have been scrutinised and are correct? It may well be that another place will seek to amend the dredging provisions——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If the Bill were technically defective, it would not be before the House. It is for the House to listen to the debate and make up its mind. It is a matter for the House to decide at 10 o'clock.

Mr. Stewart: Let me return to the point of substance raised by the hon. Member for Govan. Of course I cannot speculate on what might or might not happen in another place.

Essentially I am making two key points. First, the successor company has exactly the same obligations that the Clyde port authority has at present. It has exactly the same powers, duties and responsibilities.

Mr. Graham: Will the hon. Member give way?

Mr. Stewart: First, I shall finish my response to the hon. Member for Govan.

The successor company has exactly the same duties and responsibilities as the Clyde port authority has at present. As I have told the House, to the best of my knowledge, no port authority has an express duty in legislation to dredge a river. The legislation covering the Clyde port authority is in line with legislation that applies elsewhere. The hon. Gentleman will know that some port authorities are trusts and others are in the private sector. Some, such as Bristol, are owned and run by the local authority.

Mrs. Fyfe: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Stewart: I have been generous in giving way, so I fear that this will have to be the last time.

Mrs. Fyfe: Will the hon. Member enlighten the House? He has given repeated assurances that the responsibilities will be exactly the same, but he has the opportunity to write the Bill as he pleases. Why has he decided not to write the Bill in a manner that will ensure that dredging is carried out by imposing a clear duty?

Mr. Stewart: I emphasise that the responsibilities being taken over by the successor company are the same as those held by the Clyde port authority. That seems to be a perfectly reasonable and proper way to proceed.

Mr. Graham: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Stewart: No.

As I have explained to the House, the fact that there is no express duty in legislation does not mean that the authority or the successor company can stop dredging because of the duties that I have outlined to the House.

I have taken up quite a lot of time of the House and a large number of hon. Members wish to speak. Other points have been raised, and I hope that the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie will outline some of the points to which the Clyde port authority responded, for example, on the structure. The Bill was sought by the authority and the board was unanimous. There were no petitions against it, and I understand that the Transport and General Workers Union has not attempted to stop the restructuring proposal in Scotland, although it has taken a different position in regard to Bills applying south of the border.

I hope that the House will feel that I have dealt with some of the major questions that have been raised and will agree to give the Bill a Third Reading tonight.

7.57 pm

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): I should like to point out to the House that recently the Secretary of State for Scotland has decided to give Braehead, a monster project, the go-ahead. That concerns me and the people in my constituency. I represent a huge area of the Clyde, as every Member of Parliament knows. Renfrew district council vigorously opposed the Braehead development, which will destroy the infrastructure of Renfrewshire. It will cause immense problems for the town of Paisley, destroying the new shopping centre which would have been built there. We have recently agreed to the Tilbury operation in Linwood.

You may well ask, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what this has to do with the Bill——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. On Third Reading the House is required to confine itself to what is in the Bill.

Mr. Graham: I am trying to confine myself to what is in the Bill. The Bill has immense repercussions for my constituency. If the Bill is passed tonight, my constituency will suffer.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Of course the hon. Gentleman is right in the technical sense that the Bill gives the Clyde port authority powers to manage the Braehead development, for example. Will he be a little more explicit as to precisely why he is so opposed to that development? The hon. Gentleman, Renfrew district council and I see eye to eye on many issues.

Mr. Graham: The Bill is amazingly damaging to Scotland, and certainly to Renfrewshire. It will cause incredible problems.

There is much concern among people who live on our side of the river that dredging will not be carried out. The hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) says that if the Bill goes ahead there will be no change, but there must be change. The board will be responsible to shareholders. A commercial decision will be taken not to dredge the River Clyde because it will cost hundreds of thousands of pounds. The authority will say, "We do not have the money so we will not dredge it."

When I was on Strathclyde regional council, we gave Clyde port authority financial help to allow it to dredge the river. The authority will still be responsible for keeping the river clear. It is crazy for it to be privatised. It should remain a public corporation, looking after the interests of the Clyde and of the folk who live on its banks.

[Mr. Graham]

Braehead has been given the go-ahead, but it will do so much damage to the Renfrewshire area that it could make ghost towns of communities such as Erskine and Renfrew and it will certainly hammer Paisley shopping centre. That is a genuine concern about what is happening in the Clyde port.

I am sorry that the Secretary of State for Scotland is not here because it appears that there has been a bit of collusion. The other week, the Secretary of State dug a hole at Tilbury and said, "Linwood will rise from the ashes —there will be a big new shopping centre, factories and retail units." The Braehead development, which was refused by the council, got the go-ahead from the Secretary of State. He knows that Renfrewshire cannot take a monstrosity of a project like Braehead. What will happen to the Tilbury site at Linwood? It will end up as only housing, with no works, no factories, no warehouses and no shops. It will become a residential area because of the decision to privatise the Clyde port authority.

When the Secretary of State came to dig a hole in the ground at Tilbury in my constituency he knew that the planned development would not take place because of Braehead. That calls into question any future development in the Linwood area and at Inverclyde Recently, a decision was taken to go ahead with a shopping centre at Inverclyde. That has a lot to do with what is happening to the Clyde port authority, because anything that it does in the Govan area has a massive impact on Renfrewshire and, in effect, deprives Inverclyde of a genuine development opportunity and makes nonsense of the Inverclyde enterprise zone.

I wish that the Secretary of State was here so that I could challenge him and ask whether he knew that he was going to give planning permission for the Braehead site. Did he tell the Tilbury developers, who are spending vast sums in my area, that he was going to give the go-ahead for the Braehead site? Did he tell the developers in Inverclyde that he was going to give the go-ahead for the Braehead site?

The Bill should be thrown out. It seems that there has been collusion between the Secretary of State and the developers of Braehead and Clyde port. He is fattening up the authority for the kill and for somebody to make a lot of money. At the end of the day, the people of Renfrewshire will suffer. I note that the Minister is smiling —he can smile all he likes, and he may smile to the bank, but our folk have suffered enough from the crazy plans of this Government. This is certainly a crazy plan. It is not a plan to help the people of the Clyde or my constituents —it is a plan to make a wee bit on the side to give to the Government's friends, but they will get a resounding no from the people of Renfrewshire at the next general election. It is another gift for the Government's friends, taking from the ordinary men and women who made the Clyde what it is.

8.5 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): The hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) spoke with great passion but told us little about how the development of 200 acres at Braehead will affect his constituents. He seemed to think that those 200 acres, whether they were used for housing or whatever, would not help the local economy.

One of the encouraging aspects of the past few years has been how derelict areas of dockland have been given a new lease of life. Throughout the old major ports of the United Kingdom, buildings that previously had been standing derelict for some years have been brought back into use, establishing living, vibrant and healthy economies. That is what happens when one is able to develop and is free of the shackles of socialism and socialist practices.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) said, the Bill received substantial support on Second Reading on 14 May. There were no petitions against it, and none from the riparian local authorities. The hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde, who spoke with such passion, realised that the riparian local authorities are controlled by the Labour party. I accept that Cunninghame district council is still obtaining advice on the Bill. Under our democratic system, if it has an interest in the Bill and believes that its benefits are not what it imagines, it will take action. That is the democratic system functioning. Indeed, the Bill is an example of how the democratic system works. It must go through this House and the other place, and there are opportunities for those interested enough to take action.

The reason for the Bill is that the authority, as currently structured and confined by statute, cannot realise its full potential. Its sources of funding and finance are limited and it is unable to enter into joint ventures to develop land that it owns. Borrowing is limited by statute. If it were in the marketplace, borrowing would be restricted by the risk involved, which would be sensible.

It appears that some areas should and could be developed. I do not have enough local knowledge to comment on the proposals and schemes, but anything that brings life back into our docklands and our riversides must be good. If decision making is affected by statutory limitations on the authority, changes should be made. Only if the authority can utilise and manage its resources and assets will it be able to carry out its core area responsibility for the river and marine activities. That is a sensible use of assets in any organisation. The setting up of the holding company, with the successor company assuming all the responsibility and being accountable, means that, in that sense, nothing will change.

I welcome the fact that employees and former employees will be able to obtain shares. Giving people the opportunity to buy shares in the companies in which they work is my idea of spreading the nation's wealth. There is no greater motivator for an employee than the feeling that he owns part of the company in which he works and there is no greater discipline on a board than the knowledge that the employees are shareholders.

I understand that the Opposition are worried about dredging of the river. All United Kingdom rivers are covered by the same legislation, so the Clyde port authority under the successor company will not be in a different position. It is covered by the Clyde Port Authority Order 1965. I look forward to debating—if we ever reach that stage—the new clause tabled by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) to the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill. We could go on for ever with that Bill, but I should step out of line in this debate if I said more. I wish simply

to respond to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow. That new clause will affect the responsibilities of the authority or its successor company.

The River Clyde should never be downgraded. It is vital to Scotland's economy and to the welfare of her people. As I said on Second Reading, the Clyde has changed and developed to meet Scotland's needs at each stage—throughout the industrial revolution until today. Who can say what the future holds for that great river and for the successor company that will have the responsibility for management and navigation on the river? Few of us can say where we shall be 10, 20 or 30 years ahead. Who can say what the trade patterns will be?

As everyone knows, handling of imports and exports has changed dramatically and substantially over the past 40 years. Much of the Clyde traffic 40 years ago was handled by port authority workers who carried much of the cargo on their broad shoulders. Today, with containerisation, bulk cargo handling and the shift of trade from north America towards Europe, the Clyde port authority has been faced with substantial changes in work practice, a massive reduction in the labour force and a huge drop in the traffic to and from north America.

The container terminal was constructed, as I said on Second Reading, on the site of Princes pier at Greenock and received its first ship on 15 March 1969. The terminal, with its depth of 42 ft. at low tide, with a back-up area of 42 acres and with rail connections to the major industrial centres of the United Kingdom, had by 1973 attracted 13 shipping lines. Sadly, events overtook the north Atlantic trade and the container terminal ran into difficult times, and it is still experiencing difficulties. At the same time, there has been a substantial change in the old smokestack-related heavy industries throughout Scotland, which led to a major drop in the volume of trade involving the port and the authority. In addition, with the reduction in oil imports—because we have our own oil off the north-east coast—there has been a substantial drop, in the Clyde and other ports, in the trade in imported oil.

The Clyde is in competition with other ports throughout the United Kingdom and Europe, including Leith and Grangemouth in Scotland. Unless the Clyde can change to meet the changes in the marketplace, and unless the port authority has the flexibility and ability to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow, it is clear that it will not be able to compete effectively with other ports in the United Kingdom and Europe.

Like other hon. Members, I am worried about Hunterston, which handles 50 per cent. of the Clyde port authority's traffic, representing 43 per cent. of the authority's revenue. We all know that the well-being and future of Hunterston are very much tied up with the well-being and future of Ravenscraig. We all know that many questions need to be asked and many have not yet been answered. We in Scotland want to know the answers. We shall have opportunities in our different ways to obtain some. Unless we can get some answers, Hunterston's future will have question marks over it. That cannot give any delight to anyone other than those who do not want the Scottish economy to do well. The deep-water port at Hunterston has great facilities that should be maximised.

Mr. Wilson: The hon. Gentleman's point about Hunterston is of interest to all of us and particularly to me from a constituency point of view. Does the hon. Gentleman suggest that anything in the Clyde port authority's existing powers has contributed over many years, and certainly over the authority's lifetime, to the disappointing underdevelopment of Hunterston?

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman has an edge on me as a constituency Member. If I put a question to him about the well-being of the whisky industry in my constituency, I think that I should have the edge on him. I am not sufficiently knowledgeable to comment on details, and I should not wish to do so.

My concern as a Scottish Member of Parliament is to ensure that Scottish ports can compete effectively, efficiently and on equal terms with other ports throughout the United Kingdom and Europe. The Bill will give the people who run the authority the opportunity to do just that. That is why I have no hesitation in supporting the Bill.

8.17 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): It is always a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker). He has one characteristic in common with members of his Front Bench—he views with distaste awkwardly honest critics on the Labour Benches as much as he views with loathing honestly awkward critics on the Conservative Benches. Many of us have constituency interests and concerns that we wish to defend with the same vigour with which he defends his constituents who work in the whisky industry. The hon. Gentleman should not forget that.

I think that you were fortunate to miss the earlier exchanges, Madam Deputy Speaker——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I was listening.

Dr. Godman: I meant that it was before you came into the Chamber.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I was listening.

Dr. Godman: I beg your pardon, Madam Deputy Speaker. I certainly do not wish to cross swords with you.

As you are well aware, Madam Deputy Speaker, when Mr. Deputy Speaker was in the Chair we discussed amendments to the Bill which are to be tabled in the other place. I cannot discuss them now because I do not know what they are, but if amendments are made in another place, I shall presumably have the opportunity to scrutinise and discuss them when the Bill comes back. I should like some amendments to be made.

First, I should like clause 4 to be amended so as to require the head office of the Clyde port authority always to be located in Glasgow. The CPA occupies one of the finest buildings in Victorian Glasgow. I have said that to John Mather on a number of occasions, and I believe that he has invited my wife and me to visit the building and examine the architecture.

Mr. Lambie: He will give you lunch.

Dr. Godman: I do not think for one minute that John Mather will give me lunch after what I have to say today, although I may be able to appeal to Sir Robert Easton for a cup of coffee. The head office of the CPA should remain in Glasgow. If it cannot be in Greenock or Port Glasgow, it must be in Glasgow.

Mr. Lambie: My hon. Friend should realise that the main activity of the Clyde port authority is in Cunninghame. Its headquarters should be in Ardrossan and nowhere else.

Dr. Godman: My old and hon. Friend has a point and he has made it in his usual powerful way. But I am trying to be diplomatic. I should like the headquarters to be located in Greenock, but I am perfectly willing to accept that the head office should stay in Robertson street, Glasgow.

I should also like the Bill to be amended to require that the present directors shall not be major shareholders in any successor company.

Clause 4 deals with the duties, liabilities and responsibilities of the authority. The hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) mentioned Inverclyde district council's position on the Bill, so in fairness I ought to say something about that. I would be the last person to impugn the hon. Gentleman's honour or character, but it seems to me that a deal may have been struck with the Secretary of State for Scotland over the passage of the Bill today and the hon. Gentleman's conduct on the Standing Committee considering the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I can give the hon. Gentleman an absolute assurance that that is not so. I have repeated today that I intend to speak and vote against a guillotine on that Bill if a guillotine motion is introduced.

Dr. Godman: The hon. Gentleman is a man of his word. I readily accept what he has said and withdraw my criticism.

As I said, the hon. Gentleman referred to Inverclyde district council. It is only fair that I should mention the fact that today I received a letter from John Thompson, the director of administration for that council. Mr. Thompson wrote:

"The District Council at its meeting yesterday decided not to lodge in the House of Lords a petition objecting to the Bill."

In that regard, the remarks of the hon. Member for Eastwood were accurate. Mr. Thompson continued:

"However, the District Council has resolved to seek the support of the Clydeside MPs in opposition to the Bill."

I can well understand why the council is reluctant to petition in the other place. Like most councils in Scotland, it is strapped for cash and the procedure for presenting a petition of objection to an Opposed Private Bill Committee can be an expensive activity.

Mr. Thompson went on to say:

"As you know, the District Council opposes the Bill on the grounds that its consequences, if enacted, could potentially be of significant detriment to the District."

My hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) made that point in his inimitable way. Mr. Thompson then said:

"In particular, the continuation of the present dredging operations of the River Clyde is extremely important to the economic wellbeing of the whole Clyde area and in particular are of considerable significance to commercial and industrial users of the River. Upon privatisation, it may be the case that a private Company would consider from a commercial view that the dredging operations should be discontinued on the grounds of commercial expediency."

That was what the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) suggested in his intervention.

Mr. Thompson went on:

"Although at present there is no strict legal obligation imposed on the existing Clyde Port Authority to require the dredging of the River, the Clyde Port Authority does part finance the dredging operations in the wider public interest."

It is right and proper that Mr. Thompson should acknowledge the part played by Clyde port authority at present. His letter continued:

"A privatised Company may decide to take a narrower short term commercial view that the dredging operations are not commercially attractive and discontinue these in the future."

Mr. Thompson made some further criticisms. He said, for example:

"The Bill would emphasise the property development aspects of the privatised Companies rather than the importance of the Clyde for employment, tourism, commerce and industry, leisure and the environment in general. Such an emphasis on property development may result in short term windfall profits being taken outwith the area of the Clyde without any obligation on the part of the shareholders to re-invest in the local area having regard to any consideration of public interest."

That is what I have said all along about clauses 1 to 5. No matter how estimable Sir Robert Easton and John Mather are—I have respect for both gentlemen and for their officials—a predator company based in London, Düsseldorf, Tokyo or New York may come along and sweep them into the Clyde. Would such people have any commitment to the Clyde and its people? I think perhaps not. That is why I want the Bill amended to require the head office always to be located on the Clyde. My hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, South may argue that it should be in Saltcoats, but I would settle for Glasgow.

Mr. Sillars: Govan.

Dr. Godman: No. If it is not Glasgow, it has to be Greenock.

Did the hon. Member for Eastwood support the Eurowestport concept put forward by the late John Davidson, formerly director of the CBI in Scotland, who had a vision within which the Clyde port authority had a major role to play? A couple of years ago, in talking about the channel tunnel—I relate my remarks to clauses 4 to 6 of the Bill—he argued the case for Eurowestport:

"The Channel Tunnel will be in operation in seven years. The west of Scotland will be then connected, without transshipment break, to the European transport network—a potential advantage we have never enjoyed before. It is that absence of any need for transshipment that alters so dramatically the situation.

The scale of port developments on the European continent has been a major feature of development in the past quarter century. They have established an enviable reputation for economic, uninterrupted service. But it surely ought to be possible to break that mould by detailed forward planning, a positive approach and determined marketing. We must not accept that others have a prescriptive right to the advantages."

Mr. Allan Stewart: The late John Davidson was my successor as director of the Scottish CBI. I thought a great deal about his proposal.

Dr. Godman: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's graceful intervention about the late John Davidson.

I quoted the late John Davidson because, with regard to clause 4 of this Bill, in the light of his comments about the Eurowestport concept and the traditional maritime activities carried out on the Clyde, it is essential that the

CPA retains more than just a foothold in those industrial maritime activities. The CPA should not become a property company.

The Minister for Aviation and Shipping is listening to me in his usual attentive way. On Thursday 29 March I asked him to give us the names of the chairman, chief executive and directors of the CPA. One or two of those gentlemen have been mentioned. Needless to say, there are no women on the board. I wonder whether there will be women on future boards.

Mr. Lambie: What about friends of the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth)?

Dr. Godman: I am not sure whether Tommy O'Connor of the Transport and General Workers Union would want to find himself in such company. In addition to Tommy O'Connor and the then councillor Lawrence McGarry, one of the board members will be the managing director of Scottish Metropolitan Property plc. I wonder what ideas that CPA director has about property developments along the Clyde.

I do not want to speak for much longer because other hon. Members wish to speak. However, I want to consider dredging. It has been readily conceded by John Mather, chief executive of the CPA, by Bob Easton and by others that dredging is a major and vital task. We know that the costs of the dredging are disputed. When the Norwegian company Kvaerner sought to acquire the shipyard in the constituency of the hon. Member for Govan it was unhappy about its responsibility for meeting a share of the dredging costs. Clause 4 (3) refers to the port authority's obligation in relation to the dredging operation.

The other day I saw the dredger in the middle of the river, not far from Lymebank. By any standards she is an ancient vessel, long past her prime, and she needs to be replaced.

Mr. Worthington: That is no way to talk about a lady.

Dr. Godman: I hear what my hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington), says and I suspect that the Government Whip, the hon. Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight), might say the same thing.

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): Do not bring me into it.

Dr. Godman: The dredger is an ancient vessel. She does a fair turn of work, but she needs replacing. I estimate that, to do that job effectively, a new vessel will cost upwards of £12 million. I would like to see such a vessel built on the Clyde.

Mr. Lambie: Well, in Port Glasgow.

Dr. Godman: Where else but at Kvaerner Ferguson of Port Glasgow? The Norwegians are moving in everywhere.

The new company that will be formed if the Bill is enacted will have to find the wherewithal to replace the dredger if the company is to continue the dredging operation. In addition to that capital outlay, over the past two or three years the CPA's annual dredging costs have been in excess of £600,000. In terms of the liability under clause 4, I believe that some assistance is given to the CPA by the Strathclyde regional council, Glasgow district council, Kvaerner of Govan and Yarrow.

While I respect the people who run the CPA's trust board, in terms of clause 4(3) I have tried to change section 16 of the Clyde Port Authority Order Confirmation Act 1965 which reads:

"The Port Authority may from time to time deepen, dredge, scour and improve the bed and foreshore of the river and Firth of Clyde".

I have tried to change that power to a duty so that section 16 of the 1965 Act would read:

"The Port Authority shall from time to time".

I have sought to do that through a new clause that I have tabled to the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill because I am given to understand that nothing in this Bill abrogates the provisions of the 1965 Act. Does the Minister wish to intervene?

The Minister for Aviation and Shipping (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin) *indicated dissent.*

Dr. Godman: I thought that the Minister might tell me that I was wrong about that. If I am right, I have every right to table a new clause to a miscellaneous provisions Bill so as to change the 1965 Act. There may be a technicality with which I am not familiar, but I hope that I can change a power to a duty.

The hon. Member for Tayside, North referred to the container terminal. He was right to say that in terms of activity and vessel turn-around the terminal is a shadow of its former self. Nevertheless, there is work there. Ships are coming into the terminal. It is one of our finest deep port facilities—about 42 feet.

If the Bill is successful, the container terminal should continue as a container terminal and the land should not be regarded as a site for executive-style housing in landscaped gardens. Again referring to the late John Davidson's concept of Eurowestport, it is essential to retain that container terminal not only for the people of Greenock and Port Glasgow who work there but for the maritime link to what I hope will one day be a dedicated high-speed link through the channel tunnel and be connected with the European railway network.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The hon. Gentleman is making a fair point. Is he reassured by the fact that the Clyde port authority is investing about £1 million in the terminal for new storage and so on? There will be a real commitment.

Dr. Godman: Yes, indeed. I have seen the facilities. Not long ago, I talked to Phil Cannie and the other ex-dockers who have formed the company which rents the terminal from the CPA. I urged on them a workers' co-operative, but they settled for a private company.

I am concerned that the Clyde port authority will be regarded as a juicy financial morsel by some predator company that has no commitment to Scotland, let alone to the Clyde and the Firth of Clyde.

I am being an awkward customer with this Bill because of my constituency and Clyde-wide interests. In addition to the container terminal, the James Watt dock is in my constituency. Vessels that carry raw cane sugar from the African Caribbean and Pacific cane sugar producing countries are unloaded. There are only two such refineries left in the United Kingdom now—one on the Thames in London and one on the lower Clyde. About 300 of my constituents work in the Tate and Lyle cane sugar refinery. Apart from providing work for constituents, the House of Commons should honour its obligation, under the Lomé sugar protocol, to impoverished countries which produce

[Dr. Godman]

that crop. In addition, in my constituency there is a ship repair firm which, I am pleased to say, employs 80 men. Its managing director, Mr. Sinclair, wrote to me the other day after he saw my interview with Miss Margo McDonald on Scottish Television. He expressed his serious concern for the future of the James Watt complex.

Mr. Graham: My hon. Friend will be aware also that constituents who work in the Caledonian MacBrayne shipping company are concerned about what is happening on the Clyde.

Dr. Godman: They are indeed. That concern extends along the river and the Firth. Many of those who work around the constituencies of Greenock, Port Glasgow, Inverclyde and Renfrew have some trust in the CPA as it is currently formed, but they are deeply worried about the future ownership of the Clyde port authority and where its head office will be located in 10 years time. If it is to be located in Robertson street in Glasgow and the container terminal is still to receive investment from the Clyde port authority, I shall be a much happier man. However, I have my doubts about the implications for my constituents and many other people and, as one who is directly affected by the Bill, despite the hon. Gentleman's assurances, I shall urge hon. Members to vote against the Bill.

8.45 pm

The Minister for Aviation and Shipping (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): It might be convenient if I said a few words about the Government's position on the Bill. On Second Reading on 14 May I clearly stated the Government's position.

Mr. Wilson: The slight bombshell that the Minister dropped on Second Reading was the fact that the Treasury is to run off with 50 per cent. of the slack and that that would apply to all port privatisations. A report in *Lloyd's List* last week suggests that, under an amendment to the Finance Bill, the Treasury would not only take 50 per cent. but would then impose a corporation tax of 35 per cent. on the remaining 50 per cent., and that there would then be a further cascading of corporation tax, which could mean that the Government could claw back a still greater proportion of the total revenue. I understand that amendments to the Finance Bill have been reintroduced. As the matter is of substantial significance to any port authority that is thinking of privatising itself, will the Minister clarify the Government's position? If he cannot do so tonight, will he write to me?

Mr. McLoughlin: The position remains as I stated it on Second Reading. As, in the past, the Government put various moneys into trust boards, it is felt right that a proportion should go to the Government. On the hon. Gentleman's specific point, it would be better if I looked again at the report in *Lloyd's List* and wrote to him with further clarification. That issue will be debated later this evening and when the Finance Bill returns to the House. That may be the best time to clarify the Government's position.

The Bill has come back to the House without any amendments. It has my support, so I hope that it has the support of all hon. Members.

8.47 pm

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan): The hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) will correct me if I am wrong about the structure of the new authority and holding company. As I understand it, the successor company will be the functional arm of the holding company carrying out the functions of a port authority. The holding company will be the entrepreneurial, bustling, dynamic business organisation that will capitalise upon assets that are currently held by the Clyde port authority. Hon. Members cannot object to joint ventures between public authorities and private capital to develop ports in Glasgow or in any other part of Scotland. The Scottish Development Agency has engaged in that practice, Glasgow district council has encouraged it, and Strathclyde regional council also encourages it.

However, I fail to understand why we do not have a Bill to extend the powers of the present Clyde port authority to engage in joint ventures with private enterprise partners, and why it is necessary to go all the way to a private shareholding company, which is the holding company. For the life of me I cannot accept that someone has his eye on the massive asset stripping of the Clyde port authority's substantial holdings. The Clyde will by no means be a dead river, and certainly not on the banks where there is considerable development. Some people have great visions of capitalising on the assets on the north and south banks of the river. I share the anxieties of Opposition Members about the preparations that are taking place for massive asset stripping.

I have registered my concern about dredging. I do not think that the hon. Member for Eastwood was trying to mislead us when he said that there was no obligation on the successor company to dredge the Clyde. Clause 4 says that there will be transferred from the present port authority to the successor company

"all the property (whether heritable or moveable) of the Port Authority, and to all rights liabilities and obligations of the Port Authority".

What is the obligation if it is not dredging? The explanatory statement from the Bill's promoters suggests that the obligation rests upon the general duty of the port authority, expressed in section 13 of the 1965 Act, to take such steps from time to time as it may consider necessary for the maintenance or improvement of the port and the accommodation and facilities afforded therein or in connection therewith.

The crucial term in that obligation is not "general duty" but "port". What will be the future legal definition of a port? Not long ago such a definition would have been easy on the Clyde because from almost one end to the other it was a series of ports and it could have been said that the whole of the Clyde was a single port. However, that will not necessarily be the case in future because there has been a devastating reduction in commercial and industrial activity on the Clyde. I do not doubt that a container terminal would still be defined as a port and the same definition could be applied to the James Watt dock. But could the definition of a port be applied to the Kvaerner shipyard in Govan? It is a separate undertaking and a private enterprise company. It certainly relies upon the river, but it could not be argued that it relies upon a port.

I am worried about what may happen if we become involved in litigation. Clause 5 makes it ultra vires for the successor company to act beyond not the responsibilities or obligations of the Clyde port authority, but the present

power of that authority. It does not impose any responsibilities or obligations. We are talking about the holding company being transferred to shareholders who are concerned solely with maximising profit irrespective of the effects of any of their policies on the Clyde or its immediate environs in Glasgow or the Greenock area. Some people and organisations would protest if it was decided to stop dredging the Clyde. If the matter went to court, there would be no point in quoting the words in *Hansard* of the hon. Member for Eastwood because it is a rule of the courts in Scotland and England that *Hansard* cannot be used as guidance to the meaning of an Act.

Dr. Godman: Some of my constituents genuinely believe that the Clyde port authority does not own waterfront properties in Greenock. They argue their case on the basis of a few contracts signed in 1772 in Edinburgh, which gave to the people of Greenock in perpetuity that area of the waterfront.

Mr. Sillars: I foresee litigation arising and it will make the Court of Session interesting. *[Interruption.]* If the Bill becomes an Act and a case comes to the Court of Session, the judges will be compelled to interpret the Act. The hon. Member for Eastwood says that he expects the Clyde port authority to continue dredging. He should look again at the explanatory memorandum. It says that the successor company would succeed to the property rights and liabilities of the port authority. Clause 5 is about power only and has nothing to do with rights and liabilities, and it is arguable whether dredging is a legal, contractual liability on the Clyde port authority. If the hon. Gentleman says that it is not an obligation, it lies somewhere in the realm of ambiguity. If a case went to the Court of Session, the judge would say that if Parliament meant the authority to have a specific obligation, it would have written it into the Act. If Parliament does not do that, the matter will be debatable and a judge could well come down against the argument that the authority has a responsibility, a liability and an obligation.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I am following the hon. Gentleman's argument with interest. The duties and powers of the authority are laid down in section 13(3) of the 1965 Act and the successor company takes over those duties and powers.

Mr. Sillars: The authority has the power to dredge the Clyde but, as the hon. Gentleman says, it does not have a legal obligation to do so. If we went to the Court of Session to try to stop the authority dredging the Clyde, it would win the case because it has the power. However, if we went to the Court of Session to make it dredge the Clyde, we should be engaged in an entirely different legal argument.

Mr. Bill Walker: In order to help us follow the hon. Gentleman's line of argument, can he tell us of any other river in the United Kingdom where an authority or a private company has a statutory obligation to dredge the river?

Mr. Sillars: I do not know of any cases that have been tested in the Court of Session and that is what worries me. We have a responsibility to make sure that legislation is absolutely clear and that liabilities and responsibilities are clearly defined in the Act.

Mr. Worthington: All dredging operations in the former inner harbour on the Clyde between Victoria and Glasgow bridges ceased about a quarter of a century ago. I assume that at some stage that was defined as part of the port, that it is no longer so defined and that if it is possible for the port authority to walk away from the inner harbour, it is possible for it to walk away from anywhere.

Mr. Sillars: I am worried that it is possible for the authority to walk away from the part of the Clyde that serves the important shipyard of Kvaerner and its substantial work force. For the life of me, I cannot understand why those who are arguing for the Bill are not prepared to say that they would advise the promoters, when the Bill goes to the other place, to remove any doubt whatever about the obligations of the successor company.

Having registered my anxiety on that matter, my final point is about the public benefit. I accept that the chairman cannot get free shares and that the hon. Member for Eastwood told us that free shares will be available to the employees. I have never understood the logic of that. I could never understand why, if one happens to be lucky enough to work for the gas board or the Clyde port authority at a certain time, one receives a bonus benefit, whereas if one is unlucky enough because of the labour market not to work for such a company one is denied that benefit. Also someone who worked for such a company but who has left or retired is denied that benefit.

I am worried that the local authorities will not benefit from the privatisation. The local authorities should have what is known in the oil industry as a carried interest, a set number of shares in a company that would become revenue earning. My argument is that if there are developments along the banks of the Clyde both north and south, such as housing and various other developments, the local authorities will be called on to provide a range of services that will add to their financial burden. Therefore, if anyone is to be cut in on free shares, there is a clear case for giving them to local authorities up and down the Clyde. At least in that way they would get something out of the asset stripping of public assets that I fear is inherent in the Bill.

Like the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow, I hope that there will be amendments in another place to tighten the Bill and produce a better balance in the public interest. That balance in the public interest is missing, so I shall join others in the Lobby in voting against Third Reading.

9 pm

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I shall make only a brief speech.

For the life of me, I cannot understand why the hon. Members for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) and for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) get so worked up about dredging. Of course, dredging is important. That is why the Labour Government in 1969 wrote into the legislation that the Clyde port authority had a duty—I emphasise duty—to take such steps as from time to time "they may consider necessary for the maintenance or improvement of the Port".

One cannot run a port unless from time to time dredging, if it is necessary, is carried out. That duty is carried over from the 1965 legislation into the Bill: Hon. Gentlemen are trying to race a hare that is a non-runner. The powers in the Bill are exactly the same as those in the current legislation. If dredging is required, the authority will have the right to carry it out.

[Sir Hector Monro]

The attitude of Opposition Members is disappointing. They believe that to continue as we are will help the Clyde port authority to run an efficient port. It is obvious that times have changed dramatically since 1965 and the port needs a great deal of support to go into new ventures to maintain its income with which to enhance the port and the community that it represents. One needs only to consider the market decline in trade on the west coast and the move towards the east coast, the restrictive powers in the Act and the way in which heavy engineering has disappeared. The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow knows better than anyone how things have changed in his constituency and that the Clyde port authority must find new ways of developing the port.

New technology that has come into the west of Scotland does not require the same type of shipping as heavy engineering did years ago. We have also lost the oil shipments from the middle east because of north sea oil, which is welcome. Also imports of grain previously came into the west coast of Scotland from Canada and the United States, not only for whisky distilling but for agriculture. Cereals were imported for feedstuffs. Containerisation has moved to the south and east of the United Kingdom rather than develop on the west coast.

In simple terms, the authority is asking us to give it much greater flexibility to give it the powers to develop the port in the way that it feels necessary. It has had general support from a wide range of people who know what they are talking about. The main opposition to the Bill has come from Opposition Members who seem determined to prevent the port from developing and to drift on into stagnation.

Mr. Sillars: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has listened to what Opposition Members have said. We recognise the potential benefits of a joint venture and we have argued that it should take place, but why is it necessary to have a wholly privatised Clyde port holding company? Why cannot the present authority have its powers extended so that it can go into a joint venture? What would be wrong with that? That would comply with the development of the Clyde, and we are all in favour of that.

Sir Hector Monro: If obtaining finance and venture capital were as simple as the hon. Gentleman seems to think, no doubt the port authority would have gone down that road. In fact, the authority needs wider powers to deal with what it thinks is the best way forward in developing the Clyde.

I am not sure whether Opposition Members have mentioned responsibilities for lights, buoys and recreation facilities. I am sure that many of us have sailed on the Clyde. In war time, I operated upon it and came to know it reasonably well. There is still a great future for developing recreation on the Clyde, but the port authority needs additional powers. There is the need also to remove any questions of doubt, and that the authority has raised with us from time to time.

The hon. Member for Govan has referred to the narrow issue of venture capital. It would be a pity to lose the opportunity that is presented by a much wider approach to the development of the Clyde because of the opposition of Opposition Members. The port authority has given close attention to the possibilities and opportunities that are available to it and it will proceed with confidence, provided that the Bill is passed, to develop the Clyde in the best interests of Scotland as a whole but particularly of the west coast and the Firth of Clyde.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Is it not also relevant to the argument that my hon. Friend is advancing that the board of the port authority, which was unanimous in bringing forward the proposals, includes the former councillor, Lawrence McGarry, who was chairman of the economic development committee of Strathclyde regional council?

Sir Hector Monro: That adds force to the support that should be given to the Bill. I understand that the trade unions are enthusiastic that the Bill should proceed.

I have always believed, as does the regional council in my constituency, that economic development committees are constructive and submit positive ideas to enhance the regions in which they operate. That, of course, must take place in conjunction with the Scottish Development Agency, enterprise trusts and the Scottish Industry Department. All these organisations seem keen to go forward together to support the port authority's initiative, and I cannot understand why Opposition Members are so antagonistic to it. We should speak out for Scotland and for the Clyde and give the Bill every encouragement.

9.9 pm

Mr. David Lambie (Cunninghame, South): I am grateful for the opportunity to intervene briefly in the debate. I spoke on Second Reading and voted in the Noes Lobby. Since then I have not heard any arguments which have persuaded me to change my mind, so I shall vote against Third Reading.

The hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) is being unfair to Opposition Members, as the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) has said. We have been speaking for Scotland in general and for the Clyde in particular. Our only interest in the proposals set out in the Bill is that we consider that the Bill does not speak up, as it were, for Scotland, and especially for the Clyde.

The sixth paragraph of the statement issued by the promoters in support of Third Reading states:

> "The Port Authority would wish their business to have a commercial freedom beyond the severely restricted scope of the present powers of the Port Authority. The aim of the Bill is therefore to free the conduct of the Port Authority's business from the restrictions arising from their present limited powers."

The hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) outlined a series of restrictions and I intervened to remind him that the main function of the port authority was that of a port and harbour authority. He had not given one example of a restriction that affected the port and harbour activities of the port authority. He gave us a lot of restrictions that could be suffered by property and commercial developments if the Clyde port authority constitution is not changed.

In common with other Opposition Members, I realise that things change on a river. Former assets may become liabilities for ports and harbours, but similarly those assets may be attractive as potential property and commercial developments. I appreciate that, given the changes over the years, there must be a restructuring of the Clyde port authority to enable it to sell its assets to realise money to develop its port and harbour facilities. Opposition

Members are afraid that those assets will be stripped by the Clyde port holding company and will be used not for the benefit of the remainder of the Clyde port authority, but for the benefit of that company's directors and shareholders.

I laughed when the hon. Member for Eastwood read the comments made by a colleague and political friend, Tom O'Connor, in support of the Bill. One of the benefits of being here for a long time is that one can remember people and what they did. My political and trade union colleague, Tom O'Connor, was one of the men who prevented the port of Hunterston opening for six months because of a dispute between the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation, the steel workers' union, the Clyde port authority and the Transport and General Workers Union. That man now supports the development of the Clyde when he spent a large part of his life restricting such development. I will not take him as my guide.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I should have thought that that meant that Mr. O'Connor's credentials in the Labour movement were fully established. Would the hon. Gentleman care to enlighten the House on his views of Lawrence McGarry?

Mr. Lambie: I am in enough trouble with Strathclyde regional council, and now with the TGWU, without rising to that bait.

I realise that the Clyde port authority has been subject to restrictions for many years, but the major restriction has been withdrawn by the Government. The major restriction on the port's activities was the national dock labour scheme, which prevented it from developing the Clyde as it should have done. That scheme prevented the authority from developing the concept of a Euro-port, a transshipment port for Europe—as suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman)—based on the port of Hunterston. The authority is no longer restricted by that scheme and if it was able to realise its assets from sales on the upper Clyde there would be nothing to stop it, even under the present set-up, from developing a major port on the Clyde.

Dr. Godman: Does my hon. Friend agree that the national dock labour scheme was developed to protect registered dock workers from employers who were, in many instances, rapacious?

Mr. Lambie: I accept what my hon. Friend says about the reasons for its establishment, but I am talking about the effects that that scheme had, until last year, on developments on the Clyde.

I accept that there is a need for reorganisation. As we have been told, the Clyde port authority has three constituent parts—the upper Clyde, the lower Clyde, and the firth of Clyde, with the ports of Hunterston and Ardrossan. The port and harbour facilities at upper Clyde are finished. Those are the assets that are to be sold. The upper port is important for its shipbuilding assets, of which the hon. Member for Govan spoke. I may get into trouble with my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow by saying that, at the end of the day, maybe even Greenock and Port Glasgow are finished and the full and future development of the Clyde should be in the ports of Hunterston and Ardrossan, especially Hunterston.

Dr. Godman In Greenock, we have Kvaerner Kincaid, which produces the engines for the vessels built at Kvaerner Govan in the constituency of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars). Kincaid employs more than 500 people and Ferguson builds vessels for Caledonian MacBrayne. Greenock and Port Glasgow are far from finished.

Mr. Lambie: I accept what my hon. Friend says, but I am talking about port and harbour facilities. He is talking about manufacturing and shipbuilding facilities, which I hope will continue because a number of my constituents work in those industries.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. As he knows, I was trying to intervene a few minutes ago, but I did not want to interrupt his flow.

I agree with everything the hon. Gentleman said about the dock labour scheme. My memory may be defective, but I do not recall him voting for the Government measure to abolish it.

Mr. Lambie: Sometimes one has to follow the party Whip. In the end, I voted as I did because of the argument put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow. In the 1940s and 1950s, following the bad history of how the dockers and their families were exploited by the dock owners, there was a need for the scheme, but in the end it became a restriction on the activities of the Clyde port authority.

I am sorry that the Minister spoke so early. I thought that he would have taken the opportunity to speak at the end of the debate to answer the points made in it. If, as I have been told, the Government are enforcing a Whip on the Bill, the Minister should have the courage to defend the Bill against the arguments that have come mainly from the Opposition.

Recently, in the Scottish press and media, there have been stories that Sir Robert Scholey—my old friend "Black Bob" Scholey—is interested in building an electric power station at Hunterston to develop it as a major coal port, using the coal to generate electricity in an area earmarked for a new steel mill. I know that it is difficult if it is not in the Minister's brief, but I hope that he will intervene to inform the House whether a Scottish Minister or himself, as Minister with responsibility for ports, has taken part in the plans that we are told have been put forward by British Steel to develop the port of Hunterston, a major part of the Clyde port authority.

In the port of Hunterston there are two direct reduction plants, built by British Steel, which were mothballed the day they were finished. If the Bill is enacted, will it mean that the steel developments for which we are hoping at Hunterston will be stopped because a private company will not be interested in a steel industry for Scotland or that industry's future? Will the Minister inform the House whether the Government are taking part in such negotiations, and can he confirm the statements that have been published in the Scottish press?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have allowed the hon. Gentleman to range widely, but I must remind him that we are debating Third Reading, which is extremely narrow, and that he can refer only to what is in the Bill at present.

Mr. Lambie: I am trying to do that, Madam Deputy Speaker. I want to know whether the Clyde port authority will be obliged to continue with steel and other

[Mr. Lambie]

developments at Hunterston when the Bill becomes an Act. My hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) and I are interested in the future of the ports of Hunterston and Ardrossan, as they are the only real sources of revenue for the Clyde port authority—excluding asset sales.

I hope that the Minister will intervene to inform the House whether, if British Steel intends to build an electricity-generating station at the port of Hunterston, it will be prevented from doing so if that interferes with the steel-making capacity that we hope will be built at Hunterston.

The Bill will be bad for the future of the Clyde and it will be bad for the ports of Hunterston and Ardrossan. That is why I shall vote against Third Reading.

9.21 pm

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): It is unfortunate that the sponsor of the Bill, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), did not mention the amendments which it was agreed were necessary to the Bill, and which should have been discussed in Committee. The amendments are not enormously important, but they are significant for the future development of the Bill. The reason why we have not heard about them is that the promoters of the Bill want to avoid a Report stage and to accelerate proceedings on the Bill. That sort of manoeuvre causes a loss of trust.

It was clear from the speech of the hon. Member for Eastwood that the Bill is not necessary in this form. All Opposition Members believe that the port authorities are unsatisfactory at present. There is something questionable about a body when its owners and who it is accountable to are unknown. To say that the port authority needs amending powers is not the same as saying that it needs the Bill.

One of the disappointing aspects of tonight's debate is the fact that no one has considered the structure of the proposed company, and I shall do so later. There is confusion about the Clyde port authority, and it should be cleared up. The authority has been cosy and unexamined since the 1965 order. It is controlled by the CPA board, which is wholly appointed by the Secretary of State for Transport, who claims that he is not responsible for its activities—which I find questionable.

As far as we can tell, the chairman of the board receives £10,000 a year and each of its members £3,500 a year. Appointment to the board involves an important element of trust. The word "trust" keeps cropping up. It is a trust port, and the idea is to have some sort of mandate to safeguard the Clyde on behalf of the people. That means, for example, that the board, quite rightly, is dominated by people who have a central interest in the Clyde. It includes the managing director of Yarrow, the chief executive of Caledonian MacBrayne, a Bank of Scotland representative, a representative of a major property company and representatives from trade unions. Local authorities are represented, but they are not really represented. They are represented in the sense that it would be wrong if their representatives were not on the board, but they are there in a personal capacity, not mandated by the local authorities.

The managing directors of Yarrow and Caledonian MacBrayne would not dream of using their position in that trust port to benefit their companies. It would be unethical to use their position on the board of the Clyde port authority to their personal advantage or to the advantage of their companies. If they were to do so, the whole basis of that trust would break down.

When a new board is established but it keeps the members of the previous board and changes from a trust to a profit-making organisation, we must question the future relationship. It goes back to ownership. In this case, quite clearly the ownership is being transferred to the private sector. The Clyde port authority believes that the Government do not own it, and its chief executive said:

"If so, why should it share in the proceeds?"

Why should the Government share in the proceeds? That legitimately raises the question, why should anyone share in the proceeds? That must be justified in how the resources of the port authority are shared.

The chief executive said—and I hope that the press is correct:

"The board has only God above it."

That is a profound statement that raises serious questions about responsibility and accountability.

All Opposition Members accept that there should be reforms and increased accountability, but there should not be an automatic right of succession to a new company. Those who were appointed to the board of the port authority in trust should not have an automatic right of succession to the new company.

This privatisation is unlike any other. If it were the privatisation of gas, water, electricity or British Steel—which we regret—it would be under the supervision of the Government, who would then market the shares at a certain price. There would be an open door for those shares.

Mr. Sillars: The distinction is that, with the gas privatisation, the new company had to have a memorandum and articles of association that laid down clearly its purposes and objectives. Here we are asked to endorse the setting up of a private company whose memorandum and articles of association, and therefore its purposes and objectives, we know nothing about.

Mr. Worthington: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. It is highly unsatisfactory that we have no details about the successor company when we could be given those details because the people who will decide about the future company are the board members of the Clyde port authority—no one else, because no one else can get in. Three bodies are to be set up—the Clyde port trust, the successor company, and the holding company. The Clyde port trust will extinguish itself. It will be in existence for only a while in order to set up the successor company and the holding company. The Bill says:

"The Trust shall consist of a chairman, a deputy chairman, and not less than eight nor more than eleven other members."

These people will be the chairman, deputy chairman and other members of the port authority, who shall become the chairman, deputy chairman and other members of the trust. This body will set up the successor company and will dispose of the securities of the holding company.

The hon. Member for Eastwood challenged me about my statement that the employee share ownership scheme applied only to the non-executive directors of the port authority. I was drawing his attention to another clause,

which allows the securities to be distributed as the port trust wishes. Who has ever heard of a company in which the workers got shares but the directors did not? That would be a first. I am willing to withdraw all that I have said on this issue if the hon. Member will assure me that none of the non-executive directors, who are appointed by the Secretary of State for Transport, will benefit from privatisation.

Mr. Allan Stewart: If the general public are allowed to take up shares in the new holding company, then the directors, or the hon. Gentleman, or I, or anybody else, could apply for shares. The point is that the interest-free loan for shares is limited solely to employees or past employees of the company, so that that includes the executive directors, who are employees, but not the non-executive directors.

Mr. Worthington: That was not the assurance that I was seeking, but it takes me on to another point. The hon. Member is implying that shares in this company will be issued on the basis of a public issue of shares. We know nothing about this. He said that it would be open to me, on my humble income, to apply for shares alongside all other members of the public and to be allocated shares. Will there be a public issue of shares or will shares be issued by invitation?

Mr. Allan Stewart: That is a possibility. The board made it quite clear that it wanted to place shares with Scottish financial institutions. That is its preference.

Mr. Worthington: That is why we should be examining the Bill. Apart from a press release which was produced in about November containing a stated wish that the shares should be placed with Scottish financial institutions, I was not aware that there had been any commitment about who would get the shares or in what form. No details whatsoever have been issued about how the company is to be launched, but it is now quite clear that it will not be a public issue of shares with a listing on the Stock Exchange. There has been no attempt at that, but in some mystical way the company will be launched and people will be given the opportunity to have shares.

Dr. Godman: With regard to the non-executive directors of the present board, let me point out to my hon. Friend that there is no representative from Strathclyde regional council.

Mr. Worthington: That is correct. There never was a representative of Strathclyde regional council in a formal sense; there was a person who also happened to be a councillor on Strathclyde regional council.

Dr. Godman: Is it not the case that, when the Secretary of State makes appointments to quangos, nominations are requested from the Scottish Trades Union Congress, for example, and the local councils?

Mr. Worthington: No doubt the Department of Transport constructs such boards in a way similar to the way in which the Scottish Office constructs the boards for quangos under its control. However, I want to stick with my principal point.

If we give the Bill a Third Reading today, we shall be giving a blank cheque to a number of nominees of the Secretary of State for Transport to set up the successor company in whatever form they want. It may or may not benefit them, but it will not have to be in a detailed form approved by the House. We have an extremely vague Bill. We could have been given much more detail because the people who will shape the Clyde board trust, the holding company and the successor company are all in post in the Clyde port authority. Only they will be able to determine the shape of the new company.

The Bill is of considerable importance to the west of Scotland. The Opposition are disappointed that there has been so little interest in an issue of such importance to the future of the Clyde area. The Clyde has considerable symbolism. The port has economic, leisure and general social importance to the health of the area. Those who are in control of the Clyde must be checked to ensure that their interest in the Clyde and the people of the west of Scotland is central. If we give the Bill a Third Reading tonight, there will be no restrictions on who may own the companies and develop them in future.

There has been much reference to dredging. Through the process of debate we have clarified that issue. We now have a different answer from the first answer we received from the hon. Member for Eastwood. When the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) asked him whether the successor company would be responsible for dredging the river, the hon. Member for Eastwood replied that that was a fair question and that the answer was yes. The answer is not yes; the answer is maybe. The existing legislation allows the port authority to withdraw from dredging, and it will allow the future company to do so. Labour Members are concerned that because the authority will be privatised a commercial judgment will be made about whether it is profitable to dredge the Clyde. There are far more profitable activities for the successor company than to dredge the Clyde; that is a cost, not a profit-making exercise.

The regional council, the port authority and others commissioned studies which showed that the withdrawal of dredging would have consequences such as flooding and restricting access up the Clyde. An article on the consequences of global warming for the Clyde appeared in *Scotland on Sunday* on 10 June. There are many low-lying areas—Langbank on one side and Bowling on the other, which has the holding tanks for oil—where the consequences of flooding would be considerable.

A major port, its drainage, sewage and general environment, is much better controlled by a body that has as its central interest the welfare of the people of the area rather than by a private company, just for the time being and only if it is profitable. That is why I shall oppose the Bill.

9.41 pm

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, South): To a large extent, today's debate has been a re-run of the Second Reading debate, without much more light being shed, certainly by the sponsor of the Bill.

We have had one or two additions. We were pleased to see the occasional presence of the Secretary of State for Scotland, anxiously surveying his disparate little flock like the good shepherd to ensure that they are in good working order and all present and correct. We heard the same speech in three different forms from Scottish Conservative Members, which is possibly better than having no speech from the Minister.

[Mr. Brian Wilson]

To a large extent, we are being asked to accept the Bill without the case being spelt out meaningfully by the Government, who later will whip in sufficient Members to see the Bill over this hurdle.

It is important to spell out, as my hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) has been doing so eloquently and on the basis of much research and knowledge, the fact that we are not considering a trivial measure or some matter peripheral to the Scottish economy. We are debating a Bill which will convert a public body which is a trust—a word that should have a rather special meaning—in name if not in nature, with assets worth £53 million, into a private company. In any other age, and under any other Government, that would be a remarkable piece of effrontery and a remarkable achievement for those involved in converting into private property assets that they have certainly not created or earned. That is what is being done, and outside the House there are names for such practices.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Does the hon. Gentleman associate himself 100 per cent. with the remarks in the press release of the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington), to which I referred earlier?

Mr. Wilson: I am capable of making my own remarks.

One of the most remarkable aspects of the debate has been the unlikely sanctification by the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) of Mr. Tom O'Connor and Mr. Lawrence McGarry—gentlemen whom I have not in the past heard the hon. Gentleman speak of in terms of admiration. In opening his speech, the hon. Gentleman said that he did not want to repeat at length the arguments made on Second Reading. That would have been difficult, as he did not make them at length then. I suppose that the only relief today was that he did not quote Harry Lauder to flesh out his remarks as he did on Second Reading.

Mr. Stewart *rose*——

Mr. Wilson: The hon. Gentleman may wish to remedy that now, but I do not have time for such diversions.

Questions are unanswered. Why is the Bill needed? Why do we need a private company? If there are powers which are not at present beyond the reach of the Clyde port authority, why cannot those powers be obtained through legislation while maintaining the existing framework? By legislating in this way, we do not create a pot of gold or a private company out of public assets. That is why the Bill is being pursued.

I welcome the relatively benign presence of the Secretary of State for Scotland. Another curiosity that I have noticed in the past few minutes has been the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) flitting around the Chamber, advising all whose ear he can catch about how to proceed in the closing stages of the debate. That is exactly the kind of grubby measure in which one would expect the hon. Gentleman to be actively involved. It is certainly not the wellbeing of Clydeside communities that has motivated him to be with us at this hour.

All the examples quoted by the hon. Member for Eastwood in terms of the alleged need for the extended powers of the newly privatised company relate to speculative development—not the functions of a river authority. Labour Members accept that there are occasions when development should take place and when partnership between the public and the private sector is desirable, but we certainly do not accept that it is beyond the wit of the existing authority to enter into such relationships to achieve specific ends. We do not believe, however, that it is self-evidently true that a harbour authority should take unto itself powers which put it, as a private company, in a position of what might be regarded as unreasonable strength, with the advantage over all other developments.

The example quoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) is relevant. We have public bodies and private developers advancing supermarket and commercial development schemes in Renfrewshire—exactly the kind of developments to which the hon. Member for Eastwood referred. The Clyde port authority, because of its advantageous position as a holder of the riverside sites, will cut across everything else being done. By gaining access to these sites as a public body, it will take unto itself power to override the wider planning considerations of Renfrewshire. I can well understand the fury with which that proposal has been received by local authorities—which, presumably, the hon. Member for Eastwood would regard as wicked, anachronistic institutions—and by private sector developments which are intensively involved in these developments. The Clyde port authority has ridden roughshod over them in the deal that has been struck with the Scottish Office over the Braehead development.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The hon. Gentleman should withdraw that comment. I specifically said that Renfrew district council, which is controlled by the Labour party, the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) and I see eye to eye.

Mr. Wilson: In his guise as a reasonable man—I am familiar with that guise and have been known to value it at times—the hon. Gentleman has repeatedly said how often he finds himself agreeing with Renfrew district council and, by association, what a fine bunch of chaps they are. What he has not told us is why, on this specific issue, he finds himself in direct conflict with Renfrew district council and why he is sponsoring a Bill which runs directly contrary to the interests and wishes of that council. I do not see the hon. Gentleman rushing to intervene at this stage.

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman alleged that I was making a blanket condemnation of Renfrew district council. That is simply not the case. Of course there are issues on which I disagree with Renfrew district council —but not all the time.

Mr. Wilson: No, but this is such an issue, and we note that the grounds for the disagreement have not been explained.

Inverclyde district council said in its letter to Opposition Members:

"The Bill would emphasise the property development aspects of the privatised Companies rather than the importance of the Clyde for employment, tourism, commerce and industry, leisure and the environment in general. Such an emphasis on property development may result in short term windfall profits being taken outwith the area of the Clyde without any obligation on the part of the shareholders to re-invest in the local area having regard to any consideration of public interest."

That, in a nutshell, is one of our objections to the Bill: the Clyde port authority will become primarily and overwhelmingly a property development company, to the exclusion—certainly the subordination—of marine interests.

Mr. Graham: My hon. Friend is aware that it took us years and years to make plans for the old factory site at Linwood, where we had lost 9,000 jobs. We were going to build warehouses, factories, retail outlets. Along came Tilbury, and now the plans are in jeopardy as a result of the present scheme.

Mr. Wilson: I well understand the strength of feeling that my hon. Friend expressed, and we note the failure of the hon. Member for Eastwood to reconcile such feelings with his support for the Bill, which will precipitate the Braehead development and others like it.

On dredging, the point has been made well and often that there is a difference between powers and duties. Everyone knows that. Everyone knows that the Clyde port authority has a power to dredge. It exercises that power —indeed, it regards it as a duty. That is what it is in business for. Equally, everyone knows that if we do not write a duty into the constitution of the private authority —which, as I have explained, will have a different role and a different order of priorities, although perhaps not in the immediate future—the power will not necessarily be acted upon. Our concerns on this subject have been added to rather than diminished by the conspicuous refusal of the hon. Member for Eastwood to give any assurances on the matter. All that the hon. Gentleman has incanted and all that the hon. Members for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) and for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) have said is that the powers will not change. We all know that the powers will not change, but that means that no duty will be imposed on the new company to carry out dredging.

I share precisely the view expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) about the industrial relic that now floats about dredging the Clyde. It is not unreasonable to estimate that £10 million or £12 million worth of capital will be required to renew the vessel which dredges the Clyde. We have heard nothing from the hon. Member for Eastwood about where that capital is to come from when the time comes, as it presumably soon will, to replace the dredging vessel.

We know that, at some future time, the privatised Clyde port authority will say, "There is no duty upon us to dredge the Clyde and it is not economic to do so." The bill will then land up with the local authorities and if the local authorities do not pick up the tab, the Clyde will no longer be dredged, although dredging is vital to its role as a marine thoroughfare. We know that Kvaerner has balked at the contribution that it is asked to make to meet the dredging costs. What will happen if that company refuses to contribute its part of the dredging costs? Is Yarrow's —perhaps by then no longer under Sir Robert Easton—to continue to contribute to the dredging costs? If not, who will pay to dredge the Clyde? That such questions have gone unanswered by the hon. Member for Eastwood is, to say the least, disappointing.

I met an old friend of mine recently, Mr. Finlay McNeil, a distinguished piper and Gaelic singer, who had childhood memories of the area. He was a member of what might be known as the Gaelic diaspora in Greenock. His father served on vessels which had the duty to maintain the lighthouses on the Clyde. He happened to tell me that that function now belongs to the CPA. Is that a power or a duty? What undertakings can the hon. Member for Eastwood give us that the CPA will continue to maintain the lighthouses on the Clyde? If that function is not fulfilled by the CPA, who will fulfil it? I should be pleased if the hon. Member for Eastwood would intervene and reassure me on that point.

The financing of the CPA is, to say the least, dodgy. It is only a few weeks since we heard of the distress in the ranks of the CPA about the prospect of the closure of Ravenscraig. We shall all resist that closure, but if it happens, it will have a drastic effect on the finances of the CPA. Some 50 per cent. of the CPA's profits come from its Hunterston's operations. The Opposition will fight to ensure that Ravenscraig survives, but if through the carelessness of the Government that plant does not survive, what will be the impact on the overall finances of the CPA?

Earlier, I asked the Minister what would happen to a privatised CPA if a report in *Lloyd's List* is correct and it will not be 50 per cent. of the takings that is seized by the Treasury but corporation tax on that amount, which could mean 65 per cent. or more of the revenue from the privatisation of the CPA being taken by the Treasury. What would happen if the CPA does not, as envisaged, have a healthy capital position at the outset and guaranteed revenue from the activities at Hunterston? What if the CPA loses much of the capital and much of the revenue? None of those questions has been answered. Even more disgracefully, no attempt has been made by the Bill's sponsors to answer them.

It has been the responsibility of Labour Members to lead public opinion on this issue. Over several months my colleagues and I have tried to interest public opinion in Scotland about this matter. We have repeatedly drawn attention to the possible implications for the CPA. I would not be anything other than honest if I did not say that I am disappointed by the response.

We are somewhat inured to such measures if we can allow a public trust with assets of £53 million to be converted into private property without more of a reaction than there has been in Scotland in recent months. I am disappointed that there has been no reaction from Strathclyde region, which is the major local authority with statutory powers involved in the CPA. Many of the district councils have the gravest reservations about the proposal, but in the absence of a lead from the major local authority, they do not feel that they can take a stand on their own, although many have expressed reservations.

It is inexplicable that, while the Transport and General Workers Union opposed the Teesside legislation vigorously, it has taken no such stance over the Clyde——

Mr. Allan Stewart *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 178, Noes 47.

Division No. 274] **[9.58 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan	Atkins, Robert
Alexander, Richard	Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Allason, Rupert	Batiste, Spencer
Amess, David	Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Arbuthnot, James	Beith, A. J.
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Bellingham, Henry

Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knowles, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rowe, Andrew
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Widdecombe, Ann
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tim Devlin and
Mr. William Hague.

NOES

Armstrong, Hilary
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bermingham, Gerald
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buckley, George J.
Carr, Michael
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Haynes, Frank
Ingram, Adam
Lambie, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Nellist, Dave
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Redmond, Martin
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Strang, Gavin
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wilson, Brian
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Mike Watson, and
Mr. Maria Fyfe.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put accordingly, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House proceeded to a Division—

Mrs. Fyfe *(seated and covered)*: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I wish to say——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I shall take the point of order after the Division.

Mrs. Fyfe: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady would do herself a great justice—*[Interruption.]* Order. I am trying to speak. The hon. Lady will do herself justice if she waits until the Division is over so that I can hear her properly and the entire House can hear her.

Mrs. Fyfe: I accept that, Madam Deputy Speaker. Thank you.

The House having divided: Ayes 173, Noes 43.

Division No. 275] **[10.09 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael

Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rowe, Andrew
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Widdecombe, Ann
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tim Devlin and
Mr. William Hague.

NOES

Armstrong, Hilary
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bermingham, Gerald
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buckley, George J.
Carr, Michael
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Cohen, Harry
Cryer, Bob
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eadie, Alexander
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fyfe, Maria
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Haynes, Frank
Hinchliffe, David
Ingram, Adam
Lambie, David
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Nellist, Dave
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Redmond, Martin
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Strang, Gavin
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wilson, Brian
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Mike Watson and
Mr. Ian McCartney.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Bill read the Third time, and passed.

10.21 pm

Mrs. Fyfe: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Since I do not have a bow tie, cane or tap shoes with me, you can understand my reluctance to don the top hat and go into a Ginger Rogers routine, although the top hat is disreputable enough for the "We're a couple of swells" routine. Given the propensity of former Cabinet Ministers to acquire lucrative directorships, have we any idea how many Conservative Members will profit from tonight's proceedings and when?

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Lady waited a long time to put that point of order to me, but I must disappoint her by saying that it has nothing to do with the Chair.

ESTIMATES 1990-91

It being after Ten o'clock, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to paragraph (5) of Standing Order No. 52 (Consideration of Estimates), to put forthwith the deferred Questions necessary to dispose of the proceedings on Estimates 1990-91, Class II, Vote 2, Class II, Vote 4 and Class II, Vote 5.*

CLASS II, VOTE 2

Resolved,

That a further sum, not exceeding £74,290,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray charges that will come in the course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1991 for expenditure by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on grants and subscriptions etc. to certain international organisations, certain grants in aid, special payments and assistance, scholarships, military aid and sundry other grants and services.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

CLASS II, VOTE 4

Resolved,

That a further sum, not exceeding £45,583,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1991 for expenditure by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on the British Council.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

CLASS II, VOTE 5

Resolved,

That a further sum, not exceeding £860,719,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1991 for expenditure by the Foreign

and Commonwealth Office; Overseas Development Administration under the Overseas Development and Co-operation Act 1980 on the official United Kingdom aid programme and for assistance to Eastern Europe; including financial and technical assistance to governments, institutions, voluntary agencies and individuals; pensions and allowances in respect of overseas service including contributions to pension funds; capital and other subscriptions and contributions, including payments under guarantee, to multilateral development banks and other international and regional bodies; emergency, refugee and other relief assistance; loans to the Commonwealth Development Corporation; running costs, related capital expenditure, and other administrative costs including for the Overseas Development Natural Resources Institute (an executive agency).

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Ways and Means Motion may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.— *[Mr. Chapman.]*

Finance Bill *[Money]* (No. 2)

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Finance Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any expenses of the Secretary of State attributable to provisions of the Act relating to levy on disposals of securities of companies to which the undertaking of a harbour authority is transferred and companies which control such companies.— *[Mr. Lilley.]*

10.22 pm

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): I do not want to detain the House too long, but there are interesting aspects of the money resolution to which I want to draw the House's attention. It states:

"for the puposes of any Act resulting from the Finance Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any expenses of the Secretary of State attributable to provisions of the Act relating to levy on disposals of securities of companies to which the undertaking of a harbour authority is transferred and companies which control such companies."

I am not entirely sure whether we can hold the parliamentary draftsmen to account for the wording of the motion, but I am not aware that the Finance Bill spawns any Acts of Parliament. The money resolution applies only to

"any Act resulting from the Finance Bill".

That raises interesting interpretations because it would clearly exclude the Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority Bill, currently going through the House under the private Bill procedure. It would also exclude the Clyde Port Authority Bill, which we have been debating on Third Reading since 7 o'clock and which now retires to the other place. It would also exclude any other privatised port where the private Bill procedure was adopted because none of that legislation, should it be enacted, results from the Finance Bill. It seems to me—I should be grateful if the Financial Secretary to the Treasury would confirm it—that the privatisation of the Tees and Hartlepool and the Clyde port authorities will be excluded from the operation of the money resolution.

It is also interesting that when one reads the resolution carefully it becomes apparent that, if it applies at all, it must also apply to public Bill procedure in relation to the privatisation of ports. Many hon. Members have objected to the Government using private Bill procedure for the privatisation of the Tees and Hartlepool and the Clyde port authorities. The money resolution will enable the Government to take 50 per cent. of the assets of the port authorities when they are privatised. However, if there is to be any Act resulting from the Finance Bill in relation to the privatisation of the ports, that must cover a public Bill. In the Queen's Speech, the Government might propose privatising the 50 or so trust ports that will remain after the privatisation of the Tees and Hartlepool authority.

Therefore, I respectfully submit that the wording of the money resolution is defective because no Act arises from the Finance Bill. Such Acts can come only through the House, be initiated only by the Government, be debated only by this House and the other place and be voted on, so the Finance Bill has nothing to do with any other Act. If the day were to come when the Treasury sought to recover expenses as a result of that resolution, any authority that had been privatised would be entitled to go to the High Court, refer to the money resolution, and have it set aside as invalid. Even from the wording, one can see how invalid it is. It states:

"for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Finance Bill".

I hope that the Financial Secretary to the Treasury is making a note of those points and will answer them at the end of the debate.

The money resolution is also interesting because it states:

"it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament".

What precisely does that mean? Does it mean that the Government will raid the reserves that are set aside as a result of votes in this Parliament? Will those amounts come from the so-called peace dividend, about which we have heard so much, or is that dividend all allocated to the Secretary of State for the Environment to cover the £3,500 million that he needs to put right—if he can—the consequences of the poll tax? Will there be a special impost on the entire electorate to cover those sums? Will taxes have to be raised or—to put it another way—will it now be impossible to reduce taxes? Why does the Financial Secretary to the Treasury feel that he has to come to the House tonight with this money resolution when we all know that the consequences of the privatisation of the Tees and Hartlepool authority will mean the disposal of about £60 million worth of assets?

If the Government carry out their intention of taking 50 per cent. of that money—£30 million—there would appear to be sufficient money in the Treasury kitty to cover the expenses, however much they may be. We have already debated Third Reading of the Clyde Port Authority Bill for three hours tonight and we know that this money resolution will cover that Bill, and that the Government —through the Treasury—propose to take 50 per cent. of the Clyde port authority's assets upon its privatisation.

My hon. Friends who represent Scottish constituencies may be able to tell me whether they know the precise asset value of the Clyde port authority, because I do not. If so, they would know how much the 50 per cent. that the Treasury proposes to take amounts to. But why do the Government come to the Floor of the House tonight to make special provision for the collection of those sums of money by the Treasury?

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): My hon. Friend will have noticed that the Minister has not opened the debate. Does my hon. Friend realise that the money resolution

contains no specific items for us to debate? The Finance Bill is still in Committee. So the Finance Bill Committee has not yet considered the items of legislation that the Minister is seeking the power to apply. He assumes that he will get the approval of the Committee tomorrow, and if the resolution is not approved tonight, he cannot deal with the items tomorrow in Committee. Does my hon. Friend agree that that is an outrageous abuse of parliamentary procedures?

Mr. Bell: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend, and I know that we are debating this resolution and the ways and means resolution that follows because the Finance Committee is to discuss a series of amendments tomorrow afternoon that will permit the Government to take 50 per cent. of the assets of the Tees and Hartlepool port authority and the Clyde port authority. The money resolution is synchronised with the Committee's business tomorrow.

I found it strange that the Financial Secretary to the Treasury came to the House tonight and did not open this short debate on the money resolution, although we anticipated that he would. So, it again falls to the Opposition to make relevant points, to elucidate and to elicit answers from the Minister—but we have the silence of the graveyard from the Government Front Bench. It diminishes and demeans the House and parliamentary democracy when Ministers come to the Dispatch Box but do not make a speech.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): I am also surprised that the Minister failed to open the debate and to explain what is involved in the resolution.

My hon. Friend mentioned assets and the way in which they will be divided. The value of assets is decided by whoever does the valuation. Given the Government's track record on the valuations that they have put on the various lands that have been flogged off to the private sector, perhaps my hon. Friend can tell me whether the assets will be correctly valued and sold to the private sector for the market price, or whether the Financial Secretary will continue to put sweeteners into the system. If the Financial Secretary had spoken, he could well have answered, but I have to ask my hon. Friend, who may or may not be aware of how the valuation is to be done.

Mr. Bell: I have no doubt that the asset value will be left to market forces. We are aware that Tees and Hartlepool port authority and Clyde port authority have valuable land assets and we do not know how they will be valued. It is interesting that my hon. Friend should make that point, because he has followed the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill through the House in all its stages. Will the Financial Secretary tell us whether the money resolution is restrospective? Will it cover other port privatisations? Is the Minister nodding or shaking his head? If he wishes to intervene to clarify the matter, I shall gladly yield the floor to him. He remains seated. No doubt he will answer my points when he replies to the debate.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): The Government are at it again. They are always at it. They are putting the cart before the horse again. They have sent the errand boy from Committee to try to persuade us to agree to what they want. They are in a mess. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) was correct.

Does my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) agree that the Chair now has an opportunity to put the matter right? The Government have put the cart before the horse. It is a swindle and a fix, and the Government are always at it. It is high time that it stopped.

Mr. Bell: I agree with my hon. Friend, although I am not sure whether he was raising a point of order with the Chair or asking me a question to which he wishes me to reply. All hon. Members who have sat through the Government's remarkable proceedings on private Bills, which are in fact often hybrid Bills, will understand our problem. There was a three-hour debate earlier this evening on the privatisation of the Clyde port authority. That has now been followed by a money resolution, which is linked to that Bill, but which has been carefully separated from it so that the Bill would not be hybrid and disallowed by the House authorities.

The Minister for Aviation and Shipping has made a variety of statements, making it clear that privatisation is the route that the Government wish all the trust ports to take. However, the Government do not have the time to take the privatisations through the House in the form of a public Bill—instead, they use a private Bill procedure linked to a money resolution. That is what happens after 11 years of a Government with a large majority. They pervert the procedures, customs and traditions of the House. That results in us ending up at 10.30 pm on a Monday with the Financial Secretary not intervening to answer the valid points raised by my hon. Friends and myself.

I wish to refer to the aspect of the money resolution dealing with expenses. What expenses did the Financial Secretary have in mind when he drew up the money resolution? What expenses will be incurred by the Treasury in collecting £30 million from the assets of Tees and Hartlepool? Does he envisage any difficulty in raising that money? Will he raid the petty cash? Will he send an inspector——

Mr. Redmond: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) is asking the Minister several questions. The Minister failed to introduce the money resolution; he has simply sat there nodding or shaking his head. Can you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, tell us whether the Minister intends to stand at the Dispatch Box and answer some of the questions asked by my hon. Friends? I object to the Minister not having given a lead into this important subject.

Mr. Cryer: Further to that point of order——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. It was not a point of order, so it is not a matter for me.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Before the Minister replies to the debate, would not it be desirable for several hon. Members to have the opportunity to take part in it? Am I right in thinking that there is a strict time limit of 45 minutes for the debate? Will not mutual tolerance have to be shown by hon. Members if we are all to have the opportunity to speak?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I gather that the feeling of the House is that there should be sufficient time to allow the

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

Minister to comment on the matters that have been raised in the debate. I hope that hon. Members will bear that in mind, should they catch my eye.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There is a problem for the House, in that as the Minister did not speak first, because he was trying to get the resolution through on the nod, we do not have information on what it relates to. As I said earlier, it does not appear in the only copy that we have of the Finance Bill. The Committee considering that Bill is due to finish tomorrow, and in the ordinary course of events, the day after that a copy of the Bill as amended in Committee would be published, incorporating any new clauses related to any money resolutions that the Committee decided to approve. We do not have that information, so we are not in a position to make a decision, until and unless the Minister explains the relationship between the Bill and the resolution. He should have spoken first.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Perhaps the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) should be given the opportunity to conclude his speech. No doubt, the Financial Secretary will bear in mind what has been said.

Mr. Bell: I am always grateful for guidance from the Chair, but, like the House, I anticipated that the Financial Secretary would open the debate. We are aware that we have only 45 minutes to debate the issues that the money resolution raises. I should not wish to curtail my remarks, only to find that the debate has been cut to 25 minutes because the Financial Secretary declines to say anything. We have had no sign from those on the Treasury Bench, nor from you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because you cannot say, whether the Financial Secretary will speak. If he tells us that he will, I shall take that into account.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Peter Lilley): I assure the hon. Gentleman that he will not escape without hearing my words of wisdom on the subject.

Mr. Bell: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman.

I was asking the Financial Secretary what expenses he thought would be incurred in taking away from the assets of privatised ports 50 per cent. of their value, and about which ports we are talking—those about to be privatised as a result of Bills going through the House, or those that may be privatised as the result of a Government proposal, set out in the Queen's Speech, to privatise all the ports in the land. It would be interesting to know what expenses he has in mind.

The money resolution deals with a levy on disposal of securities. Which securities does the Financial Secretary have in mind? How does he see that disposal? Is he talking about cash in hand or cash in the bank, or about assets that have grown up in the port authorities over many years? Is he talking about assets developed from past Government grants? In the case of the Tees and Hartlepool port authority, the Government's excuse for taking away 50 per cent. of its assets was that the Government gave grants to it 20 years ago.

It would be wrong if, when the Treasury is talking about a levy on the disposal of securities, it was talking about all the securities rather than those into which there has been a grant input from the Government. I am aware that the Public Accounts Committee likes the idea that, where there has been an input from the Treasury to build up the assets of a port authority such as Tees and Hartlepool, there ought to be a return on that investment. However, it seems rather far fetched for the Treasury to take 50 per cent. of all the assets, regardless of whether there has been any input from the Treasury, and then for the Government to come to the House at this time of night to pass a resolution entitling the Treasury to collect the expenses of collecting money to which it has no entitlement. That draws attention to the manner in which the Government operate and to the arrogant way in which they deal with the House and with ports that are being privatised at their behest. At the time of the privatisation proposals, no one was told that 50 per cent. of the assets would go and that the Government would come to the House tonight to collect their expenses from the national purse.

The resolution refers to harbour authorities. Either the parliamentary draftsman or the Financial Secretary to the Treasury is at fault because in the case of Tees and Hartlepool or the Clyde port authority we are dealing not simply with harbour undertakings but with port undertakings. There is a difference in law between a port and a harbour. Tees and Hartlepool and the Clyde port authority could well argue that they have port responsibilities rather than simply harbour responsibilities. Again, the resolution is defective. When the Treasury seeks to collect those expenses from a variety of privatised ports, there will be every reason for those ports to go to court and say that the provisions do not apply to them because they are more than harbour authorities: they are port authorities, and the wording of the resolution limits the collection of any expenses to harbour authorities. Again, the parliamentary draftsman or the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, whom I should expect to take full responsibility for the resolution, seems to be building up a court case.

The resolution refers to the transfer to companies and other

"companies which control such companies".

Whom does the Financial Secretary have in mind? Does he accept the principle that Opposition Members have been arguing for many a long day and night that the privatised ports will end up in the hands of conglomerates such as P and O and Trafalgar House? They may be part of an expansion programme by Associated British Ports or they may end up in foreign hands. The resolution covers that eventuality by inserting provisions into the Finance Bill relating to the companies in control. When those assets are ultimately transferred into third party hands, the Treasury will be entitled under the money resolution to collect from those companies.

The wording of the resolution reveals the Government's ultimate hand. First, they wish the ports to be privatised. Secondly, they wish to take 50 per cent. of their assets. Thirdly, the Treasury wishes to collect its expenses. Fourthly, the Government anticipate that the companies will end up in the hands of conglomerates and that ports on the Tees, on the Clyde and other ports will be gobbled up when they are privatised or when the Government coerce them into the private sector.

It has not been a wasteful debate. It is not a question of passing the time of day, but it involves holding the Government to account on what appears to be defective wording, which will be challenged in the courts if any of the companies that may be affected by it are so minded.

The resolution cannot distinguish between a port and a harbour: it relates to Acts of Parliament arising and resulting from the Finance Bill. The wording is slothful. The Financial Secretary to the Treasury will have to explain it to the House and to the Finance Bill Committee tomorrow and eventually the courts will have to interpret it.

10.49 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): The purpose of the money resolution and the Ways and Means resolution is to enable this tax-raising Government to raise another new tax. In this instance, the tax would not necessarily be levied at 50 per cent., as the Government say, but in some circumstances at 100 per cent. or 110 per cent.

The Government have discovered that trust ports have money which does not seem to belong to anyone. Under this Government, the Exchequer assumes that if money does not belong to anyone in particular it ought to belong to the Exchequer and therefore the largest possible amount should be seized as quickly as possible. The effect of the proposals is to enable the Government to pay the expenses of collecting a tax, levied at 50 per cent. of the market value of the securities disposed of when trust ports are privatised.

It is relevant to remember that the market value is not necessarily the price for which the shares in the privatised ports will be sold. The Revenue may deem it to be considerably higher, and 50 per cent. of what the Revenue deems to be the market value may be as much as 100 per cent. of the value for which the securities were sold. It is rather like the Trustee Savings Bank case. The money that shareholders pay when they buy shares in a privatised trust port goes to the port and adds to the existing assets in which they are seeking to buy a share. The end result is that the value of the company is the original assets and the price paid for the shares. The tax is levied at 50 per cent. of that total. It may therefore be 100 per cent. of the original value of the port before privatisation. The Government owe an explanation as to why they are proposing to levy a tax on money which was never theirs, and at a rate potentially much higher than 50 per cent.

If one argues, as it is reasonable to argue, that there is a large windfall gain in privatisations, why should it go to the Exchequer? Why should it not go to the companies concerned and the communities in which the ports are situated? Why should it not go to the local authorities in those areas, or into a common good fund, the trustees of which could apply the money for the benefit of those areas? Why is not any levy on the privatisation process structured to ensure that it benefits the ports and the areas alongside the ports where services have to be provided such as the roads leading to the port areas?

No argument can be made for the Exchequer to claim all this money, and the argument is not being advanced by the privatising ports. They are not saying to the Government, "Please take all this money off us—we are embarrassed about having it." It would be better for the money to be given to local communities. Far from the Government encouraging the privatisation of ports under these proposals, some ports will say, "If all the money is going to the Exchequer, we do not want to follow the route of privatisation".

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I can see the hon. Gentleman's difficulty, but he is anticipating the debate on the next motion rather than debating the money resolution.

Mr. Beith: I took advice from the Clerks before deciding whether to attempt to make two speeches or to summarise my remarks as succinctly as possible in one speech. I have opted, so far as possible, for the latter course.

My main purpose is to argue that the House, and particularly Conservative Members, should realise before passing the money resolution that we are providing for the defraying of expenses of collecting a new tax—a tax that may be levied at a high level—to which the Exchequer has no right or claim, certainly none based on the grants that it may have given to the ports, because those are repaid as part of the privatisation process.

The Government owe it to the House to explain why they are trying to levy such a tax, why they are trying to give the Exchequer money to which it has no right, why they are not trying to ensure that the money remains in the communities and with those who work in the ports, and why they are complicating the process of privatisation with a resolution for which there appears to be no demand in the ports concerned.

We shall get down to the detail in the Finance Bill Committee tomorrow. Having introduced a new clause on this subject, the Government withdrew it. Late on Friday, they retabled the new clause. Once again, it will be before the Standing Committee for tomorrow's sitting. The Government seem to be in considerable confusion about what they are doing. That is hardly surprising for a Government who are supposed to be getting rid of taxes but in fact are introducing yet another new tax on a basis for which there seems to be no defence.

10.54 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): It is clearly necessary to debate money motions every time they arise. As the House knows, I have paid assiduous attention to these matters over many months. There have not been many money motions in past months, so it is appropriate that I should spend a few moments on this one, giving the Minister the opportunity to make the speech that he should have made at the beginning.

It is extraordinary that the Executive should try to get such a motion through the House on the nod. No doubt the Minister had a few notes prepared, just in case the Opposition were scrupulous enough, as we always are, to check on the way in which the Government were trying to dodge the measure through the House. It is outrageous that the Vote Office has nothing available in connection with the Finance Bill and this money motion. A new clause has not yet been added to the Finance Bill to link it.

Mr. Lilley: The new clauses were put down on the amendment paper today.

Mr. Cryer: I imagine that the hon. Gentleman regards that as some sort of administrative triumph. He has God knows how many civil servants working for him and an office full of additional civil servants in his private office, but he could not get the clauses tabled until the very day when Parliament is debating the issue.

The new clauses were not available for hon. Members to take home and study at the weekend so that we could

[Mr. Cryer]

come prepared to debate what we were told last Thursday was on the Order Paper. Why were the new clauses not tabled last Thursday? We could then have taken them home, got some information from the Library and been ready to subject the Minister to a thorough cross-examination. The hon. Gentleman tabled them today because he was trying to dodge accountability, just as he was trying to dodge accountability by sitting on his bottom when he should have been up explaining exactly what this was about. He should have been admitting shamefacedly to the House that the Government had made a botch of it, as they always do. The Government are abusing the democratic processes and shovelling so much legislation through that the House does not have time to debate the money motion properly.

A satisfactory amount of information is not before the House. New clauses may have been tabled to the Finance Bill, but they will be considered by the Standing Committee. Strictly, they do not have anything to do with the House. They may not be passed. The Government get the estate agents, merchant bankers and other riff-raff on the Tory Benches into the Committee, tell them to "Vote this way", and expect the measures to be passed automatically without any debate or mature judgment of the issues. That is wrong. It is an affront to the intelligences even of some Conservative Members, although that is not a strong point to make.

The Minister could have helped the House a great deal if he had said all this at the beginning. He did not do so because he hoped—as the Government hope on so many occasions—to get a money motion passed on the nod. That is why I invariably speak—to disappoint the Government in that expectation, if in no other.

What annual expenditure is involved? It is an open-ended invitation to the Minister to spend what he likes. It is outrageous that we have this motion before us.

The measure is designed to obtain revenue from the transfer of the trust ports, which is being effected by private Bills. There are now so many private Bills going through the House that the Government have had to table a resolution at this late stage. I understand that the Finance Bill Committee is due to finish its deliberations tomorrow. That means that this is the last occasion on which the Government can table clauses for the Committee to consider, so the Minister's boast that the Government tabled the clauses today is an implicit admission of incompetence on his part and that of the Government. They could not have tabled them after today and they will lose the right to milk the trust ports if the resolution is not carried tonight. That is why I suggest to my hon. Friends that we should vote on the resolution and prevent its being passed. We should make sure that people understand that we know of the dodges that the Tory Government are setting about in Parliament and that, although they have a majority of 150, we intend to do our best to ensure that the resolution does not go through on the nod.

There is an important relationship between private and public Bills. As a number of Opposition Members have said, the Government are using the private Bill procedure as though it were a public Bill system of which they can take advantage. The resolution, which would enable the Government to milk the trust ports by imposing a levy, is a direct example of that. If the Government did not have an organised system for piloting private Bills through Parliament, they would not need such a resolution.

Mr. Redmond: Perhaps my hon. Friend could explain the levy. The Committee may see the relevant documentation tomorrow, but when I went to the Vote Office and asked for information relating to this and to the next item on the Order Paper, I was informed that it was not available. If my hon. Friend has the proposals, perhaps he could pass them around. Indeed, the Minister could have passed them round. After all, the Government are spending millions of pounds distributing leaflets on their NHS proposals.

Mr. Cryer: I know that my hon. Friend is extremely concerned at the abuse of the House that the use of the private Bill procedure represents. We all know that my hon. Friend is honoured for holding the Executive to account on these issues.

I shall not take much longer, although I must say to the Minister, who is looking at his watch, that there will be plenty of time later. I can rely on the Minister to use his ingenuity to include any explanations that he is prevented by shortage of time from using on this resolution by his speech on the Ways and Means resolution. I do not know about my hon. Friends, but I believe that we should have a close look at that, too. If we are not satisfied—even though the debate can go on for some time—it would not be imprudent to consider voting on the Ways and Means resolution. But we shall come to that. The Minister has several minutes to make the speech that he should have made at the beginning of the debate and I now give him the opportunity to do so.

11.3 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Peter Lilley): I am glad that I did not speak at the start of the debate because I could not have forecast exactly the questions that hon. Members have properly raised. I shall do my best to respond to as many of them as I can and I shall take the opportunity, as the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) suggested, to answer any outstanding questions in the subsequent debate, to which I look forward.

The resolution simply authorises the expenditure of moneys on the administration of the levy that the clauses that we shall consider in the Finance Bill Committee tomorrow would impose on any port that privatised itself. That admistrative expenditure applies only to the operation of the levy. The money resolution will not enable us to expend moneys on the privatisation of ports; the House can rest assured on that.

I was asked what was meant by
"any Act resulting from the Finance Bill".
It is, of course, the Finance Act which will result from the Finance Bill and not any private Act resulting from a private Bill now going through the House. Normally, the moneys raised used for any administrative expenditures under the Finance Bill money resolution will come from Department of Transport voted expenditure headlined for administration.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South intervened in the speech of his hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) and asked about the non-availability of clauses. I explained that they were tabled on Friday, published on Saturday, and appear on

today's Order Paper. We are not debating those clauses. That will be a task for the Finance Bill Standing Committee. We tabled the clauses so that we could debate them in Committee, although we could have tabled them later on Report had we so wished and had we any subversive intent, which of course we have not.

The hon. Member for Middlesbrough asked whether the resolution is retrospective. It is not. He also asked whether we were in any way using private Bills to privatise ports. By definition, private Bills are private and the private institution—in this case the port—brings forward the Bill, not the Government.

The hon. Member for Middlesbrough also asked about the nature of the expenses that might be incurred under the money resolution. They would include valuation costs of the proceeds of sale, determining whether the levy is payable and general administrative and collection costs. I suspect that those costs will not be large, but it is right that we should receive proper authorisation before they can be undertaken.

The hon. Member for Middlesbrough also asked what securities are mentioned in the Bill. They are shares in the company, debentures, stocks and bonds and not anything owned by the company. He also asked whether it was right to refer to harbour authorities rather than port authorities. I am reliably informed that all port authorities are harbour authorities.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) said that we were taking the opportunity to impose a tax and that the money should instead in some way be channelled to employees, local authorities and the area in general. He will find from the clauses that up to 3 per cent. of the proceeds can go to employees, and that will be a larger proportion than in any other sale. It is intended that 50 per cent. of the proceeds will be left with the company and liable to taxation. Privatisation——

It being three-quarters of an hour after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business).*

The House divided: Ayes 121, Noes 30.

Division No. 276] **[11.07 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Tony
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Gow, Ian
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rowe, Andrew
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Twinn, Dr Ian
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Widdecombe, Ann
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Nicholas Baker and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

NOES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bermingham, Gerald
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carr, Michael
Cryer, Bob
Dixon, Don
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fyfe, Maria
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Haynes, Frank
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Kirkwood, Archy
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Nellist, Dave
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Skinner, Dennis
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert N.

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. George Buckley and
Mr. Martin Redmond.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Finance Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any expenses of the Secretary of State attributable to provisions of the Act relating to levy on disposals of securities of companies to which the undertaking of a harbour authority is transferred and companies which control such companies.

Ways and Means

LEVY ON PORT PRIVATISATIONS

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That provision may be made for a levy on disposals of securities of companies to which the undertaking of a harbour authority is transferred and companies which control such companies and for the payment into the Consolidated Fund of payments of levy, interest on unpaid levy and penalties in respect of levy.—*[Mr. Lilley.]*

11.18 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Notices of amendments were given to Standing Committee E on the Finance Bill and they relate to the two resolutions, the first of which has just been disposed of. Will it be in order to discuss any of the new clauses, which are clearly relevant to the debate? Are the new clauses the property of the Committee until it makes a decision and reports to the House? I think that I know the answer to my questions, but, naturally, I seek your confirmation and guidance. If we are excluded from debating these matters, the House is being outrageously dealt with by the Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): The hon. Gentleman is interpreting the advice that has been given to me, which is that it would be in order to discuss the matters to which the motion applies.

11.20 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Peter Lilley): I shall endeavour to respond to some of the points raised but not answered on the previous motion. I shall be as brief as possible because I know that the House does not want to keep itself from its bed.

The Government have tabled six new clauses to the Finance Bill to provide for a 50 per cent. levy on the proceeds of the privatisation of trust ports. The House will be aware that two trust ports—the Tees and Hartlepool port authority and the Clyde port authority—are seeking to turn themselves into companies by means of private Acts of Parliament. The Government welcome that initiative because we see considerable benefits from early privatisation which will remove unnecessary restrictions on the way in which the port businesses can be developed, allow ports to develop their assets and give them a more flexible capital base while exposing them more fully to the disciplines of the market. The Government believe that privatisation will increase the efficiency of the trust ports and lead to a better service to port users.

The trust ports are owned not by the Government but by the state. It must be for Parliament to decide who should benefit from the proceeds of sale. In the Government's view, a proportion of the proceeds should go to the Exchequer. The clause provides that this proportion should be 50 per cent. It is a matter of judgment what the right proportion should be. In making their decision, the Government have tried to be fair to all the parties involved, including the ports and the Exchequer.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): Will the only deductions from the capital raised by the flotation be the 50 per cent. taken by the Government, or will tax be levied on top of that?

Mr. Lilley: Tax will apply to the proceeds in the normal way, but the levy will be a cost to be deducted in calculating any capital gain, which will be liable to capital gains tax. Therefore, the capital gain left after the levy will bear the burden of capital gains tax.

Mr. Devlin: What proportion of the total proceeds will be left with the successor companies?

Mr. Lilley: Clearly the proportion will be somewhat less than 50 per cent. How much capital gains tax is required will depend on the capital gain and the companies' ingenuity in reducing the capital gains tax that they pay.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): A moment ago the Minister said that the ports were owned by the state. What is the state in this context? If it is not the Crown, can he explain any basis of English law in which there is something called the state which can own ports?

Mr. Lilley: It was the courts which used the term "owned by the state". It is not a term that we have added to their vocabulary. It comes from the vocabulary of the courts.

It is a matter of judgment to decide what is the right proportion that should be taken in the form of a levy. In making their decision, the Government have tried to be fair to all parties, including both the ports and the Exchequer. We had to take into account several factors. Factors which suggested a higher Exchequer share included the need to safeguard the interests of the taxpayer, who has contributed to the development of the trust ports, albeit on a relatively modest scale; and the need to ensure a level playing field between the newly privatised trust ports and ports already in the private sector. Allowing the trust ports to keep the majority of the proceeds would give them an unfair commercial advantage over ports already operating privately.

There were several arguments in favour of a lower Exchequer share. They included the desirability of rewarding the initiative shown by authorities such as the Tees and Hartlepool and the Clyde port authorities of introducing private Bills; the benefits of early privatisation; the need to retain an incentive for other trust ports to seek privatisation; and, of course, the ports' intention to use some of the funds to invest in new developments and develop their existing assets.

Mr. Devlin: I apologise for interrupting my hon. Friend again. If the proposals are accepted—this is of fundamental importance to the privatisation of the two ports—there will be no incentive for any other port to follow in their footsteps. Secondly, there will be no proper reward for the two companies that so bravely went forward where others feared to tread. Thirdly, benefit will be lost to the peoples of the Clyde and Teesside, who would otherwise have benefited, because in both instances the ports will have to go to the markets in London for their flotations if they are to make a real profit. That will be a disaster for my constituents and for the constituents of Clydeside Members.

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is unduly pessimistic. I am surprised to find that he has an ally in the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer). I do not accept my hon. Friend's suggestion that the ports will have no incentive to privatise. They will retain 50 per cent. of the funds.

Mr. Devlin: My hon. Friend said that that would be taxed.

Mr. Lilley: Of course. The receipts will be subject to capital gains tax. That has always been the position and it is not being altered. We are merely reducing the net assets that will be liable to taxation.

The incentive to privatise is not only to retain funds from the issue. The ports have made a strong case—I consider it to be a convincing one—that they are hampered by the present deeds and structure of their make-up. They wish to have a private company structure and to be freed from the limitations that are now imposed on the activities in which they can engage. They would not desist because the money that they obtain will be somewhat less than previously was estimated. It seems not unreasonable that we would take 50 per cent. of the proceeds. I recall that we took 100 per cent. in the case of Associated British Ports. I do not take the pessimistic view of my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin).

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): If 50 per cent. of the assets are to be taken by the Government, that leaves 50 per cent. of the proceeds. If 40 per cent. is the higher rate of capital gains tax, is it not right that 40 per cent. of the 50 per cent. will further be taken by the Government?

Mr. Lilley: I imagine that in this instance capital gains tax will be paid at the corporation tax rate rather than at the higher rate of CGT, and that is 35 per cent.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Minister sure about that?

Mr. Lilley: I am never sure of anything.

Mr. Skinner: I hope that that will be written down.

Mr. Lilley: Bearing in mind all the considerations which I have outlined, the Government believe that, on balance, 50 per cent. is right. As the new clause imposes a charge, we need a Ways and Means motion such as the one which is before the House.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) was critical of the Government for imposing a tax and suggested that money should be diverted to employees, local authorities and others. Without a levy, it would be impossible to divert money to any specified beneficiaries, unless the hon. Gentleman proposes to do so by a thoroughly unparliamentary means such as extra-parliamentary plunder. I shall be grateful if he enlightens the House on that score.

The hon. Gentleman asked why we withdrew the ways Ways and Means motion earlier and suggested that the Government were having second thoughts and wished to alter it. We withdrew it because we wished hon. Members to be able to go home to bed after they had been debating other matters at great length. It seemed sensible to withdraw it and then to reintroduce it. The motion was tabled on Friday and copies of it were available in the Vote Office that morning. It was published on Saturday and it could have been taken home by hon. Members over the weekend.

Mr. Beith: If the House is to be asked to pass the motion, surely it must be on the basis that the Government have specific plans to channel the revenue to the good of the employees and communities concerned. On that basis, it might be worth inviting the House to approve it. It is apparent, however, that the Government have no plans to do that. It is on that basis that I argue that it is wrong for the money to go to the central Exchequer.

Mr. Lilley: If the hon. Gentleman believes that the central Exchequer should never receive any money from taxation or levies, he will be hard pressed to finance the public expenditure plans he supports.

In the clauses we have spelt out that up to 3 per cent. of the shares can go to employees, that 50 per cent. will be retained, before being subject to capital gains tax, by the trust ports. That money will be reinvested in the ports and in assets that have lain idle and undeveloped because of the restrictions imposed on the operations by the trustee status of the ports. The money will therefore be channelled automatically into the local authority areas. The other 50 per cent. will be available to the Exchequer to put to the excellent use to which the Government put public expenditure.

11.30 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): The Financial Secretary said that he is never sure about anything and, having followed him through most of the Committee on the Finance Bill, I cannot contradict him.

For the avoidance of doubt, it would be helpful to the House if I said that the Ways and Means resolution that we are discussing will enable the Government to introduce clauses into the Finance Bill tomorrow to bring in a new tax. You will know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, perhaps better than anyone in the House, that, in the normal way of things, the Finance Bill Committee is not allowed to put up taxes or introduce new ones. Our affairs are circumscribed by the resolutions passed in the House at the end of the debate on the Budget. To facilitate such an unusual course of events, the Government have come to the House, correctly in their terms, to get the money resolution and the Ways and Means resolution through.

The resolution does not serve any announced taxation policy—there was no word about it in the Budget speech or on Second Reading of the Finance Bill. It does not concern a new tax nor does it raise VAT or adjust the rates of income tax to secure better the revenues of the state. The resolution has been tagged on to the end of the Finance Bill to facilitate private legislation. The Labour party regards that as an abuse of the Finance Bill procedures. It is wrong that privatisation measures introduced through the private Bill procedure—technically they are not backed or opposed by the Government or the Opposition, but are subject to a free vote—should be facilitated by the Finance Bill.

The Labour party is opposed to privatisation measures, but that is not the matter under discussion tonight. We are discussing the share-out—the division of the money. The Government have argued that the trust ports belong not to the Government, but to the state. If that is so, surely it behoves the House to consider the mechanism by which the state offers those trust ports for sale. We are well aware that that mechanism is a private Bill passed through the House and the other place. The sale is governed by the decision of Parliament.

Who is in charge of the administration of the state? It is ludicrous for the Government to try to pretend that that is not a matter for them. For whom is it a matter if not for the Government? The Government must make the decision. If the state is offering the trust ports for sale and

[Mr. Nicholas Brown]

the Government are in charge of the state, surely the Government keep the money realised from the sale. That, surely, is the logical position, although it is not the one that the Government are adopting.

The Government could adopt an alternative position. They could say that these institutions are somehow in limbo—not actually owned by the state and controlled by the Government but more distant. The analogy might be with a family company that is floating on the stock exchange and raising money in the same way as would any other private company that is going public. But surely, in these circumstances, the analogy should be with a company raising extra money that would accrue to the company—and to no one else, certainly not to the Government. Those seem to be alternatives: the Government cannot say that both are true, since they are mutually contradictory. So the Government will take half the money and the other half will remain with the port companies and be subject to taxation in the usual way.

If the proposals are passed tomorrow, the tax obligation placed on the new limited companies will be the minimum 50 per cent., instead of the maximum.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend will bear it in mind that, in the new clauses tabled for debate by the Finance Bill Committee, the Government will take powers, subject to resolution of the House, to alter that percentage to any that they deem suitable. Fifty per cent. is only an assumption, subject to alteration at the whim of the Government.

Mr. Brown: We can go on only what the Government have told us of their intentions so far, but my hon. Friend is quite right. The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) made a similar point, and he could have gone on to say that the tax treatment of the proceeds involved in this operation is bound to affect the share price. As people consider what they will pay for the Clyde or Tees and Hartlepool port authorities—we have not even agreed to pass the privatisation legislation in respect of the latter—they will inquire about the tax treatment of the institutions that they are buying. If a large amount of the proceeds revert to the Government, the value of the shares will fall; and if the whole proceeds stay with the company as if it were a private company going public, presumably the value of the shares will rise.

The privatisation process is highly unlikely to help Clyde, Tees and Hartlepool or any of the other 50 small trust ports that may end up in the hands of private capital. The private investment will come from all over the country. If there are profits—especially short-term profits—to be made from the privatisation, those profits will be dispersed all over the country, not retained as they should be, in the region in which they originated. Were successor public authorities to be created, we could ensure that the profits were retained locally.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson), in the debate on the Clyde port authority, mentioned the public duties placed on the port authorities—to dredge rivers for river users, to maintain lighthouses—which thereby incur expenditure that does not necessarily generate a return. How will such duties sit alongside private sector ownership? Unhappily, I suggest. In the previous debate the Government did not say what provision they intended to cover these matters. I suspect that the Financial Secretary will say nothing on the subject tonight, but we shall press him on it tomorrow.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): My hon. Friend makes an interesting point. Why have not the Government written that into the Bill? Obviously, they do not want liability to fall upon the new privatised ports and harbours—or whatever the Financial Secretary wants to call them. If liability does not fall on the privatised companies, where does it fall, if not upon the public purse? The poor old taxpayer may have to continue to pick up the bill for performing a duty that should rightly belong to the new privatised industry.

Mr. Brown: I share my hon. Friend's fears. Probably it would work like this: the newly privatised port authorities, which will command a monopoly when running the facilities of the port or harbour of which they are in charge, will say to the users, "The cost of dredging is this. If you want it done to a certain depth, you will each pay your share, and if you object to that, we won't do it." The days when the river was dredged for them, as a subsidy to industry along the river, will be over. The same may even be true of the maintenance of lighthouses, which people's lives depend on. The privatised port authority will say to users who require the lighthouse to be there, "You will pay the economic cost or it will not be maintained."

I remind the House that we are talking not merely about assets that pertain to the operation of a port authority—there is much more to it. The port authorities own assets that far outstrip the narrow function of running a port. Indeed, one of the arguments for privatisation is that full and proper economic use of those assets cannot be made under the current trust status, which relates solely to port operation. A limited company, a series of limited companies, or an owning company and another company that will run the port separately—allowing the owning company to get on with other economic activities—are required. In other words, they will get on with the exploitation of surplus land, because there certainly is surplus land in many port authorities.

Tees and Hartlepool port authority, as my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) knows, said in its notes of evidence that it is aware that

> "The current members of the Port Authority at the time when the Act is implemented, will be responsible for setting up the companies and will of course constitute the Trust, which will be responsible for the sale.
>
> The current members have said that the Bill will enable the business to 'have scope to develop outside the estuary, both elsewhere in the UK and in Europe, and both in the provision of port facilities and in other distribution activities.'
>
> The current members also said again in a press statement, issued when the Bill was announced:—' The authority is determined that broadening its business scope will take place without diminishing its commitment to maintain, develop and expand the ports of Tees and Hartlepool and that direction of its activities will remain on Teesside so as to ensure that the area shares to the maximum in the benefit that will accrue'"—

I emphasise this—

> "'from the development of its business on a broader scale.'"

In other words, private status and expansion are intended, which, as my hon. Friends the Members for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) and for Middlesbrough would be quick to point out, is bound to be facilitated by the existence of urban development corporations in the areas that many of the port trusts under consideration occupy. State money for economic development sits alongside new limited

companies that have trading in spheres other than narrow port operations as a stated objective. The opportunity to make substantial profits on real estate speculation is considerable.

Mr. Cryer: I draw my hon. Friend's attention to the Exmouth Docks Bill. Exmouth is a relatively small port, and it has been closed illegally. The authority applied to the House for permission to close it, but has done so without waiting for that. Exmouth's function as a harbour has been neglected, to the detriment of the immediate hinterland, because the directors want to develop surplus land for a marina and associated housing. That area has lost a valuable transport facility.

Mr. Brown: As a Member of Parliament for the city of Newcastle upon Tyne, I am not unfamiliar with such scams. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing my attention to one in another part of the country. The opportunities—and my hon. Friend gives a stark example—are considerable. I and other hon. Members must challenge the wisdom and the equity of what the Government are doing. If there is a need for a change in status for the port authorities that provide important public services, surely we should look for successor institutions in the public sector. Such institutions are quite capable of taking care of economic development functions, and of doing so in such a way that they are accountable to the local community. The social desirability and the profits of such activities are matters for the local community and not for people who happen to end up as owners of the new private sector institutions, perhaps because of their position prior to privatisation. Many people have been put in influential positions prior to privatisation by no other person than the Secretary of State for Transport, who has charge of such appointments.

The Government did not announce the new tax in the Budget. They did not announce it on Second Reading of the Finance Bill. Indeed, their first reference to the fact that they might take a share in the proceeds of the sale, other than through normal taxation—to which my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough referred—was in a ministerial response on Second Reading of the Clyde Port Authority Bill. That was when they announced the proposed 50 per cent. take. It was on the evening prior to the Committee stage of the Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority Bill.

It was clear from the answers given by the chief executive of the port authority at the Committee hearing that the level of take and its mechanism had been something of a shock. That view is underscored by the fact that the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field), who chaired the proceedings, tabled an amendment to the Finance Bill to reduce the percentage of the Government's take. That amendment has disappeared—*[Interruption.]* It has disappeared. I do not know what magic has brought that about.

Mr. Beith: The answer is simple—the Government withdrew their clause, thereby sweeping away amendments that had been tabled to it. They then retabled the clause a couple of days later.

Mr. Brown: In those circumstances, surely it would be possible also to retable the amendment—but it has not reappeared. It is probably too late as the matter is to be discussed tomorrow.

It is important that the House realises that we are considering a Ways and Means motion that will facilitate a new levy. It is not connected with corporation tax or capital gains tax. Technically, it is difficult to understand, although the objectives are clear. The levy is payable only on a disposal of securities to what is referred to as a successor company from what is referred to as a relevant port authority. In other words, the latter can be only a harbour authority that is not already a company and is not a local authority. I am assuming that if it is a company owned by the Government or local authorities, all the proceeds of privatisation flow into the right pockets anyway, and if it is a privately owned company, it could not be privatised again.

The levy is designed to apply where a non-company harbour authority transfers its trade, an undertaking by Act of Parliament, to a subsidiary in exchange for shares. In other words, the circumstances that we are expecting to pertain following the passage of the private Bill on the Clyde port trust, and that on the Tees and Hartlepool port trust, if those Bills are passed, will apply if the companies then sell the shares. The Government may say that the levy applies only where the shares are sold by the relevant port authority or its creature. The taxation of such schemes is, by necessity, complex. It will depend on the corporation tax statutes, the harbour authority, the terms of the private Act, and the scheme for transferring the trade. However, at first sight, the levy is a second non-offsetable charge to tax. Although that may not be what the Government intend, what has been published shows that that is how the scheme will operate in practice.

Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham): I trust that the hon. Gentleman will tell us what his proposals are. Assuming that privatisation goes ahead, what does he think should happen to the proceeds? Is he saying that 100 per cent. should remain with the new owners, or that 100 per cent. should revert to the taxpayer, or what?

Mr. Brown: I thought that I had dealt with that point. The Labour party's view is that if there is a need to restructure the Clyde or the Tees and Hartlepool trust port, there should be a successor—more modern, and perhaps more versatile, but a public authority in the public domain, representing the interests in the local community, and carrying on what are essentially public functions. The Labour party is voting against the private Bills—a fact that the hon. Gentleman has probably noticed. For the hon. Gentleman to say that, while we disagree with it, it has now been done and we should say what the tax treatment should be, is disingenuous. We do not think that it should have been done in the first place. Therefore, I see no point in answering the hon. Gentleman's question. I have made it clear that we believe that it should not have been done in the first place. It is like saying to somebody, "You don't believe in capital punishment, but if people have to be put to death, should they be hung or gassed?" It should not be done at all.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are getting away from the resolution before the House. I hope that we shall get back to it.

Mr. Brown: I have done my best to answer the question in my terms. I am sorry that I will not come on to the hon. Gentleman's ground, and debate the details of a matter that is wholly for the Government, not the Opposition. We

[Mr. Brown]

do not agree with it, so we shall not join the argument about how the spoils should be shared out. There should not be any spoils. The money should remain with the local community, in a successor public authority.

Mr. Moate: This is an important matter, not just for the ports that we are discussing at the moment but for many other trust ports. Assuming that privatisation takes place —and the hon. Gentleman volunteered that that is not what we are debating—does not it behove the hon. Gentleman to make serious proposals about what should happen to the proceeds? Have not the Government come forward with an acceptable——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that we shall not pursue that line of debate, because I should have to rule it out of order. I hope that the House will confine itself to the motion.

Mr. Brown: I have done my best with the question. If it would help the hon. Gentleman, I can tell him that we shall be voting against the Government's proposals tomorrow, and if Tory Members on the Committee considering the Finance Bill wish to oppose them as well, perhaps because they think that the proposed tax is too high or too low —both lines are open to them—all that they have to do is to shout no when we do. I wonder how many Tory Members will do that. The hon. Gentleman does not have to persuade me to vote against the Government; he has to convince his hon. Friends and I suspect that that is a different matter.

As I understand the proposals—I know that we shall be going into more detail tomorrow, so I shall not detain the House much longer—the levy can be deducted in calculating any gain made on the sale of the shares that attract the levy. That suggests that quite large gains on the sale of those shares are expected. That brings me back to what we consider to be at the heart of the debate. Quite substantial sums—£60 million in the Hartlepool and Tees port trust and a slightly smaller sum, in the mid-£50 million range, in the Clyde port trust—are at stake. The House should take seriously the treatment of that money. We consider that the Government should establish successor public authorities that will serve the public interest rather than bolt through the private Bill procedure and, through very tacky use of the Finance Bill, facilitate a measure that will be in the long-term disinterest of the citizens whom the port authorities serve and the people of our country.

11.56 pm

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): I shall not detain the House long as I know that my hon. Friends wish to get on with the debate as quickly as possible, but I wish to make one important point.

The levy is a new tax on a completely new procedure for taking trust ports out of the public sector and putting them into the private sector. One could argue convincingly on both sides of the question as to whether such a levy should be made and whether it should be 100 per cent. or nil.

Two particular points concern me as a constituency Member of Parliament near one of the ports currently undergoing privatisation. First, as I understand it, the amendments to be introduced in the Finance Bill Committee tomorrow attach the levy not to the proceeds of sale but to the market value of shares. Therefore, if the ports go to the market and the market gives them a certain price which is taken to be the proceeds, they will face the levy not on the proceeds gained from the sale but on what the shares might have realised if they had been sold in the City of London.

The plan in regard to Teessideis that the port will sell its shares to local pension funds and other interested bodies so as to keep the equity and the interest in the local community.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Devlin: I will give way in a moment, but I wish to finish this important point.

If the proposal goes through as currently drafted, instead of the shares being offered to the people and the pension funds of Teesside, they will be offered to the City. That is why I reject all the assurances given by the promoters of the Bill when it came before the House some time ago.

Secondly, the levy is not the end of the taxing arrangements for privatisation. The 50 per cent. levy is a straight abstraction of funds from the privatisation process. In addition, there will be a further rate of corporation tax of the order of 30 per cent. That means that approximately 65 per cent. of the possible market value of the shares will be abstracted from the flotation. Indeed, it is possible that more than 100 per cent. of the proceeds of the sale will be abstracted. It will thus have failed completely and there will be no reward for the brave local authority proposing the plan and no incentive for any other public port to go through the same process. I am profoundly disturbed by that.

I understand that the Liberals tabled some amendments to the original proposals but dropped them when the draft clause was withdrawn. As the new clause has been introduced in a slightly different form, the amendments would not normally attach to it, but it has been confirmed that the Liberals' amendments will attach to it tomorrow. The amendments tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) and further amendments being tabled by Conservative Members will attach to it when it is considered tomorrow.

I am happy to vote for the concept of a levy on disposals for the purposes of the motion, but I am not in favour of a levy on the market value of the shares rather than on the proceeds of the sale, thus making privatisation a meaningless process. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to consider that closely because, unfortunately, I shall not have the pleasure of joining him in Committee tomorrow morning.

Dr. Godman: The concern that the hon. Gentleman expressed about the need to retain the ownership and management of a port authority in the locality is shared equally by Clydeside Members in relation to the privatisation of the Clyde port authority.

Mr. Devlin: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, because the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) did not satisfactorily answer the question about how much of the proceeds should be retained by the state. It is no answer for him to say that we should not undergo this process. He must face the question of the tax treatment. The only ideologically pure position for the

Labour party is to abstract 100 per cent. of the proceeds of sale. That is what the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East should have had the courage to say.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Devlin: I will just finish this point. The hon. Gentleman will not say that because he is a north-eastern Member of Parliament and does not want to upset the voting public around the ports on the Clyde and Teesside.

Mr. Brown: That is all very well, but Newcastle ceased to be a port some time ago. With a majority of 12,500 —somewhat larger than the hon. Gentleman's—I do not have to kowtow to any interest group in my constituency, and I certainly would not do so. The point that the Labour party is making is that we do not have to say how we would deal with the proceeds of the sale of these institutions because we would not sell them at all—we would create successor authorities in the public sphere and in the public interest, something that the Conservative party seems willing to overlook.

Mr. Devlin: As the Labour party does not have a view on this matter, it will obviously sit mute in Committee tomorrow and not oppose the Government or say anything further, allowing hon. Members who do not have difficulties about dealing with the tax treatment of this problem to deal with it among themselves. No doubt the hon. Gentleman and his party will sit there and say nothing.

12.3 am

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): I am a member of the Finance Bill Committee and chairperson of the Transport and General Workers Union parliamentary group. Under the private Bill procedure, our union submitted a great deal of evidence about the effects of the levy and proposals for the surplus income realised by the sale of the assets.

The motion is a Government attempt to provide a back-up to the proposals in new clauses 67 to 72 of the Finance Bill, which will be considered tomorrow. The Government want to provide a new, confiscatory tax on the assets realised from the privatisation of the Clyde port authority, the Tees and Hartlepool port authority and other authorities to be privatised later. The new clauses will allow the Government to implement their announcement that they intend to take 50 per cent. of the proceeds of the privatisation of any trust port.

The British Ports Federation urged the Government to introduce general enabling legislation to allow trust ports to go down the privatisation road, if they so decide. Through lack of public parliamentary time, the Government have not been able to provide the necessary facilities to allow the companies to go down that route. They have offered the private Bill procedure, and the Clyde port authority and the Tees and Hartlepool port authority are following it.

The Government's actions in the motion and the new clauses are not a million miles away from the procedures applying to the disposal of assets by local authorities. New clause 67 states:

"—(1) A levy shall be chargeable on the disposal of securities of a company which is, or has control of, a successor company to a relevant port authority if the disposal is made by—

(a) the relevant port authority,

(b) a company under the control of the relevant port authority, or

(c) a person constituted under a private Act the Bill for which was promoted by the relevant port authority."

Only 20 per cent. of the income derived from the capital receipts gained by a local authority in the disposal of its assets can remain with the authority for the use of the community, while the remainder goes to the Treasury. Under the motion, at least 50 per cent. of the capital receipts accrued from privatisation goes to the Treasury and will not be retained by the successor company for use in developing the port or in assisting the community through a development agency, the local authority or a similar body. The successor company will be prevented from using the money in the way that it would prefer.

The Government's 50 per cent. proposal could have been influenced by arguments in opposition during the passage of the Clyde Port Authority Bill and the Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority Bill. Those who presented petitions and gave evidence to the Committees made it clear that, if privatisation went ahead, the capital receipts accruing from the sale should remain with the successor companies and within the local communities, for the development of port resources and facilities and to utilise joint projects within the ports and in the surrounding hinterland. The new clause would remove that opportunity.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House put aside their objections to the original privatisation proposals on the ground that, as the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) said, assurances had been given that resources accruing from the sales would be ploughed back into the development of the infrastructure in the local communities from which the assets had been realised. Most of the ports are located in areas where resources are required to develop alternative forms of employment and infrastructure, so one can understand the opposition to the Government's proposals. Under new clause 67, millions of pounds' worth of assets accruing from the sales may be siphoned off to the Exchequer rather than being used by the successor company or by that company in conjunction with the local community.

When the British Transport Docks Board was privatised and became Associated British Ports, the equity value of the company was way below what the Government had estimated before the flotation price was set. The assets were completely undervalued and initially the company did not realise its true value on the open market. Under the Ways and Means resolution and new clause 67, both the Clyde ports authority and the Tees and Hartlepool ports authority may be sold on the open market at considerably less than their true market value. If their assets are undervalued, the resources coming back into the successor companies will be less than one might have expected. At the same time, the authorities will have a minimum of 50 per cent. of their supposed assets taken by the Treasury. That will undermine the long-term viability of the company and its ability to raise capital to develop the port facilities which the Government so readily suggested needed to be privatised so as to raise the finance to develop future opportunities in the ports. Those resources will be withdrawn from the ports, first by undervaluation on flotation and, secondly, by the imposition of a confiscatory tax after the sale.

Dr. Godman: If new clause 67 is successful, it is likely that the port authority will become more of a property company and will divorce itself from its maritime industrial activities. That will damage many maritime communities on the Clyde.

Mr. McCartney: From my own personal background, history and heritage, I know a great deal about that question. My father was the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie for a number of years and I was brought up in a Clyde port community. No one seems to realise that the current capability of the assets of the Clyde port authority are to be counted not in tens of millions or thousands of millions of pounds. We are talking about hundreds of billions of pounds' worth of public assets developed over a number of years being floated off on privatisation. Moreover, at least 50 per cent. of the resources from those assets will not be ploughed back into the Clyde port communities, which are suffering from under-investment and chronic unemployment and which have been devastated in the past decade by the withdrawal of shipbuilding and associated industries. The resources accrued from those assets should be used on the Clyde, but instead they will be withdrawn from the CPA area and used by the Government, no doubt to provide tax cuts for the well-off in the run-up to the next general election.

It is vitally important that we relate this motion to the new clauses that the Government intend to move in Committee tomorrow. When we consider what the Government intend to do in terms of confiscating huge public resources for the Treasury, we believe that we have every right to question the Government's right to raise that kind of taxation levy.

Mr. Bell: My hon. Friend is making an important contribution to the debate. Does he accept what the Financial Secretary to the Treasury said earlier—that the Government are simply confiscating the funds, that they are not earmarking them for any special purpose but simply putting them into the contingency fund where they will be absorbed without benefiting the communities involved?

Mr. McCartney: My hon. Friend is right. The Government are confiscating the resources. They are not ring-fencing them for the development of port facilities for 1992 and beyond and the pressures that will come from our European competitors in Rotterdam and the North sea ports from Germany to Portugal. The Government are not trying to use the resources to develop port facilities and the hinterland to face the situation after deregulation in 1992.

The Government have given no indication that they will use the resources for retraining in the ports. Tens of thousands of jobs have been lost in the past decade. Indeed, in the past 12 months thousands of jobs have been lost in port communities on the western and eastern seaboards of Britain. The Government have not sought to ring-fence the resources for training and retraining, nor the resources being ring-fenced to pay for a high-speed rail link to the channel tunnel to improve Britain's transport infrastructure. It is clear that the resources are to be cynically siphoned off by the Government for whatever short-term financial gain they think they can get in relation to the electorate.

Worst of all, the communities concerned will lose those resources for ever. The opportunity to improve the transport infrastructure to and between ports in Britain will also be lost for at least another decade. The Government are not just being negligent—in industrial and taxation terms they are being criminally negligent as they try to implement new clauses 67 to 72 in Committee tomorrow.

My hon. Friends will return constantly to this point and question the Government's right to take 50 per cent. of an artificial value of a port asset, even taking into account the capital gains liability, to create an effective deterrent to predators subsequent to the sale of the port and its assets.

In evidence to the Committee on the Tees and Hartlepool Ports Authority Bill, the Transport and General Workers Union said:

"If port authorities wish to go private, then the assets in the port should be vested in a new statutory body made up of representatives in the port area and the surrounding community, comprising employees, local residents, users of the port facilities, shipping interests, the port authority, the regional and local county council and, where one exists, a regional development corporation."

That would seem to me—and, I assume, to Conservative Members interested in the development of their local communities and employment opportunities in those communities—to be a reasonable proposal. If privatisation is to take place, the benefits should be spread throughout the community and the resources from the privatisation should be used to develop the community's infrastructure.

The proposal seems not dissimilar to the Government's argument on the creation of urban development corporations. They implied that UDCs would have a job to do in conjunction with local business communities, local trade unions, local authorities, and so on. When it comes to privatisation, ports will be disembowelled at the point of sale, and 50 per cent. of their assets will be dragged from them and the community, placed in the hands of the Exchequer and used for projects other than the development of the local economy. That runs counter to the Government's strategy of regenerating communities in the north-west, the north-east and other parts of Britain, such as Scotland, where because of the historical run-down of ports there is massive unemployment and much land dereliction.

Mr. Bell: My hon. Friend will have noted the statement by the Financial Secretary to the Treasury that the ports are owned by the state and are not trust ports, as that was originally defined in relation to 50 or so ports. Is it not a fact that when they were trust ports they were held in trust for the local communities? Is not that the point that we are trying to convey to the Financial Secretary? Being trust ports, in the interests of local communities, the proceeds should be ring-fenced in the interests of local communities if there is to be privatisation.

Mr. McCartney: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I do not have time to discuss the history of the development of trust ports, but they were set up to protect the interests of local communities. The subsequent development of ports had to relate to the needs of local communities. In most instances, whether they were large or small trust ports, there was a good working relationship between local communities, local authorities, chambers of commerce and other local institutions and the port for the development of programmes of activities to ensure the best use of those ports on behalf of the community and the local economy.

Mr. Cryer: Is it not also true that a successful and expanding port often means greatly increased volumes of traffic in the immediate area? Local communities have therefore carried the burden of a large amount of traffic congestion and noise, mainly from large lorries up to 38 tonnes, the maximum weight available because of port haulage. If the local community has to bear that burden, it might at least have some of the benefits arising from privatisation.

Mr. McCartney: I used to work for the Labour party in Kent, not 100 yd from the eastern docks of Dover. I know all too well the consequences of literally millions of tonnes of lorry movements a year to and from the port. In the mid-1970s, the local community argued for a levy at the port to take account of the environmental consequences for communities living near port facilities.

The argument about the sale and confiscation of resources to the national Exchequer rather than remaining in the community is partly a response to the need to provide additional investment to improve the environment in communities near port facilities. Improvements in areas of land dereliction, transport infrastructure, and so on are related to activities of roll-on/roll-off traffic to and from ports, and require capital investment and capital resources, which could come from the sale of the ports. The sales represent a huge financial bonanza for the Government, who will guarantee those resources to themselves at the expense of the local community.

In its evidence to the Committee examining the Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority Bill my union also said that a devolved structure which would involve the community with the successor company had an important physical asset. The union said:

"The structure would ensure that the control of the port's assets would be securely retained in the community which had taken the major role in generating the port's assets, and because, generally speaking, ports are significant employment generators, investment in the port and its future development would have first claim on the use of its transferred assets when owned and controlled by a representative body of that kind."

That is not a revolutionary or unique statement, but a common sense approach to the development of community infrastructures when resources become available. Irrespective of their ideological support or opposition to the sale of public assets, all hon. Members should agree that the beneficiaries of such sales should be the community in which the sale takes place.

Mr. Bell: My hon. Friend touches on an important topic. About £40·5 million is being taken out of the Tees and Hartlepool community and about £16·25 million is being taken out of the Clyde community. The figures may not be accurate, but money is being taken out by the Government rather than put in.

Mr. McCartney: The levy is rather like a big vacuum cleaner, sucking up resources placed on the market by a local company. There is double taxation because not only is there a 50 per cent. levy on the perceived capital value of the company but there is another tax rake-off. As the hon. Members for Stockton, South and for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) have said, in practice the 50 per cent. tax climbs to a rate of 100 or 110 per cent. That is to be imposed by a Government who say that they are the Government of low taxation, who will remove taxation from the backs of business and allow it freedom to invest and develop in the community.

In reality, the Government cannot keep their greedy mitts off assets that have been built up in communities over more than a century. They see an opportunity to seize resources for party political purposes in the run-up to the general election. *[Interruption.]* I think that the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) said, "Nonsense." I will give way if he wishes to contribute to the debate. My hon. Friends and I stayed for many hours last week to assist him in his forlorn campaign to prevent the import of thousands of tonnes of South African coal, although the hon. Gentleman's opposition to that had more to do with saving his seat than with anything else.

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): The hon. Gentleman should have been looking this way. I did not say "Nonsense".

Mr. McCartney: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman. The hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) is sitting behind the hon. Member for Sherwood. Is he asleep? The hon. Member for Dover is the sleaze factor of the Conservative party in the south-east.

Mr. Andy Stewart: He was bombed out of the Carlton Club last week.

Mr. McCartney: He will certainly be bombed out at the next election.

New clauses 67 to 72 are no more than a token gesture by the Government and a sop to reduce Opposition arguments against the privatisation of ports. We shall not fall for that. We start from the premise that, as a matter of principle, the ports should not be privatised. But if they are to be privatised, the resources from the sales must remain with the successor companies and the communities in which they operate. It is therefore vital that hon. Members on both sides who believe in the propriety of the House and its ability to resist manipulation by the Executive should reject the motion.

Mr. Cryer: Does my hon. Friend accept that manipulation of the House is exactly what the Tory Government have in mind? Even at this moment the Tory Whips are telephoning the sleepy brigade of the Tory majority to come in and support a closure. Not only are the Government driving the resolution through the House with inadequate information based on clauses not yet considered by the Standing Committee that is considering the Finance Bill but they are using their ruthless majority to drive it through the House.

Mr. McCartney: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It is not the first time that we have been here late at night discussing legislation in which the Government are manipulating the procedures of the House for party political ends. They are continually manipulating the House. After 11 years in government they treat the House and its Members with utter contempt. As a relatively new Member of the House, I sometimes feel that the rights of Back-Bench Members, from whatever party, are cynically put aside for the purposes of the Executive to control business and the nature of the business. The Government treat the House as no more than a rubber stamp for their activities.

Mr. Bell: I am not sure whether my hon. Friend commented on the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer). Here we are dealing with an important debate which will affect the

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future of our local communities and certainly of my constituents and those of my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman). Yet we face the possible closure of the debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Let us return to the motion before the House.

Mr. McCartney: I cannot comment on the closure of the debate but it will not be the first time that the Government or the Conservative party have sought to use the procedures of the House to close a debate in which Opposition Members wished to speak. They have also tried to keep the hon. Member for Sherwood quiet in his opposition to ports measures that have come before the House on previous occasions.

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): I cannot understand a word the hon. Gentleman is saying.

Mr. McCartney: Does the hon. Gentleman wish me to give way to him because he cannot understand what I am saying?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Let us return to the motion before the House.

Mr. McCartney: I accept what you say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but it is a bit rich when hon. Members who have been in the dungeons downstairs meander in here and criticise me from a sedentary position. Some Opposition Members have spent a considerable number of hours here and have invested their whole lives in port communities and the protection of those communities. We do not lightly take lessons from rum-filled Conservative Members. If they wish to speak, let them get up and do so, but I will not be put off by sedentary comments from them.

The position is clear. The Government are attempting to use this Ways and Means procedure to facilitate the privatisation of at least 50 trust ports in Britain. But in facilitating the privatisation—this is more sinister than the privatisation—they are gathering to themselves literally hundreds of millions of pounds of public assets which should remain in the community, to be used for the Government's own purposes and dissipated on their pet projects. The money will not be ploughed back into the community from which the resources came in the first place.

For those reasons, Opposition Members will divide the House at the end of the debate and oppose the Government's proposals, and in the Standing Committee tomorrow we shall oppose the Government in all their attempts to gather up and steal, Dick Turpin fashion, the resources that were deployed in communities.

Mr. Pawsey: Sit down.

Mr. McCartney: I am sitting down.

12.35 am

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): I am glad to be able to take up some of the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney). He has great knowledge of the matters that we are discussing because of his Transport and General Workers Union background and his personal experience. His contribution encapsulated a series of important arguments of which the House should not lose sight.

My hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield talked about confiscatory taxation and then advanced an equally sound argument when he referred to the undervaluation of Associated British Ports. The Government may have brought the resolution before the House—it deals with market values—because of that undervaluation. It is a subject that will be discussed tomorrow when the Finance Bill is discussed in Committee.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury talked about the previous money resolution and the Ways and Means resolution that is before us in terms of retrospection and the privatisation of Associated British Ports. He talked earlier about the unfair advantage that would be given to the new ports if the proposed taxation were not to be applied. As I understand it, the taxation will not be retrospective to include ABP. Who is losing out in the new confiscatory taxation that my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield described?

In a series of interventions in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield an effort was made by Opposition Members to draw attention to ring fencing and the sums that would be raised by the proposed taxation. The Financial Secretary mentioned under his breath when I made my first intervention that public expenditure was not beneficial to the community. It seemed that that response ended with a question mark. Public expenditure is beneficial to the community, and the Labour party is the party that seeks to increase public expenditure for the benefit of the community. The effect of the resolution will be to take money away from local communities.

My hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield compared the resolution with local government resolutions and referred especially to housing. He is right that only 20 per cent. of receipts of council housing sales are allowed to be used by the local community.

Mr. McCartney: There are land sales as well and other assets which local authorities have to dispose of from time to time. When the Conservative party came to power, 100 per cent. of capital receipts could be utilised by local authorities for other developments in the community as long as that was approved by the Department of the Environment. There has been a reduction to 20 per cent., and the Government—these rogues—take the rest of it.

Mr. Bell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his intervention. He has demonstrated once again his knowledge of the workings of local government. As he said earlier—I have made the same point—money is being taken from local communities and it is not being replaced. There is no specific public expenditure in the areas of Tees and Hartlepool that he and I represent as a result of the privatisation that we have been considering. I am reminded of the North sea oil asset sales that have taken place over the past 10 years. About £70,000 million have found their way into the funds of the nation without being ring fenced.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It would be helpful if we were to consider one industry at a time.

Mr. Bell: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for bringing me back to the subject of the debate.

The new clauses that will be considered in Committee tomorrow will not result in the ring fencing of the assets that will be subject to taxation. I am glad that the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin), who spoke earlier, has remained in his place. I once congratulated him on a sensible statement that he made in Committee and he produced a leaflet which contained my response. He circulated in throughout his constituency to ensure that his electorate knew what I had said about him. Therefore, tonight, I shall not extend to him my congratulations on his declared intention not to support the Government should we divide the House.

The hon. Member for Stockton, South made an important reference to the value of the shares connected with the Tees and Hartlepool port. He said that the promoters had suggested that the port's assets would be sold to local pension funds among others. There is no guarantee about that in the Ways and Means resolution or in the private Bill.

Dr. Godman: In the absence of guarantees on the local pension funds and local shareholders, the present board of the Clyde port authority, all of whom live close to the river, may eventually be supplanted by people who have no commitment to the Clyde and its maritime industries.

Mr. Bell: That possibility is referred to in the Ways and Means resolution when it speaks of a levy on "companies which control such companies".
The Government anticipate that the control of the Clyde port authority and that of the Tees and Hartlepool authority will end up in the hands of multinational companies elsewhere or, as the hon. Member for Stockton, South said, on the stock exchange. Those ports will then be floated and taken over by outside people. No guarantee has been given about the ability of local pension funds and local citizens to purchase shares.

Earlier the Financial Secretary said that the shares will be sold to workers, but how does he know?

Mr. Lilley: Provision in the clauses allows for up to 3 per cent. of the shares to be sold to the workers without affecting the proceeds liable to levy.

Mr. Bell: I am grateful for that significant revelation——

Mr. Lilley: Up to 3 per cent. of the shares can be given to the workers without affecting the proceeds liable to levy.

Mr. Bell: That is an interesting correction.

We have no guarantee that any of the work force in Cleveland and the Tees and Hartlepool areas will be able to benefit from a purchase. It is clear from the new clauses that the Government intend to introduce, facilitated by the Ways and Means resolution, that directors of the Tees and Hartlepool port authority will be unable to help themselves to shares in the successor company without those shares being levied at the market value. I am not entirely sure whether that shows great confidence in the directors on the part of the Government. Is it anticipated that the directors will give themselves shares at less than the fair market value? The Government have certainly covered that possible eventuality.

The hon. Member for Stockport, South said that about 30 per cent. corporation tax would be levied on the value of the assets. I understand from the Minister that 35 per cent. corporation tax will be levied.

Mr. Devlin: Since I made my earlier statement, I have learnt that 25 per cent.—not 35 per cent.—corporation tax will be levied. Perhaps the Minister can confirm that later.

Mr. Bell: I am not entirely sure why corporation tax should be levied at that lower rate instead of at the rate of 35 per cent. mentioned by the Minister.

If the resolution is passed, followed by the new clauses in Committee, the Government will take £30 million of the £60 million assets of the Tees and Hartlepool authority. On 35 per cent. of the remaining £30 million, the Government will take another £10·5 million——

Mr. Devlin: The hon. Member is misconstruing the figures. We are talking about flotation and hence about the tax on the market value of the shares, not on the existing assets. That is an important distinction.

Mr. Bell: We have always been told that the assets are worth £58 million which will be converted into shares which will then be sold to pension funds, to the work force and to other interested parties as yet unknown. People on Teesside believe that the Government will take 50 per cent., which is almost £30 million. Assuming the figures given by the Financial Secretary tonight, £10·5 million more will be taken away, too. So, of assets worth £60 million, the Government will take £40·5 million. I am sure that, when launching their enterprise, the promoters of the Bill never guessed that that would happen.

Given that the Government will take £40·5 million of the £60 million, how many years does the Financial Secretary think will have to pass before the port's asset base returns to what it is today? How much profit will it have to make to restore the difference?

Mr. McCartney: To make up the shortfall, is it not more likely that the port will have to sell some assets which it does not need in the short term but which it might want to retain for development in the future? The port might have earmarked surplus land for such development, but it might be told to sell the land, which has a huge market value, for housing development and so on.

Mr. Bell: That is a valid point. There will have to be asset sales to make up the shortfall. So, instead of privatisation giving Tees and Hartlepool control over its own destiny, it will lose control of it—and of its assets. That can only be to the disadvantage of the port. It will certainly make it more difficult for the port to develop as it should.

Tees and Hartlepool handles the third largest tonnage in the country; Clyde handles the 10th largest, and has a work force of about 350. It is profitable and does not rely on Government subsidies.

Earlier, the Financial Secretary said that privatising these ports would allow them to build on their capital bases. But we have discovered that 50 per cent., followed by 35 per cent., of that capital base will be taken away from them. The Minister said that this was a matter of judgment, and so it is, but it is strange that the Treasury can take 50 per cent. of the assets of a port authority on its privatisation——

Mr. Cryer : Does my hon. Friend accept that the Government were so eager to take the opportunity to plunder these ports that they got 172 Tory Members to vote on the private Bill earlier tonight, but that because they expected these motions to go through on the nod the

[Mr. Cryer]

number of Tory Members has gone down to just over 100 and the Government are busy telephoning around the conglomeration of soon-to-be-discarded junior Ministers asking them to come in?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Let us get back to the motion.

Mr. Bell: I shall follow your counsel, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I shall not follow my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) along that line.

I was interested in the statement made by the Financial Secretary to the Treasury that the trust ports belong to the state. He prayed in aid the High Court. I have no idea which judgment he wished to refer to. I am sure that, even as a financial rather than a transport Minister, he must know that the term "trust port" goes back many years —certainly back to the 1930s—and was used by the Rochdale committee, which examined the nature of trust ports and their development in the 1960s. For all those years, it has been understood that such ports are held in trust for the local community.

Mr. McCartney: Even if the Financial Secretary's predictions are correct, and the ports are owned by the state, that should not give it the right to asset-strip their resources. That is the sort of activity that goes on in Stalinist economies; it is not what one would expect from a western-style democracy.

Mr. Bell: The Financial Secretary's speech and my hon. Friend's intervention remind me of the Trustee Savings bank, which was mentioned earlier. Its assets were worth £1 billion and the Government decided not to take a single penny but allowed the £1 billion to go straight into the financial markets, into the City of London, out in more plastic cards and bigger take-over bids, with no significant benefit to the community, to the manufacturing sector or to the local community. Yet, when the Government see an opportunity to take £30 million from the Tees and Hartlepool port authority and a similar large sum from the Clyde port authority, they are there like a shot.

One can imagine why we are debating this resolution tonight. We know of the great difficulties that the Government have in finding £3·5 billion to make up for the errors and the foolishness of the poll tax provisions and further likely expenditure requirements next year. Some £30 million from Tees and Hartlepool is a useful adjunct to raising money for that purpose.

There are some 50 trust ports. Perhaps the Financial Secretary can give us some information on them. As a result of the Ways and Means resolution, at least £100 million will be taken out of local communities up and down the country. That is a significant sum of money which we should debate on the Floor of the House tonight.

The Financial Secretary made a series of points in justification of the resolution. Most of them were spurious, and I am sure that he will not mind my telling him so. He said that the Treasury would take a higher share and that he thought that that was to the taxpayer's benefit. He talked of a level playing field—an interesting concept that we hear about time and again. I heard an east German business man talking of level playing fields on the television only yesterday morning.

The Financial Secretary also talked of the unfair commercial advantage which he felt might go to the Tees and Hartlepool port authority or to the Clyde port authority. But I believe that Associated British Ports did not have to pay the 50 per cent. levy that is being imposed tonight. He also talked of a lower Exchequer share and of not penalising Tees and Hartlepool and the Clyde because of their privatisation.

Mr. Devlin: I urge the hon. Gentleman to draw his speech to a close. He is digging himself into a deep hole. He is drawing a comparison with Associated British Ports, but it paid 100 per cent., not 50 per cent. The robbery was worse.

Mr. Bell: I am aware of the adage of my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) that when in a hole, one should stop digging. If I am in a hole, I shall immediately throw out the shovel.

I am reciting the weaknesses in the arguments of the Financial Secretary when he sought to explain why 50 per cent. of the assets of the Tees and Hartlepool port authority will be taken away. He mentioned a 35 per cent. corporation tax. He was modest and sensible and I sympathised with him when he said that he was never sure of anything. I can well imagine that, in his position, that is a proper attitude to take.

The Financial Secretary said that, on balance, 50 per cent. was about the right figure. I shall explain later why I do not believe that that is a proper and valid figure. My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown), who served with me on Newcastle city council, has grown in stature since he came to the House. He is handling the Opposition's case in Committee on the Finance Bill. He rightly said that there was not a word about this new taxation in the Budget or on Second Reading of the Finance Bill. He mentioned the abuse of the private Bill procedure, to which we have referred on several occasions.

The Financial Secretary said that privatisation of the Tees and Hartlepool and the Clyde port authorities was the wish of the companies. I must enlighten him. Until the former Secretary of State for Transport said that it was the Government's wish to take the privatisation route for the ports, the idea had never dawned upon the port authorities. It was the idea of the former Secretary of State for Transport, not the wish of the members of the boards.

The resolution is intended to clear the way for the Government to participate, if not in the sale of the century, certainly in the bargain of the century. The taking of £30 million of the assets of Tees and Hartlepool is nothing short of the Treasury getting its sticky fingers on our assets.

Mr. Humfrey Malins (Croydon, North-West): Sit down.

Mr. Bell: The hon. Gentleman must be patient; I have not yet begun my main speech. We are here not only to hold the Government accountable, but to probe them and to elucidate a whole series of reports from the Financial Secretary to the Treasury. I shall patiently build upon my speech within the rules of order and under the guidance of Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We are witnessing the bargain of the century. The Treasury is getting its sticky fingers on £30 million of the assets of the Tees and Hartlepool port authority, which

has yet to be privatised, and an additional £70 million from other port authorities, including the Clyde port authority—which we debated earlier—and other trust ports when they move from trust status to the private domain.

I am sorry that the Minister of Aviation and Shipping, who was here earlier, is no longer in his place. He may be——

Mr. Tim Boswell (Daventry): My hon. Friend is here.

Mr. Bell: The Minister has moved precipitately from the Front Bench to the Back Bench. He may be anticipating the events of 16 and 17 July. He may be one of those Ministers who needs to worry about his future, or——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We should get on with the debate about the motion.

Mr. Bell: —he may be in line for promotion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should address himself to the motion.

Mr. Bell: I am grateful for your guidance, Sir. I hope that the Minister can hold his breath long enough. According to the Minister, whom I am glad to see here, the Tees and Hartlepool port authority made a pre-tax profit of £9·2 million in 1988 on a turnover of £35·5 million. Whatever the differences that I may have with the authority, I regard that as a commendable record—so commendable that the Government intend to modify their Finance Bill, through this resolution, to take a share of the spoils.

I trust that you will pardon me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if tonight you hear a series of epithets, metaphors and possibly mixed metaphors to describe the Government's actions in relation to the Tees and Hartlepool and the Clyde port authorities. The English language is hard put to describe what has been variously called "barefaced robbery", "getting their grubby hands on the community's money"—a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield—and "daylight robbery". Lawyers say that there is not much difference between "barefaced" and "daylight" robbery. They amount to one and the same thing. In this case, the robbery is both daylight and barefaced. It is an asset stripping exercise by the Treasury to deprive any successor company to the Tees and Hartlepool port authority of £30 million plus taxation.

What hope is there for the country when the asset strippers are alive and well not only among the conglomerates and the rip-off merchants but in the heart of the Treasury? Essentially, the Ways and Means resolution will enable the Government to incorporate into the Finance Bill new clauses 67 and 68. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South has referred to them, but it is clear that if the motion is passed, those new clauses will be before the Committee tomorrow. I was intrigued by the fact that the amendments tabled by the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) did not appear on the Amendment Paper, although the hon. Member for Stockton, South has told us that they will be by tomorrow. The proposal of the hon. Member for Isle of Wight would reduce the 50 per cent. to be taken by the Government to 40 per cent. That would be a small and interesting concession.

I hope that the Financial Secretary will tell us whether he will accept those amendments. We understand, and it has been confirmed on several occasions, that the new clauses to the Finance Bill will be tabled if the resolution is passed, and will be debated by the Committee tomorrow afternoon. If that is the case, I can only advise my hon. Friends who are serving on the Committee to block this money-grabbing exercise by the Treasury.

Earlier, the hon. Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate) asked us what the Opposition would do in a similar situation, with a similar resolution. He reminded me of the story of the general who asked Napoleon, "What would you do if you had the enemy to the left of you, the enemy to the right of you, the enemy to the front of you and the enemy to the back of you? How would you get out of that?". Napoleon replied, "I would not get into it." The Opposition would not be privatising the ports, nor having the House debate, at 1 o'clock in the morning, a money resolution that allows the Government to take 50 per cent. of the profit from the Tees and Hartlepool and other port authorities. Nor would we have a Financial Secretary trying to evade most of the points put to him.

One can sympathise with the Government in seeking to bring such resolutions before the House and for seeking to get their hands on every penny—or every new fivepenny piece—that is going. As we read in the newspapers, even the peace dividend will not be safe in their hands and will be used, along with the money raised by tonight's resolution, to cushion another disastrous round of poll tax payments in the next financial year. Every penny, every £30 million, every £100 million and every confiscatory piece of taxation counts.

We all know that in the short term the Ways and Means resolution is aimed at the proposed privatisation of the assets of the Tees and Hartlepool port authority. In the longer term it is also aimed at the assets of the Clyde port authority. Watching your expression with great attention, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall not lead the House into a debate on the merits or otherwise of the Government's insistence on using private Bills for public Bill purposes. As my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East mentioned earlier, we are not here to debate the merits or otherwise of the privatisation. Conservative Members may aid and abet a willing Government to privatise our assets through the private Bill procedure, but that is a matter for them.

Even the Leader of the House has published a document on changes in private Bill procedures. We shall not go down that route either, but a glimpse at the reasoning behind the privatisation of the Tees and Hartlepool port authority will quickly explain why we are debating the Ways and Means resolution tonight.

I have one question for the Financial Secretary about Tees and Hartlepool. As the Treasury wishes to acquire 50 per cent. of its assets, does it really wish the privatised authority to compete with Associated British Ports and Felixstowe, which are already privatised? Why is the port of Tees and Hartlepool being penalised compared with other ports already in the private sector? The Financial Secretary gave a somewhat oblique response when he said that he did not want the Tees and Hartlepool port authority or the Clyde port authority to have an unfair advantage. That seems rather an odd way to make that point.

The Ways and Means resolution refers to the amounts of money that the Government will raise. The Government

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seem to believe that they can pass the Ways and Means resolution and take 50 per cent. of the assets of Tees and Hartlepool because many years ago they made a grant to the Tees and Hartlepool. No such grant has been made since 1980. One of the first things that the Government did when they took office was to prevent any further grants being made to the Tees and Hartlepool.

Even the Minister for Aviation and Shipping had to accept on the Second Reading of the Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority Bill on 15 March:

"Admittedly it is a long time since such grants were paid to the THPA, and the amounts were small".

One should pause there for a moment. I warned you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about the number of metaphors that might fly your way this evening, and we have all heard the phrase, "From little acorns mighty oaks grow". It is quite remarkable that, following small grants 20 years ago to Tees and Hartlepool to facilitate the building of certain assets, the Government boldly assert to the House that they will take 50 per cent. of all assets of the Tees and Hartlepool port authority as a result of the Ways and Means resolution. The Minister continued:

"But the grants were paid about 20 years ago towards investment projects in the port, and some of those assets are still in use."—[*Official Report*, 15 March 1990; Vol. 169, c. 749.]

It is strange that some of the assets are still in use. The Government are seeking to get not 50 per cent. of the value of those assets but 50 per cent. of all assets, which is remarkable.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend will have noticed that the Minister did not touch on the allowable deductions from the 50 per cent. rate of levy. He included a long list contained in new clause 68, such as fees, commissions and remuneration paid for professional services. Given the huge sums that the Government have paid for professional services, does my hon. Friend agree that it should be more adequately defined?

Mr. Bell: I agree with my hon. Friend. I did not want to quote chapter and verse from the new clauses, but we have noticed the reticence of the Financial Secretary, who went so quickly through his notes that I could not keep up with him in my inimitable shorthand. I hope that *Hansard* had a better chance to note what he said.

The Ways and Means resolution will enable the Government not to levy on grants paid against specific investment projects or even specific assets. It will, however, entitle them to 50 per cent. of the assets of all investment projects, whether or not they were financed by the Government 20 years ago or during that period or later by the port authority.

Between 1964 and 1980, as a trust port, Tees and Hartlepool could borrow from the Government, but since 1980 it has had to raise its finances on the money markets. The resolution makes no distinction.

I do not want to upset my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe). We had great difficulty in Committee in distinguishing whether he was the hon. Member for Hinchliffe or for Wakefield. If I may upset his sense of humour again, may I say that, rather like the mills of God, the Treasury grinds exceeding slow, but it grinds exceeding small, though with patience it stands waiting, with exactness grinds it all? For such small sums of money, paid in investment grant so many years ago, the Treasury will gain a benefit—I should say a windfall—for the Consolidated Fund of £30 million from the Tees and Hartlepool. As I said earlier, about £100 million will flow from the other privatisation measures.

The Financial Secretary touched on that in his opening remarks. He talked about the taxpayer and the benefit to the taxpayer. Perhaps the taxpayer should be happy; perhaps the Treasury should be congratulated; perhaps it is all part of the Government's privatisation drive; perhaps the proceeds will now be considered as the proceeds of privatisation. The Financial Secretary nods his head. Is he saying that the money that goes into the Consolidated Fund as a result of this 50 per cent. levy is part of the proceeds of privatisation? Will it be so treated in the Treasury books? Will it appear in the forecasts in the Autumn Statement as part of the privatisation proceeds? What of a local community such as Teesside? What of my constituents of Middlesbrough? What of the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman)? What of the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Leadbitter)? What of the constituents of the hon. Member for Stockton, South? We have seen the Clyde and the Tees and Hartlepool authorities grow. We have seen the goods going in and out. We look askance at 1992 and all that that means for the port. As my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield asked, why cannot that money be retained by the Tees and Hartlepool port authority? It does not need to be privatised. Why cannot that money be made available for the whole community? Why do we need this motion?

We hear a great deal about ring fencing and the earmarking of grants, but by abandoning the motion and then abandoning the Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority Bill we would ensure that the port authority's assets did not disappear into the maw of the Consolidated Fund but would be available to the community as a direct and easily calculable benefit.

My hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield referred to the Opposed Private Bill Committee and told us the view of the Transport and General Workers Union. Why cannot the money be invested in better port facilities to meet the challenges of 1992? Why cannot the money be used to create useful work for the skilled work force on Teesside? Why cannot the money be used for the regeneration of Teesside, which would be a joy and pride to us all? In those circumstances, the motion would not even have to be debated.

The Minister for Aviation and Shipping is rather ubiquitous, but he is still on the Floor of the House. On 15 March 1990, when trying to explain himself to the House, he said:

"There is a general rule that, when assets acquired or improved by a non-Exchequer body with the aid of Government grants are disposed of, an appropriate proportion of the proceeds should go to the Exchequer."

I submit that 50 per cent. is not an appropriate sum to be taken by the state. By any stretch of the imagination, 50 per cent. of the assets can hardly be described as appropriate.

Mr. McCartney: We are talking about 50 per cent. of the market value of the assets. The most iniquitous aspect of the proposal is that the perceived market value of the company's assets is not necessarily the sale price at flotation.

Mr. Bell: That is an important point. In response to an intervention, the Financial Secretary said that the expenses were those associated with valuations of what was or was not the market value.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): This seems to be an odd kind of privatisation scheme. Naturally the Government are hellbent on privatisation in many ways. I heard the exchange involving the Financial Secretary when reference was made to a substantial rake-off, which was said to be well over 50 per cent. in terms of taxes. On the basis of ex-Cabinet Ministers joining the board of privatised companies to get a big fat salary——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Skinner: Hear me out, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I shall not hear the hon. Member out if he is not in order. He seems to be going far from the motion.

Mr. Skinner: No, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The burden of the debate has been about the Government taking a rake-off from these companies in taxation and so on. It has been suggested that that could amount to well over 50 per cent., based on capital gains and the rest. We now know that one ex-Minister joins the board of most privatised companies. Clearly, the Financial Secretary has not considered the matter properly. If he is the bod who is to get a job on one of the privatised port authorities, he should bear in mind that there will not be enough money for him—certainly not enough money——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has gone far enough. Mr. Bell.

Mr. Bell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), although I suspect that the Financial Secretary has a political career ahead of him rather than a career on a board of directors. I am sure that he has great expectations as 17 July appears on the horizon.

Let me again refer to the Minister for Aviation and Shipping, who is so ubiquitous that I cannot see him. He has drifted from the Front Bench to the Back Benches or out of the Chamber altogether. Like the competent Minister he has become, the hon. Gentleman duly reached for an appropriate fig leaf to disguise what the Government were doing and to seek to give this Ways and Means resolution some semblance of dignity and decency. On 15 March, he said that the Public Accounts Committee rightly attached great importance to the principle that, where grant money has been given to a particular enterprise, the Treasury has a right to an appropriate return on the investment. It is the House rather than the Public Accounts Committee which is debating the resolution tonight, but I will wager with the Minister for Aviation and Shipping, when he comes back to the House, and even the Financial Secretary, deep in thought as he is, that the PAC has never said that it considers 50 per cent. of an asset value an appropriate return on any investment —never mind an investment of such small proportions made 20 years ago.

Mr. McCartney: We are not talking about 50 per cent. of the disposal price or 50 per cent. of the value of the orginal investment in terms of grant. We are talking about 50 per cent. of the market value of the assets disposed of. That is considerably in excess of any minimal amount of grant provided 20 years ago. The Government are not getting a return on their capital; they are getting an excessive return on an asset in which they did not invest in the first place. It is called asset stripping.

Mr. Bell: I said earlier that the Government are asset stripping in a way that would make other asset strippers blush with shame.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover referred to the Financial Secretary to the Treasury. There is a clear confusion between the Financial Secretary, who is responsible for financial matters, and the Secretary of State for Transport, who is responsible for transport, and I am trying to elicit the precise difference between the two with my references to the Minister for Aviation and Shipping.

As I said, the 50 per cent. taken by the Government as a result of the Ways and Means resolution may be described as extortionate; it can never be described as appropriate.

The Ways and Means resolution is part of a double sleight of hand by the Government. First, it ensures that the Tees and Hartlepool port authority will be privatised under a private, rather than a public, Bill. Secondly, it ensures that the Bill cannot be described as a hybrid Bill because the Government have tabled new clauses to the Finance Bill.

I pray in aid again not the logic of the situation, which speaks for itself, but the words of the Minister for Aviation and Shipping. The hon. Gentleman is probably right to have left the House as I do not know that my words will assist his career or the events that may take place on 17 July. On 15 March, he said:

"If the Bill"—

the Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority Bill—

"were amended to provide expressly for a share of the proceeds to go to the Exchequer, it would cease to be a private Bill. There would then be the problem of accommodating it within the Government's legislative programme, to which I have already referred."—[*Official Report*, 15 March 1990; Vol. 169, c. 749.]

The Minister confirmed to the House that here was a public Bill on a private Bill route which required the modification of the Finance Bill to take into account its financial provisions. If that is not a perversion of the procedures of this House, I do not know what is. The Minister is to be congratulated on his lucid honesty. There was nothing opaque about the Government's intention. It is simple straigthforward chicanery, and they have subverted the procedures of the House in this Ways and Means resolution tonight by treating a public Bill like a private Bill and a modified Finance Bill like a hybrid Bill.

My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow sat through the charade earlier this evening called the Third Reading of the Clyde Port Authority Bill. He will no doubt understand the points that I am making on behalf of his constituency.

Mr. Skinner: Have we gone into extra time yet?

Mr. Bell: Extra time is for penalties, and we will have to see whether the penalty taker is up to it.

Other trust ports might be tempted to take the privatisation route. The hon. Member for Stockton, South earlier made a valid intervention in the speech of the Financial Secretary to the Treasury when he referred to the Ways and Means resolution and the 50 per cent. of market

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value that the Government will take and corporation tax of 35 per cent. on top of that. The hon. Member for Stockton, South wanted to know what incentive there would be for other ports to follow the privatisation route. Why should other ports follow that route and see the Government take their asset values by way of taxation through the impost or levy? Should they follow that route because of a vague element of competition among themselves so that they can invest in ports in Europe or buy our smaller ports in this country? Why should they follow the privatisation route once they know that the Government will take 50 per cent. of the money?

The former Secretary of State for Transport, the right hon. Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon), did not hint when he proposed the privatisation of the ports through the private Bill route that that should be achieved in such a way that the Government should have 50 per cent. of the assets.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: I draw my hon. Friend's attention to the fact that that was not mentioned in the Budget speech or on Second Reading of the Finance Bill. The Government did not mention it when discussing private legislation and it was not mentioned when we were discussing public legislation either.

Mr. Bell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for reminding me of that. We are considering a new tax. The Government are introducing in this Ways and Means resolution the second new tax in the past year. They have introduced the poll tax and they are now introducing this new tax on the assets of our ports.

At least some small service has been served by this resolution. The House is entitled to know whether on each privatisation of each trust port, whether through the private or public Bill route, we are to have similar resolutions before the House; or will the new clauses to the Finance Bill to which I have referred, hopefully suitably amended by the amounts tabled by the hon. Member for Isle of Wight, be repeated in Finance Bills in future? In short, are we debating a blanket resolution covering future privatisation of ports? I hope that the Financial Secretary to the Treasury will consider those matters when he replies.

I want to bring my comments to a close so that other hon. Members may make useful contributions to the debate. Teesside and its community will be worse off as a result of this motion if it is passed tonight. Those who work for the authority will not be heartened by the knowledge that the Government have an eye on the assets that they have built up over the years—assets not just of bricks and mortar, but of toil and sweat. The workers' investment in their workplace has been life long. They have been sadly and severely damaged by the abolition of the dock labour scheme. They will be further damaged by the privatisation of Tees and Hartlepool, and they will be undermined by this motion. I urge my hon. Friends to vote against the motion.

1.32 am

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Hon. Members should examine the motion with great care. As occurred earlier, we have seen demonstrated, as lawyers say, beyond peradventure the way in which the Government have tried to deceive the House in how this legislative process is being undertaken. It is accepted that this is a taxation measure. A Ways and Means resolution is a common requirement of a taxation measure. As was said in a useful outline of the position, the measure was not announced in any manifesto, the Finance Bill or the Budget. There has been an attempt to slip the measure through the back door.

Fortunately, due to the vigilance of the Opposition, the Government's ploy has been exposed. If we had depended on the Minister, we should have had virtually no information at all. Bit by bit, it was revealed that the basis of the resolution is a component not of the Finance Bill but of the new clauses that were tabled for discussion in Standing Committee E tomorrow. The Government assumed that the Committee would approve the new clauses. It is offensive and arrogant for the Government to make that assumption. When hon. Members are to consider a subject on the Whip the following week, how many hon. Members actually pick up copies of new clauses, tabled in relation to a Ways and Means resolution, to be dealt with in Committee the following week? Normally, hon. Members go to the Vote Office, as I did, and get hold of a copy of the Finance Bill. In the Finance Bill there is no information about the resolution. It is a monumental evasion of convention that hon. Members should have no information available.

I am grateful to Mr. Deputy Speaker for saying that we could discuss the new clauses. That is an important component of our debate, and must necessarily be so. In the ordinary course of events, it would be left to the Standing Committee, which would then report to the House on alterations to the Bill, including any new clauses. However, because of the special circumstances, we have perforce to refer to the new clauses.

Mr. Beith: The position is worse than the hon. Gentleman has described. If he had gone to the Vote Office on Friday morning and picked up a copy of the amendments then tabled, he would have found that no new clause of this nature had been tabled. If he had made further inquiries, he would have discovered that there had been one but that it had been withdrawn. Only if he had been in the Public Bill Office in the last moments of Friday would he have discovered that the Government rushed back to table the new clauses.

Mr. Cryer: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that information. He is a member of Standing Committee E and has been taking an interest, as members of the Committee normally do. Only a tiny proportion of hon. Members are on a Standing Committee at any given time. Having a knowledge of proceedings on the Finance Bill, and knowing that the clauses were previously tabled but were withdrawn, the hon. Gentleman would naturally know more than the vast majority of hon. Members who are not on the Finance Bill Committee. The hon. Gentleman is right—it is a dodge to withdraw the new clauses and then to retable them at the very last minute on Friday. My original assertion, which the Minister disputed, that it would be extremely difficult for hon. Members to take the information home with them over the weekend is correct. Even hon. Members who were here until the last moment of Friday's sitting would have had difficulty in doing that.

Mr. Skinner: Is my hon. Friend saying that the Minister is lying?

Mr. Cryer: I would not go as far as that. I am saying that the Minister was certainly being economical with the truth when he maintained that hon. Members could get the information to enable them to debate the money resolution and the Ways and Means resolution, because that patently was not the case.

New clause 68 shows the purposes for which the levy is to be used. The Ways and Means resolution gives authority for the levy to be made and new clause 68 excludes certain expenditure from that levy. If the clause is accepted by the Committee and becomes part of the Finance Act, those will be statutory exclusions and for that reason, we must discuss them. According to new clause 68(3)(a), they are

"fees, commissions or remuneration paid for professional services".

That is the first item, but there are three others.

It is alarming that in opening the debate the Minister did not touch on any of those items. It is encouraging that such expenditure will require statutory approval. In a recent Adjournment debate I raised the issue of the sale of skill centres. One of the scandals about that giveaway was that Deloitte Haskins and Sells received £500,000 in fees for professional services, which included marketing and valuation services. Subsection (3)(d) of new clause 68 deals precisely with that because it mentions

"expenses reasonably incurred in ascertaining the market value of the securities disposed of."

That is exactly the area that was critically examined. I and many people thought that the fees paid for those professional services were excessive. The resolution in conjunction with new clause 68 encourages expenditure in such areas by giving statutory exemptions from payment of the levy. It includes costs of transfer and advertising.

I am amazed that the Minister did not mention the expenditure that the Government have in mind. For example, is it the lavish expenditure on professional services and advertising in which the Government have been engaged? Will they put down guidelines? The Government frequently do that in all sorts of areas. When they pass primary legislation—as in this case—they issue guidelines that become almost laws in themselves to, for example, the trust ports. They are simply the instructions of a Minister to a civil servant, or from a civil servant to a Minister to say yes to the provision of guidance on the amount of expenditure that can be incurred.

The levy is the specific provision in the resolution. There are penalties. The levy can be varied by the Minister by way of statutory instrument. That is in new clause 68. The Minister talks about the levy being 50 per cent. However, if the new clause is passed, it will be subject to the affirmative procedure for statutory instruments. That is better than the negative procedure.

Mr. Skinner: What is that?

Mr. Cryer: It is where one has to table a prayer in order simply to obtain time for a debate. The Minister and all hon. Members present know that in the affirmative procedure, unless hon. Members object——

Mr. Skinner: The Minister is asleep.

Mr. Cryer: Under the affirmative procedure, unless hon. Members object, the matter can be dealt with in what is called a merits committee.

Mr. Skinner: The Minister knows what happened to Lawson: he fell asleep and got sacked.

Mr. Cryer: Often few hon. Members turn up for discussions in merits committees—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) must not keep calling out from a sedentary position and interrupting his hon. Friend, and he knows that he must not.

Mr. Skinner: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Cryer: I give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner).

Mr. Skinner: If Mr. Deputy Speaker will allow me. I was pointing out to my hon. Friend and others that the Minister had dropped to sleep two or three times during my hon. Friend's speech. I wondered whether my hon. Friend thought that it was right and proper that while he was making important points about taxation the Financial Secretary was dropping off. The Chancellor of the Exchequer dropped off to sleep and six months later he got the sack. I was being fair to the Minister. I was pointing out that he might follow in the same fashion. That is all that I was saying.

Mr. Cryer: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point. I thought that that was the drift of the interchange that was taking place. I was alarmed to find the Minister dozing off in the middle of my speech when I was making important points. It is characteristic of the Government's arrogant behaviour towards the House. The Minister made a nominal speech. He read out his brief virtually word for word. He finished it in five or six minutes, packed up and expects the motion to go through the House on the nod. The Government have had a bit of a jolt tonight. We have been exercising the vigilance that an Opposition should exercise——

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): I beg to move, That strangers do withdraw.

Notice being taken that strangers were present, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER, *pursuant to Standing Order No. 143 (Withdrawal of strangers from House), put forthwith the Question,* That strangers do withdraw:—

The House proceeded to a Division—

Mr. McCartney *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You did not call a Division. No Division was called.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman was not listening.

The House having divided: Ayes 1, Noes 123.

Division No. 277] **[1.42 am**

AYES

Ashby, David

Mr. Neil Hamilton and Mr. Harry Bellingham.

Tellers for the Ayes:

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Boswell, Tim
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Budgen, Nicholas

Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cryer, Bob
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dixon, Don
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Tony
Fallon, Michael
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Goodlad, Alastair
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Hayes, Jerry
Haynes, Frank
Hayward, Robert
Hinchliffe, David
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCartney, Ian
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rowe, Andrew
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Viggers, Peter
Widdecombe, Ann
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Patrick Thompson and
Mr. James Cran.

Question accordingly negatived.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Tim Renton) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—
The House divided: Ayes 115, Noes 11.

Division No. 278] **[1.52 am**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Boswell, Tim
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'l's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Tony
Fallon, Michael
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knowles, Michael
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Pawsey, James
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rowe, Andrew
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Viggers, Peter
Widdecombe, Ann
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Greg Knight.

NOES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Dixon, Don
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Haynes, Frank
Hinchliffe, David
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Nellist, Dave
Skinner, Dennis

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Ian McCartney.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Question put accordingly:—
The House divided: Ayes 113, Noes 11.

Division No. 279] **[2.03 am**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Boswell, Tim
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'l's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim

Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Tony
Fallon, Michael
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knowles, Michael
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Maginnis, Ken
Malins, Humfrey
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Pawsey, James
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rowe, Andrew
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Viggers, Peter
Widdecombe, Ann
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Greg Knight.

NOES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Cryer, Bob
Dixon, Don
Haynes, Frank
Hinchliffe, David
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Nellist, Dave
Skinner, Dennis

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ian McCartney and
Dr. Norman A. Godman.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That provision may be made for a levy on disposals of securities of companies to which the undertaking of a harbour authority is transferred and companies which control such companies and for the payment into the Consolidated Fund of payments of levy, interest on unpaid levy and penalties in respect of levy.

Ordered,

That it be an Instruction to the Standing Committee on the Finance Bill that it have power to make provision therein pursuant to the foregoing Resolution.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

INSURANCE

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

That the draft Insurance Companies (Amendment) Regulations 1990, which were laid before this House on 8th June, be approved.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

The House divided: Ayes 93, Noes 8.

Division No. 280] **[2.14 am**

AYES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Boswell, Tim
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Tony
Fallon, Michael
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Hayward, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rowe, Andrew
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Viggers, Peter
Widdecombe, Ann

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

NOES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Bell, Stuart
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Haynes, Frank
Hinchliffe, David
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Nellist, Dave
Skinner, Dennis

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Ian McCartney.

Question accordingly agreed to.

COMPANIES

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

That the Companies (Fees) (Amendment) Regulations 1990 (S.I., 1990, No. 1197), dated 7th June 1990, a copy of which was laid before this House on 8th June, be approved. —*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Question agreed to.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

That the draft Planning and Building Regulations (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 1990, which was laid before this House on 16th May, be approved.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Question agreed to.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

VOTING RIGHTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(5) (Standing Committees on European Community Documents),

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 7398/88 and 4218/90, relating to voting rights for Community nationals in local elections in their Member State of residence; and endorses the Government's view that the right to vote and stand as a candidate in local elections is primarily a matter of political rights which extends beyond the Community's competence and should be left to individual Member States to decide.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Question agreed to.

Denby Grange Colliery

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

2.25 am

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): Even at this late hour, I am grateful to have the opportunity to raise several matters relating to my constituency. The closure of the Denby Grange colliery, the last pit in the Wakefield constituency, means that the period of the present Government has seen the complete destruction of an industry which had been the backbone of the Wakefield economy for generations. Although this debate is prompted by that closure, I wish to widen the issue. The Government are obstructing Wakefield's attempts to replace lost jobs in traditional industries. I should like to explain what we in Wakefield believe is needed from the Government to enable us to move forward in the process of re-industrialisation.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) for remaining until this late hour. I hope that he will catch your eye later, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so that he can briefly contribute in support of my arguments. My hon. Friend has argued much longer than I have, and I appreciate his support tonight.

I have no desire to paint an entirely black picture of the economy of the Wakefield district. As the Minister is well aware, there are some positive factors. I commend Wakefield metropolitan district council on its efforts with job regeneration in recent years to offset the rundown in traditional industries such as coal. The economic development department of the local authority has fought tooth and nail for new industry, with considerable success. The Minister is familiar with some examples—the Coca-Cola Schweppes Beveridges and Nacanco development came to the Wakefield 41 site in 1988, creating 180 jobs, with a potential for 500 jobs. The Wakefield 41 business park, which opened in October last year, has the potential for some 1,200 jobs, and we hope that it will be the success that we expect. Asda's new distribution centre in the Normanton industrial estate has the potential for some 350 jobs.

These developments have been achieved entirely through local effort. Companies have recognised the tremendous potential of the Wakefield district. The Minister is familiar with Pioneer, the Japanese audiovisual company, which has been attracted to the Whitwood Common site in Pontefract and Castleford. We hope that it will create 500 jobs in the first phase, and the number is expected to double in the second phase. The Minister will recall some months ago meeting the four Wakefield district Members of Parliament, the local authority representatives, and representatives of the Yorkshire and Humberside Development Association. We pressed him to give Government assistance to bring Pioneer to Wakefield to create much-needed jobs. We had tea and biscuits and sympathy, but not much help.

All the developments that I have mentioned are specific to the motorway corridor of the M1 and M62. It is of particular concern to the local authority that future developments on the corridor will be restricted by limitations on land.

The Minister may point to the fact that official unemployment figures have fallen recently. I would argue

that that fall has been due in large part to the efforts of Wakefield district council to attract local employment. It is also important to stress that the Government's changes in the unemployment count have had a direct bearing on the specific circumstances of Wakefield district. I refer in particular to the Government's 29th adjustment of the count, aimed at reducing the unemployment figure—the amendment of the redundant mineworkers scheme, which has relieved a number of ex-miners in the Wakefield area of the requirement to sign on. In an area where the coal industry is in decline, that is bound to have a huge impact on the number of people registering as unemployed.

The closure of Denby Grange colliery is a body blow to Wakefield's hopes of a revival in its economic prospects. It is particularly bad news for those employed at the pit, many of whom are known to me personally and have worked so hard to keep the pit going over a number of years during which its future has been threatened. It is particularly sad to note that a number of the employees affected had already experienced two or three pit closures before moving to Denby Grange. The numbers involved in the closure are worrying. About 200 contractors are losing their work at the pit because of the closure. About 620 miners are directly affected, as well as about 50 administrative and managerial staff. The bulk of the employees affected are under 30, so they will be seeking alternative employment. I know that the Minister has had a long hard day, but I must point out to thim that that brings the total of pit job losses in Wakefield under the present Government to around the 16,000 mark.

My hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford will echo this point. The map for assisted areas was last drawn up in 1984, but the majority of job losses in the coal and related industries have occurred since then. In 1984, Wakefield had 16 collieries and 15,340 miners. We now have three collieries employing 2,690 miners. Those figures represent a loss of 13 collieries and more than 13,000 jobs in just five years, since the last assisted area map was drawn up. In the same period, job losses in mining-related industries have totalled nearly 3,000. Subcontractors have been directly affected and mining engineering in Wakefield has been badly affected, with hundreds of people losing their jobs.

All this gives cause for concern about our export record. Many of the mining engineering companies in Wakefield are major exporters and earners for Britain. Some companies are worried that the decline in the home coal industry makes it more difficult for them to market their products to foreign Governments. A recent study of the engineering sector by Leeds polytechnic said that Wakefield

"has an engineering industry structure which is unfavourably biased away from the relatively buoyant segment and in favour of a segment which is nationally experienced high relative decline."

It is worth mentioning also that, since the Government came to power, Wakefield's other backbone industry, the textile industry, has lost about 5,000 jobs.

The Government's policy is obstructing Wakefield's attempt to re-industrialise, and the side effects of that policy have had a major impact on our continuing problems. High interest rates are a case in point. Last week, the Forum of Private Business, a lobby group representing 17,000 companies, conducted a survey suggesting that the Government's high interest rate policy had cost Yorkshire and Humberside almost 70,000 new jobs, a number of which would have come to the Wakefield district to offset the job losses in traditional industries.

We must also consider the way in which the Government have failed to invest in the infrastructure which would have encouraged renewed investment and employment in the Wakefield district. The most recent example of that is the Government's failure to invest in high speed direct rail links from the north to the channel tunnel. That makes the task of job creation in an area such as mine that much more difficult.

Government policies have led directly to the export of British jobs from areas such as Wakefield. That has a major bearing on our predicament, particularly in the coal industry. The privatisation of electricity generation has led directly to a huge increase in coal imports. The Government have actively supported private measures such as the Humber Ports Bill promoted by the Minister's Parliamentary Private Secretary which have been geared towards importing bulk cargos such as coal from countries such as South Africa.

Last month an Oxford economist called Terry O'Shaunessy said that the Government's policies will not only lead to further massive mining job losses but will increase the trade deficit by up to £1,500 million per year. In that respect, the Government's policies are economic madness, especially in view of the present huge balance of payments deficit. Obviously, such policies are a death warrant for what is left of the coal industry in Wakefield district.

I wish to pinpoint the two main areas which are of major concern to my colleagues in the Wakefield district and to Wakefield district council in seeking to create new jobs and industries in the area. We face those problems against a background of difficulties which in many instances are related to Government policies as we try to re-industrialise the area.

Wakefield has been included in the European Commission's RECHAR programme—an aid programme for coalfield areas. When it was announced, it appeared to be a major boost for the Wakefield district. Unfortunately, there is a nasty sting in the tail as a result of Government policy. The economic development officer of Wakefield described it as a poisoned chalice when I spoke to her yesterday.

I hope that the Minister will respond to that particular point when he replies. Because Government restrictions on local authority capital spending were determined before it was known that RECHAR funds would be available, in order to spend RECHAR money other planned projects have to be shelved or RECHAR has to be spent on projects that would have gone ahead anyway. The whole purpose of RECHAR projects is that they should result in additional schemes targeted on local problems such as those in Wakefield with the declining coal industry.

The British Government, however, are the only Government in the Community completely to undermine the intention of the RECHAR programme. That has enormous obvious consequences for places like Wakefield. One could say with regard to RECHAR, "The EEC giveth, and the British Government taketh away."

I wish now to consider assisted area status. The Minister is aware that in Wakefield we have been pressing for a long time for that status because the boundaries were drawn up in 1984 and they are now completely irrelevant for areas such as Wakefield. One way to overcome the

[Mr. David Hinchliffe]

Catch-22 situation that I have described with regard to RECHAR is for the local authority concerned to be designated an assisted area or urban programme area. That would extend the local authority's capital borrowing powers by the cost of whatever schemes are acceptable to central Government and allow EC finance to be set against the cost. Those are schemes in addition to the original capital programme and therefore fit the EC requirement. I plead with the Minister to listen specifically to that point, because without that secondary assistance RECHAR is largely irrelevant to many of the problems that we face in Wakefield.

In Wakefield—my hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford will support me in this—we believe that there is no justification for the continued exclusion of Wakefield from assisted area and urban programme status. The changes in the employment base of Wakefield since 1984 mean that we should be included in the programme to do the job that our constituents want us to do. Wakefield must be unique, and it must be recognised by the EC for RECHAR, but it has had no recognition from the Government, although we have put our problems to Ministers time and again. This is my third Adjournment debate on the subject. My hon. Friend has been pressing the matter for years and has also had an Adjournment debate on it.

Regional assistance is now totally out of date and must be revised urgently. I hope that the Minister will appreciate these points, the efforts that we have made, and the fact that we have had some success in our task. We could have much more success with the kind of assistance that I have described.

2.40 am

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Does the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) have the consent of the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) and the Minister?

Mr. Hinchliffe: Yes.

The Minister for Industry (Mr. Douglas Hogg): Yes.

Mr. Lofthouse: I shall be brief to allow the Minister to reply as fully as he possibly can.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) for allowing me to intervene in his Adjournment debate, and I congratulate him on being successful in the ballot. As my hon. Friend said, this is the latest of many debates to try to influence the appropriate Minister of the needs of mining communities, especially in the constituencies of Wakefield and Pontefract and Castleford. I probably sound like a parrot: I have explained the problem time and again, but, unfortunately, my words have so far fallen on deaf ears.

The Minister will recall that the Energy Select Committee published two major reports—one on the coal industry, and one on the privatisation of electricity production. Those reports highlighted the problems that have been and will be created by further pit closures in mining communities. However, to date, my constituents have not received any aid to attract alternative industry. As my hon. Friend has said, we have had some success with Pioneer and Coca-Cola, but that success was brought about by the efforts of the local authority. There has been no financial assistance from the Government.

We are approaching a serious situation because the rundown of the coal industry has not ended. In fact, the rundown will be rapid over the next two or three years and beyond, but there are no signs of any Government assistance.

At the time of the Denby Grange announcement, there was another announcement on the Allerton Bywater workshops in my constituency. Four hundred men lost their jobs. I went to the workshops a short while ago, and it was quite obvious that quite a lot of money had been spent there. Looking at the new buildings, one would think that capacity would last for years and years. One old-timer in the workshops said, "There's something going on up here. They're spending a lot of money. I'll bet they're going to flog it." I bet he is not far off. I bet that somebody will get hold of that wonderful workshop with all its equipment and put it into the private sector. In my constituency, 10,000 jobs have been lost since the miners' strike, and we expect many more to go.

I support all that my hon. Friend has said. I understand the difficulties about redrawing the intermediate area status map because they have been put to us year in and year out. It is ironic that we enjoyed intermediate area status until about 1981 when we had all the pits working in the constituency.

There are to be further rundowns, and the Government should provide assistance as soon as possible. When the time comes to redraw the map, I hope that the Minister will find a way to include Wakefield and the Pontefract and Castleford travel-to-work area. There will be great devastation as a result of the Government's deliberate policy of electricity privatisation. The decision last week to subsidise the nuclear power industry will also hit the coal industry. How can the Government justify the running down of a major source of energy and at the same time be prepared to subsidise another form of energy, the full cost of which is not known? Nobody is really concerned to find out the true cost, including decommissioning, of nuclear energy.

If the Government continue to wipe out the coal industry, they have an obligation to encourage alternative employment for men whose average age, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield has said, is 30 to 33. Such men cannot be thrown on the scrap heap and if they are not provided with alternative employment there will be social unrest. I hope that the Minister will seriously consider our request.

2.46 am

The Minister for Industry (Mr. Douglas Hogg): The hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) has raised the question of the closure of the Denby Grange colliery and its implications for the Wakefield district. I fully recognise his concern about that. However, as I am sure he is aware, and he accepts, decisions on pit closures remain a commercial matter for British Coal. It is not for the Government to seek to intervene in these commercial decisions. They are for the management to make in the light of its costs and the relative competitive position of

what it produces. One understands the uncertainty, worry and disturbance that this is bound to cause the miners involved, their families, and naturally the wider community.

As the hon. Gentleman will know, where jobs are lost, British Coal offers generous redundancy terms that are in line with the best available in British industry. To date, British Coal has managed the restructuring of the industry without the need for compulsory redundancies. Any miner wishing to stay has had the option of moving to another pit rather than taking redundancy.

The hon. Members for Wakefield and for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) concentrated on the effect that the closure will have on the Wakefield area. They commented on what they see as a shortage of Government assistance to help the area overcome problems caused by the rundown of the local mining industry. Both hon. Gentlemen, most notably the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford, called on the Government to give Wakefield assisted area status. I am afraid that I must make it plain that there is no prospect of granting such status in advance of any general review of the assisted area status map.

Unemployment in Wakefield and Dewsbury currently stands at 7·3 per cent. compared with the Great Britain average of 6·2 per cent. The average for all intermediate areas is 8 per cent. and the average for all development areas is higher at 11 per cent. I had the pleasure of meeting both hon. Members some time ago when they came to see me about a particular inward investment. At that time we discussed the prospects of giving assisted area status to Wakefield.

The plain truth is that the number of registered unemployed in Wakefield and Dewsbury does not justify according the area assisted area status—certainly not now. Moreover, as I explained to both hon. Gentlemen when they were good enough to see me, we do not intend to redraw the map during the lifetime of this Parliament. Therefore, there is no immediate prospect whatever of Wakefield being given assisted area status. However, when the map is reviewed, the position of Wakefield will be considered. What both hon. Gentlemen have said will be taken into account.

Mr. Lofthouse: Although the Minister has given the figures for Wakefield and Dewsbury and compared them with the national figures, he has not referred to the figures for the Pontefract and Castleford travel-to-work area, which are much higher. It is one of the blackspots. It is a mining community within the Wakefield metropolitan district area. The Government will find, if my figures are correct, that unemployment is about 11 per cent.

Mr. Hogg: I make two points in reply to the hon. Gentleman. First, the Castleford and Pontefract area is probably too small to attract assisted area status. The matter could be examined but it is probably too small on its own. Secondly, we do not have it in mind to redraw the map during the lifetime of this Parliament.

Mr. Lofthouse: But Pontefract and Castleford is a travel-to-work area which previously enjoyed intermediate area status. The boundaries were extended out into the rural areas at about the same time. That brought unemployment down. Some people may have thought that that was a deliberate policy. Nevertheless, the area is a travel-to-work area. It enjoyed that status before, and it was considered large enough to have intermediate area status then.

Mr. Hogg: Whatever the force of the hon. Gentleman's point that it is a travel-to-work area, we do not propose to redraw the map during the lifetime of this Parliament. The hon. Gentleman knows that because we discussed it when we had the pleasure of meeting some months ago.

I now wish to turn to several issues which were directly or indirectly raised during the debate. The Government have been criticised for doing insufficient to assist the development of employment in the area. I do not agree with that criticism, but before I come to the detail of what the Government are doing—within the time permitted to me—it is right to say that British Coal provides considerable assistance in the mining areas of Yorkshire which have been affected by the pit closures. British Coal Enterprise Limited was set up in 1984 to help create employment opportunities in the coalfield regions. It provided loan finance to businesses setting up, expanding or relocating in mining areas. In the Yorkshire region alone it provided loans of £8·9 million to 415 businesses. That led to the creation of over 5,000 jobs. I understand that approximately 30 per cent. of these jobs relate to the Wakefield metropolitan district council area.

British Coal Enterprise has also provided financial sponsorship to the Wakefield enterprise agency and funded managed workshops and small business units. These schemes aim to provide new employment opportunities for anyone in the coal industry.

Another aspect of Government activity, which I must mention briefly—I have only two minutes left—is the effect of the consultancy initiatives operated by the Department of Trade and Industry. As the House will be aware, the scheme aims to encourage small and medium-sized businesses to recognise the need for, and benefit from, the use of outside expertise. My Department provides 50 per cent. of the cost of such consultancies in the Wakefield area. To date, over 70 companies in the Wakefield area have taken advantage of it.

My Department also runs the research and technology initiative under which there are several schemes to encourage collaborative industrial research projects. Firms in Wakefield are eligible.

I should mention that Wakefield has an enterprise zone, at Langthwaite Grange. It has also been accorded the status of a derelict land clearance area. This means that public sector reclamation schemes qualify for derelict land grant——

Mr. Hinchliffe: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Hogg: I shall not. I have only one more minute of my reply.

This means that public sector reclamation schemes qualify for derelict land grant at a rate of 100 per cent. of eligible costs, and private sector schemes at a rate of 80 per cent.

I am glad to say that since 1985 Wakefield has received more than £2·3 million in derelict land grant,

[Mr. Hogg]

and as part of the council's three-year rolling programme a further £650,000 has been allocated by the Department of the Environment for the financial year 1990-91.

The Government's small firm service has also been——

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at five minutes to Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 3 July 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

KILLINGHOLME GENERATING STATIONS (ANCILLARY POWERS) BILL *[Lords]*

GREAT YARMOUTH PORT AUTHORITY BILL *[Lords]*
(By Order)
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 5 July.

Oral Answers to Questions

HEALTH

NHS Inflation

1. **Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the latest estimate for national health service inflation for the remainder of the current financial year.

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): The Government do not make estimates of inflation in the national health service before the end of the financial year concerned.

Mr. Leighton: Is not the underfunding of the national health service for inflation one reason why the service is starved of cash? Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware of the financial crisis in the North East Thames region that has led to the postponement of phase 3 of Newham general hospital? It was promised in 1984, but has now been scrapped, and that has led to a sense of betrayal in Newham.

Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware of the growing and projected population moving into London's docklands and the need for health facilities for them, which have been mentioned by the district health authority and London Docklands development corporation in representations to his Department and the Department of Environment? Nothing has been done. Why? Will he do something about that? Will he review the position of health services in the London borough of Newham?

Mr. Clarke: The health service is not underfunded. Indeed, the resources available to it have grown so fast that we are now spending almost half as much again, over and above inflation, as the previous Labour Government were spending when they left office. This year, health authorities have at least an additional 4 per cent., ahead of inflation, in their coffers compared with last year.

I am aware of the postponement of the hospital in Newham. It is an unfortunate result of the fact that the North East Thames capital programme was racing ahead, partly on the basis of land sales in a booming property market. Those land sales have now slowed and the region has had to review its programme. I agree that it is a serious problem and, together with the regional health authorities, I shall continue to review the capital programmes, and especially that of the North East Thames region.

Mr. Michael Morris: Will my right hon. and learned Friend clarify a point recently announced in the press—that some districts will not be required to achieve a level playing field by the beginning of the next financial year? If that is the case, why should others suffer?

Mr. Clarke: No one is suffering, because it has always been a requirement that all parts of the national health service should live within the growing amount of resources available to it. All districts have always been expected to keep within those resources, and they are being urged to do so now.

I accept that one or two district health authorities may not manage to do that this year, but we will accept that only on the basis that they are well on course to eliminating the deficits as quickly as possible thereafter.

Ms. Harman: Will the Secretary of State make good the underfunding of Camberwell district health authority? Is he aware that tomorrow night that health authority will consider proposals to cut 106 beds and begin the reduction of its junior medical staff by up to 40 doctors? Does not he think that people in south London and throughout the country will be disgusted by the fact that, with hospitals in south London facing £3 million of cuts this year, he is prepared to spend £3 million of taxpayers' money on propaganda leaflets?

Mr. Clarke: The system of cash limits in the national health service was introduced by the previous Labour Government. It was a wise move, and I am sure that no future Government will remove cash limits from the national health service.

The cash limits for Camberwell or, indeed, anywhere else vastly exceed the levels expected when Labour was last in power. It remains a fact that all parts of the national health service are expected to deliver their services within the growing resources allocated to them. Sometimes they can cut beds and facilities and switch the money saved to more important parts of the service or use it to maintain the number of patient treatments at reduced cost. That is part of managing the health service and Camberwell, like every other district, sometimes has to face difficult decisions about how best to maintain high-quality services within the resources available.

Mr. Speaker: We now come to question No. 2.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I will, with permission, Mr. Speaker, answer questions Nos. 2, 3, 6, 7, 10 and 15 together at 3.30 pm.

Hospital Doctors (Pay)

4. **Mr. Irvine:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the percentage change in the pay of hospital doctors in the national health service since 1979.

The Minister for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): Since 1979, the pay of hospital doctors has increased in real terms by 33 per cent.

Mr. Irvine: Does my hon. Friend agree that that encouraging answer provides clear evidence of the Government's commitment to the national health service? What is more, does not it provide clear evidence of their readiness and ability to back their commitment with hard cash?—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] If she has them, will my hon. Friend give the comparative figures for the period 1974 to 1979, when Labour was in office?

Mrs. Bottomley: By chance, I am able to give that information for the period between 1974 and 1979—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. In fairness to everyone, the Minister should answer one question.

Mrs. Bottomley: I shall answer only one question, and provide the information that my hon. Friend wants. Between 1974 and 1979, the pay of hospital doctors fell by 6·4 per cent., which contrasts with a 33 per cent. increase over the years that the present Government have been in power. That is a strong indication of our belief in the professionals who work in the health service as well as of our commitment to the patients whom we are all there to serve.

Mr. Skinner: Why does not the Minister tell the House about another 33 per cent. increase for last year only? I refer to the increase gained by company chairmen following a 28 per cent. increase the previous year. If it is good enough for company chairmen, bosses, and friends of the Tory party, why cannot hospital doctors, nurses and others who work in the health service receive the same kind of increase?

Mrs. Bottomley: It is exactly that type of contribution from the hon. Gentleman that makes all those who work in the health service fear the day that Labour ever achieves power. It is precisely that type of political mischief-making that so enormously depresses the 1 million people who work in the health service. The hon. Gentleman mentioned nurses. Their pay has risen by 43 per cent. while the present Government have been in power, which contrasts with a fall of 21 per cent. when a Labour Government were responsible for the service.

Speech Therapists

5. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what target he has set for the level of provision for speech therapists per 100,000 population.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): We have not set any national targets. It is for individual health authorities to assess the numbers of speech therapists they require.

Mr. Squire: Is my hon. Friend aware that there is a national shortage of speech therapists, and that in the North East Thames region the shortfall is estimated at 35 per cent? The figure for my district is similar. Will my hon. Friend give his full commitment to increasing the supply of qualified speech therapists and to reducing the number of children who sometimes have to wait more than one year for an initial assessment?

Mr. Dorrell: We recognise the need to increase the number of speech therapists in the future. Perhaps the best earnest of our intention to do that is the 80 per cent. increase in the number of speech therapists in post since 1979. An important way of improving the flow of people into the profession is to ensure that pay and conditions are made properly flexible. That issue will be addressed as part of the review promised for this autumn.

Mr. Dalyell: What does the Minister mean by his remark that pay and conditions should be made properly flexible?

Mr. Dorrell: It means ensuring that the pay and conditions offered secure an adequate flow of people into the profession.

Dame Jill Knight: Will my hon. Friend take this opportunity to pay tribute to the work of speech therapists, who do an exceptionally good job, often in difficult circumstances, for people who desperately need help?

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Speech therapy offers an important release for people who would be unable to get as much out of life as they can with the help of a properly qualified speech therapist. As my hon. Friend will know, the Education Act 1981 was instrumental in identifying the major opportunities for improvement in individual circumstances that is offered by speech therapists.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Is the Minister aware just how seriously the current shortage of speech therapists is being felt by disabled children and their parents? In particular, is he aware that there are schools for such children, many with severe speech impairments, that now have no speech therapy at all and that this will involve lifelong consequences for the children affected? What action will he take to help them?

Mr. Dorrell: I have already said that I recognise the need for further improvement in the number of speech therapists. I should have hoped that the right hon. Gentleman would welcome the increase of 80 per cent. in the total number of speech therapists in post since he left office as Minister for the Disabled.

Doctors' Surgeries (Rents)

8. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received about the operation of the cost rent scheme for doctors' surgeries.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received one formal representation about the operation of the cost rent scheme.

Mr. French: Will my hon. Friend issue guidelines to family practitioner committees to avoid the difficulty under the cost rent scheme when permission for a new doctor's surgery is first given and later withdrawn?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend has a constituency case on which he has made diligent and persistent representations. I assure him that in his FPC area 63 schemes out of 86 practices have been approved. A letter was sent to FPCs six months before the new system started, and in the current statement of fees and

allowances clear guidance is again given. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will respond to my hon. Friend on his constituency case in the near future.

Mental Handicap Services

9. **Mrs. Wise:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he intends to introduce a specific grant earmarked for mental handicap services.

Mr. Dorrell: No, Sir. Local authorities already accord these services a high priority.

Mrs. Wise: Does the Minister understand the surprise that will be felt in the House on hearing that statement? One of the great fears of parents of mentally handicapped offspring is that when they die their children will have nowhere to go. Is he aware that there is wild fluctuation in the priority accorded to mental handicap services by different authorities? What is he doing to stop his right hon. Friends from exerting unreasonable pressure for cuts in local government spending which will certainly be felt in mental handicap services?

Mr. Dorrell: It is a funny way to cut services for the mentally handicapped. Since 1979 places in local authority homes and hostels for the mentally handicapped have increased by 57 per cent., places in adult training centres and day centres have increased by 30 per cent., and the number of local authority staff employed in residential homes and hostels has increased by 109 per cent. The facts simply do not accord with the hon. Lady's prejudices.

Mr. Favell: Life in the community for the mentally handicapped is one of the most important but least applauded reforms made by the Government. When I meet mentally handicapped people who have moved into the community I ask whether they would prefer to go back where they came from. I have never yet found one who would prefer to be back in hospital or in a home rather than in the community. It is a wonderful reform and it is about time the Opposition recognised it.

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. He speaks with some authority. I happen to know that he is the president of Stockport Mencap. The line that he takes is supported by patients and the professionals who look after the patients and it should be supported by the House.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Is the Minister aware of Mencap's concern about the absence of services for mentally handicapped adults? Does he accept that his figures confirm that there is a shortfall of 22,000 places—25 per cent.—in adult training centres? How did he respond to Sir Brian Rix's letter to Members of Parliament which said that if that shortfall continues there will be a lottery leading to empty hours, empty days and empty years for some of society's most vulnerable people?

Mr. Dorrell: What the facts confirm, to pick up the hon. Gentleman's phrase, is that there has been a 69 per cent. increase in real expenditure on facilities for the mentally handicapped in the community since 1979. That hardly makes out the case for additional protection for expenditure by local authorities on the mentally handicapped.

Mr. John Marshall: Will my hon. Friend confirm that specific grants would go against all the traditions of local government finance? Does he suspect that the Opposition's enthusiasm for such grants illustrates their lack of confidence in Labour-controlled councils' spending priorities?

Mr. Dorrell: It also squares ill with the repeated allegations of the Opposition that the Conservative party wants to centralise power that properly belongs to local government. It is a proper exercise of local discretion.

Community Care

12. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations have been received from local authorities regarding the costs of implementing the Government's proposals on community care.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We are having discussions with local authority associations in the usual way. The local authorities have produced an estimate of those costs which they believe will be necessary in the implementation of care in the community.

Mr. Flynn: Does the Minister agree that the Government appear to be having extreme difficulty understanding the argument? It is not a question of centralising power; it is one of a shortfall in finances. Does the Minister agree that by 1994 social services depts will be facing a shortfall of £500 million? The projections are that the fall in Government funding and increasing costs will mean that the social services departments will have the greatest difficulty implementing the Children Act 1989 and care in the community. What do the Government propose to do about it?

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman is right that local authority social services departments are already implementing the Children Act as well as carrying forward plans for care in the community. Social services departments have seen an increase in their spending of about 37 per cent. over the past 10 years. Of course, they will have to seek good value for money and meet the most important priorities in carrying forward their plans. We have always made it clear that adequate resources will be made available for implementing care in the community.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: How can my hon. Friend assure the House that there will be adequate funds for community care after April 1991, bearing in mind the fact that it is almost inevitable—I have it from the highest level of government—that there will be additional capping next year? How can my hon. Friend and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State guarantee the House that the most vulnerable groups of people—the mentally handicapped, the mentally ill, the elderly and the disabled —will get the sums of money that are allocated to them under the present system when capping will take a major part of next year's local government financial allocation?

Mrs. Bottomley: There were those who believed that local authorities should not be entrusted with the important task of care in the community. I am not one of those people. Had the health service undertaken that responsibility, it would have become a directly managed service. Local authority responsibility involves local accountability. Where a particular need has to be addressed, a limited specific grant is appropriate, and for that reason last week my right hon. and learned Friend the

Secretary of State introduced the popular ring-fenced grant for drug and alcohol-related difficulties. We have made it clear throughout that adequate resources will be made available for the implementation of care in the community.

Mr. Kennedy: Does not the Minister appreciate that in addition to the problems faced by local authorities, as outlined by the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), the health authorities are offloading people into the community far more rapidly than was ever envisaged when care in the community gained all-party support? They are forced by the squeeze on their budgets to release property on to the open market or to release patients back into the community without adequate back-up care. When will the Minister make sure that one arm of government is working in conjunction and harmony with other arms of government so that people do not fall through the net? That is precisely what is happening at the moment.

Mrs. Bottomley: I do not underestimate the difficulty of implementing care in the community. It will take 10 years to achieve the care for the frail and vulnerable that many of us hope to see. One such difficulty is not the narrow question of resources that my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) mentioned. The key is persuading the different groups to collaborate and to plan together to ensure that those who require the help receive it. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State spoke of the increase in resources to the health service. I have made it clear that there has been a substantial increase in funding to local authority social services departments, quite apart from the vast resources that are given through social security. The key is to make those substantial resources work effectively in the best interests of the frail and vulnerable.

Mr. Wilshire: When my hon. Friend responds to representations from local authorities, will she resist the pressures to support ring fencing of budgets? Does she agree that hon. Members who support wholesale ring fencing of local government budgets are in favour of destroying local government as we know it?

Mrs. Bottomley: I entirely endorse my hon. Friend's point. Ring fencing of substantial sums of money undermines local accountability. Those who believe in local government should welcome local accountability. Plans will have to be made for community care. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will have powers of direction and there will be appropriate safeguards.

Mr. Robin Cook: What advice on the cost of community care did the Minister and her colleagues give the Secretary of State for the Environment before he capped 19 social services authorities? Is she aware that in the past month, as a result of that capping, North Tyneside has had to cut its social services budget by a tenth, Derbyshire by £2·5 million, and Fulham by £1·5 million and that Barnsley is having to shut old folks' homes and introduce charges for home helps of £5 a week? Is not she concerned about the effect of those sharp cuts and savage rises on elderly and disabled people in our community? What is the point of her lecturing local authorities to provide more community care when her colleagues in the Government penalise the local authorities that provide the most?

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman constantly identifies with the producer interest rather than with those who must pay the community charge. I am well aware that elderly and disabled people and others must pay the community charge. They welcome the fact that they have been protected from the excessive spending of their local authorities by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. It is right for local authorities to make proper plans, but that does not involve spending £1 million on a publicity department for Derbyshire county council.

Junior Doctors

13. **Mr. Lambie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he next intends to meet representatives of national health service junior doctors to discuss their terms and conditions of service.

19. **Mr. James Lamond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he next intends to meet representatives of national health service junior doctors to discuss their terms and conditions of service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I shall next meet the representatives formally later this summer to discuss the first report of the working group that we have set up with the key parties involved to discuss the problem of junior hospital doctors' hours.

Mr. Lambie: I am disappointed by that reply. I should have thought that the Minister would seek an immediate meeting with the junior doctors. Is she aware that the British Medical Association is carrying out a survey of junior hospital doctors on industrial action over hours of work? The junior doctors want only a reduction in their hours of work to a maximum of 72 hours a week instead of the 92 hours that they are working at present, with no more than 36 hours of continuous work. In the best interests of patients and the national health service, will the Minister grant those fair demands?

Mrs. Bottomley: I have had a series of formal and informal meetings with junior doctors, and I hope shortly to meet the new chairman of the hospital junior staff committee. For the first time, we have called together all the key players who affect junior hospital doctors' hours —the royal colleges, consultants, junior hospital doctors and management. We are determined to have further action and will take all possible steps to achieve it, but it is very much for the profession to demonstrate commitment and to make the necessary changes with us to ensure that we put an end to unreasonably long hours for junior hospital doctors.

Mr. Lamond: Is not the Minister's answer a little unconvincing when we recall that her Department has found time wholly to reorganise the health service, to disrupt the relationship between the general practitioner and his patients and to pull the rug from under the national health service hospitals, while this simple problem, which has been known about for years, has still

to be tackled? Junior doctors, who are an essential link in the health service, are expected to work, on average, more than 90 hours a week.

Mrs. Bottomley: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman is not entirely correct in his facts. The junior doctors worked more than 90 hours a week—91 hours a week—when the hon. Gentleman's party was in power. However, under this Government, their working hours are down to 83 hours a week, with about 58 hours when they are actually working. It is a complex issue because there is a difference between being on call and working. We are determined to see further progress and I am pleased to be able to inform the hon. Gentleman that, by the summer, only around one in eight junior hospital doctors will be working more than one in three onerous rotas. That is substantial progress over two years and we are determined, with those directly involved, to see further progress.

Mr. Conway: Will my hon. Friend continue to emphasise the difference between being on duty and being on call? Does she accept that, before any radical change is made, all junior doctors—not necessarily just their representatives—should be consulted, because any shortening of the number of hours would have implications for the length of time that doctors must serve before registration?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend is exactly right. There is a large distinction between being on call and working, which is why legislation is an irrelevance in the context. My hon. Friend also identifies another important point, which is the role of the royal colleges in approving the training places. We are at an opportune moment when, for the first time, the royal colleges, the consultants themselves —and there are, of course, 21 per cent. more consultants than there were 10 years ago—and the juniors are prepared to work with the NHS management to ensure that our junior hospital doctors can be alert as well as awake when on duty.

Mr. Forman: I welcome the obvious progress toward shorter hours for junior hospital doctors, but is my hon. Friend aware that many of us share a deep concern about the problem, especially when we read stories of such doctors falling asleep on duty? Where does the real difficulty lie? Can my hon. Friend tell the House about the obstacles?

Mrs. Bottomley: I share my hon. Friend's deep concern. He is addressing the point about continuous hours of duty. There is a difference between the cumulative hours worked in a week and having long, continuous hours on duty. In many cases, the juniors themselves prefer to have continuous hours on duty so that they can have long weekends off duty. It is for them to sort out with the consultants in their particular locations the best way of organising the work rotas. In many cases, a move towards a team approach rather than an individual firm approach makes a difference. In other cases, other members of the health care profession, such as nurses, can substitute for doctors. It is a complex and subtle matter on which all parties are determined to make progress. Progress is in the interests not only of the junior hospital doctors, but of the patients, who are entitled to be treated in hospital by doctors who have had a good night's sleep.

Mr. Galbraith: Does the Minister agree that any progress made so far has been modest and slow and that the average hours worked by junior hospital doctors are still 87 a week? Any improvements have been achieved simply by shifting work from one group of overworked junior doctors to another group of overworked junior doctors. Is not the solution, as the Minister in part suggested, to look at ways of shifting work, such as giving responsibility for intravenous injections and phlebotomies to nurses and, most of all, to increase manpower, especially consultant manpower, so that they can take over some of the duties?

Mrs. Bottomley: As I was able to inform the House a moment ago, the number of consultants has increased by 21 per cent. It is important that some of the new consultants should be prepared to cover. If the new consultants refuse to cover for the juniors, the difficulty of the juniors' hours will persist. The working practices of juniors, consultants and management alike are involved. But there has been much more substantial progress than the hon. Gentleman suggests. The number of junior doctors working such hours has fallen from one in four to one in eight over two years, and regions that have shown real determination have cut by a half the number working onerous rotas. I would mention in particular South West Thames regional health authority, Northern regional health authority and South Western regional health authority.

Sir Robert McCrindle: Like the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith), I have recently been on the receiving end of the valuable services of junior hospital doctors. Will my hon. Friend take on board the suggestion that one way of relieving to some extent the burden to which junior hospital doctors are subjected would be to try to give them some clerical and secretarial assistance? In my recent experience, junior hospital doctors spend a great deal of their time engaging in such activities, which, arguably, could be dealt with by somebody else.

Mrs. Bottomley: The discussion will soon be taken up by the working party that I have established, on precisely this subject. As my hon. Friend said, clerical skills may well play an important part. The work requirements of the consultants are important and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway) said, the training requirements of the royal colleges are also involved. In many cases, a shift system could be introduced and in others juniors could be used to cover for other specialties in which they have had appropriate experience. In addition, in certain cases units can be amalgamated so that the junior can cover. What is clear is that all those involved are determined to take the necessary constructive action to bring an end to what I regard as an unacceptable problem.

Speech Therapy

14. Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients have requested speech therapy treatment from Liverpool area health authority but remain without care.

Mr. Dorrell: I understand that on 20 March there were 1,300 people receiving speech therapy in Liverpool district and a further 1,775 people registered as requiring the service.

Mr. Alton: Is the Minister aware that of the nearly 2,000 people in Liverpool requiring speech therapy but currently denied it, 800 are children with special needs—partially hearing or disabled children? There are hospitals completely without speech therapy cover and there is no speech therapist to deal with the special needs of the deaf. Does the Minister agree with the view of the local area health authority chairman that the profession needs to be restructured and that improved resources and regrading are required? Does he further agree that the starting salary of £8,000 for a graduate is one reason why it is impossible to retain speech therapists within the service?

Mr. Dorrell: I agree that regrading would be desirable and we are committed to doing that in the autumn. I also agree with the conclusions of the Davies and Enderby study that, although pay and conditions are part of the problem, we must also look at patterns of work within the speech therapy profession to ensure that we make the best possible use of the skilled manpower available.

Mr. Wareing: Does not the Minister realise that the Government are regarding the problem with great complacency? A child of four in my constituency has been told that when his fifth birthday comes he will be able to obtain the speech therapy treatment that he requires only by going to a school in Warrington or Southport. Is not that disgraceful, and is not it about time that the Government gave real priority to the management of the speech therapy service so that conditions of service are such that speech therapists are retained in the service rather than being forced into other occupations?

Mr. Dorrell: I challenge the hon. Gentleman to find any part of the health service in which there was an increase of 120 per cent. in real expenditure during the Labour Government's four years in power. We have increased real expenditure on speech therapists by 120 per cent. and we have increased the number of therapists in post by 80 per cent. That is not complacency.

Mr. Rowe: Does my hon. Friend accept that, in places such as Liverpool, where the problem is acute, as it is in my constituency, there will always be a temptation for employers to look for people calling themselves speech therapists—which anyone can do—without guaranteeing the quality that qualification as a speech therapist ensures? Will he give the assurance that, in his tremendous efforts to solve those difficulties, he will not look for a cut in the quality of the service that is offered?

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend is right to the extent that we must ensure that the people who offer those services are properly qualified to give them. Equally, we must not allow ourselves to regard the services as a mediaeval mystery. We must ensure that speech therapists are adequately qualified but not overqualified.

Eye Tests

16. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what further evidence has been made available to his Department regarding the effects of the introduction of charges on the numbers of eyesight checks undertaken.

20. **Mr. Rees:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what further evidence has been made available to his Department regarding the effects of the introduction of charges on the numbers of eyesight checks undertaken.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have received no new independent evidence on sight test demand since the publication of the independent national opinion poll report last month, which showed that the number of sight tests being undertaken is fully in line with past trends.

Ms. Short: I am shocked that the Secretary of State did not see the *Which?* report—he is not doing his job properly if he did not. That report showed that there has been a serious drop of 2·5 million in the number of eye tests. As the right hon. and learned Gentleman will know, one in 20 people are referred for serious sight and other health problems, which means that about 125,000 seriously ill people are being missed. Will he now admit that that is a disastrous move for people's health, apologise for misleading the House and the country, and scrap the eye test charge, because people's health is too valuable for them to miss eye tests?

Mr. Clarke: There has been no reduction in the number of eye tests as a result of the introduction of charges. All the evidence—not only our survey of 10,000 people but the MORI survey that was carried out for the Association of Optometrists, and even the telephone ring-round by the Royal National Institute for the Blind—shows that there has been no reduction in the number of eye tests compared with the tend that was established before the charging system was changed in 1987.

The Consumers Association, in its *Which?* magazine, has not explained the methodology that produced its rather startling conclusion. Most of the contrary claims are based on leading questions about whether people think that charges might deter them. All sensible surveys show that there has been no evidence of deterrence. The Labour party's only spending promise to spend £90 million to go back to the previous system is based on a mistaken assessment of the facts.

Community Care

18. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations he has received regarding the policy of care in the community.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We receive many representations in correspondence and at regular meetings with organisations concerned with our plans for community care.

Mr. Yeo: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the Government believe that voluntary organisations have a major role to play in delivering policies on care in the community? Is she aware of the warm welcome that has been given to the policy of giving grants to voluntary organisations to deal with specific problems of drugs and alcohol?

Mrs. Bottomley: I thank my hon. Friend. I am fully aware of the importance of encouraging voluntary organisations. We want a mixed economy of care for the frail and the vulnerable. I know of my hon. Friend's distinguished service in one such organisation. I can confirm that there has been a wide welcome for the announcement by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State last week that voluntary bodies concerned with drug and alcohol-related difficulties will receive special funding.

Mr. Ashley: Does the Minister care to deny that every voluntary organisation concerned with disabled people condemns the Government's failure to provide adequate community care for mentally handicapped and mentally ill people? Does she deny also that thousands of those people have been denied adequate help and that the present situation is an absolute scandal?

Mrs. Bottomley: The right hon. Gentleman's account far from resembles my experience. There has been a substantial improvement in the care of the mentally ill and the mentally handicapped in our community. If we contrast what is available now with what was available several years ago, the situation is striking and most impressive. I agree with the right hon. Gentleman that more should be done. That is why I welcome the work that is being carried forward by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State in the specific grant for mentally ill people. We believe that there is a special need for co-operation between health authorities and local authorities and that further work needs to be done.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. David Young. Mr. John Hughes. Mr. Ted Leadbitter. Question 24.

Mr. Wareing: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. What question are we on?

Mr. Speaker: I was informed that the hon. Gentleman's question 21 had been withdrawn. If that is not so take question 21 first.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: With permission, I shall answer this question together with question 2 at 3.30 pm as it is one of the 32 questions on the Order Paper about self-governing trusts. Like you, Mr. Speaker, I believed that the question was unstarred. Obviously we were wrongly informed that the hon. Gentleman had withdrawn his question.

Mr. Speaker: Then we go to question 24. Mr. John Hughes.

Junior Doctors

24. **Mr. John Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he next intends to meet representatives of national health service junior doctors to discuss their terms and conditions of service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: As I have made clear, we hope to meet soon the new chairman of the junior hospital doctors staff. We are determined to see further action on junior hospital doctors' hours.

Mr. Hughes: Has the Minister's knowledge that the mishandling of the ambulance dispute classically demonstrated how an individual, subject to far fewer pressures than the complex pressures and experiences——

Hon. Members: Reading.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Gentleman please paraphrase his question? [HON. MEMBERS: "Reading".] Order. This takes time out of Question Time.

Mr. Hughes: Has the Minister's knowledge that the mishandling of the ambulance dispute clearly demonstrated that an individual subject to fewer pressures than the pressures daily experienced by junior doctors will act in an irrational manner? [HON. MEMBERS: "Reading".] Has that equipped her to understand——

Hon. Members: Reading.

Mr. Speaker: Order. This takes a lot of time out of Question Time.

Mr. Hughes: —than the long-winded procedures that she has set up to deal with the junior doctors issue will put patients' health at risk? Will she take immediate steps to meet the doctors and resolve the issue?

Mrs. Bottomley: I shall reply more formally when I have had a chance to study the hon. Gentleman's question in the *Official Report*. We are determined to see further action on junior hospital doctors. It is a matter for the professions involved and the royal colleges, but we believe that, for the first time, we have called the relevant parties together. We hope that there will be a constructive and realistic outcome.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 July.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others, including——

Hon. Members: Reading.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Hon. Members know perfectly well that the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition always have an opportunity to refer to their notes.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others—[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."]—including one with Chief Anyaoku, the new Secretary General of the Commonwealth. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today, including one with the Chinese ambassador. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Mrs. Mahon: Does the Prime Minister agree that there are some terrorists whom her Government deal with? Every year at the United Nations, the British representatives vote for the seating of a Khmer Rouge representative. If the representatives do not vote for that this year, it is a bit late as the genocidal murderers march for a second time on Phnom Penh. How does she sleep at night knowing that she has helped to bring that about?

The Prime Minister: Nonsense. Who shall have the seat to represent Cambodia is very much a matter for the

United Nations. We have hitherto supported the United Nations. In future, we shall reconsider our vote as to who should take that seat for Cambodia.

Mr. Jopling: If the Prime Minister can find time today to give further thought to future policies, will she ask herself why it should be necessary for the Forestry Commission to own £1 billion of real estate in land and growing timber? Is not it a good candidate for privatisation?

The Prime Minister: I am well aware that my right hon. Friend has consistently taken that view, and I think that there is something in what he says, but we must consider it in more detail for future policy.

Mr. Kinnock: Does not the Prime Minister think that it would be only fair if the booklet about the changes being imposed on the national health service were paid for out of Tory party funds?

The Prime Minister: No. I think that when families have to spend £39 a week to maintain the national health service, they are entitled to a booklet on the national health service reforms, the people involved in it and how it works. It is extremely good value for money.

Mr. Kinnock: Families support the national health service. However, as for the proposals, the doctors do not support them, the nurses do not support them and, most importantly, the patients do not support them. Whenever they are put to the vote, they get turned down by huge majorities. The only organisation that supports the proposals and propaganda is the Conservative party. Let it pay for the booklet.

The Prime Minister: If the doctors do not support the proposals, it is astonishing that there are so many applications for both self-governing hospitals and practice budgets. I quite understand—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: I quite understand what the right hon. Gentleman is saying—any choice, whether on the part of the professionals who run the health service or the patient, is anathema to socialism.

Mr. Kinnock: If the Prime Minister is so confident about opting out and the reception that it will receive, will she give me an undertaking now that when it is proposed that a hospital should opt out, but the doctors, nurses and patients are against it, the Government will not accept the proposal for opting out?

The Prime Minister: Once again, the right hon. Gentleman does not understand——

Hon. Members: Straight answer.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: No hospital is opting out of the health service, as the right hon. Gentleman knows. He deliberately tries to give the opposite impression. Self-governing hospitals are part of the national health service; the real reason why the Labour party does not want them is that they will be extremely popular due to the better service that they will give to patients and will offer choice, which is anathema to the Labour party.

Mr. Lord: Amidst the excitement of World Cup football—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lord: Amidst the excitement of World Cup football and Wimbledon, does the Prime Minister think that it is right to remind ourselves of the great difference between sportsmanship and gamesmanship? Does she further think it right to remind all those involved with sport, particularly people in the public eye—players, officials, commentators and correspondents—of the enormous responsibility that they have to maintain the standards of the game and to set an example, particularly to young people interested in sport?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend. We all wish our team well and success tomorrow evening. We hope that it and all our spectators will act in accordance with the best standards in Britain.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the House to settle down.

Mr. Ashdown: In view of the Prime Minister's well-known admiration for the views of Dr. Pöhl, the president of the Bundesbank, did she note that in his speech on the exchange rate mechanism yesterday, he clearly stated that, in his opinion, the Prime Minister's seven-year-old statement that Britain should join when the time was right now meant that Britain should join soon? Is she still unable to agree with him?

The Prime Minister: I read every word of Dr. Karl Otto Pöhl's speech. I saw him for more than half an hour yesterday morning and discussed those matters with him. I should not disagree that we are bound to join the exchange rate mechanism. We have accepted that, and we shall join—as Karl Otto Pöhl said—when the time is right. I do not know quite what he meant by "soon", but I could agree or disagree with that according to what it means.

Mr. Burt: Is not it the case that in the past few years this country has given assistance to black South African students to enable them to come to this country, to education projects in the townships and to humanitarian projects in South Africa to support the rural black community? At the time of the visit of Mr. Nelson Mandela, is not it right that due credit should be paid to this country for its work in furthering reform and progress in South Africa?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. We have made a point of giving far more help to black South Africans in education and housing. We made it clear that we are for the end of apartheid—which is totally immoral and which must end—and that we were going to do something for black South Africans. All the kinds of assistance that my hon. Friend has enumerated were gladly given, and have already been a great help to them. That help will be of even greater assistance when they form the majority Government in South Africa.

Q2. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. McFall: The Prime Minister must be aware of the grave difficulties of pushing the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill through the House, not least with her tiny band of Scottish Back Benchers who have revolted. Will she pledge not to guillotine the Bill and curtail debate on such an important measure, or will she back her totally isolated Secretary of State for Scotland at the perilously high price of ignoring her Scottish Back Benchers?

The Prime Minister: The Bill to which the hon. Gentleman refers is part of the Government's legislative programme; it came from the other place, and was given an unopposed Second Reading in the House of Commons. It is a significant reform, especially the parts that deal with the legal profession. It is important that it should receive proper consideration in Committee, and in due course become law.

Mr. Budgen: Will my right hon. Friend ask her Cabinet colleagues to have a word with the president of the Bundesbank today, so that he can explain to them that the only choice is between joining the exchange rate mechanism—and moving inexorably towards a common currency and a common monetary authority—and not going in at all? He would also explain that there is no clever compromise, and that if we attempt one it will lead to greater instability in European currencies and the justified anger of our European allies.

The Prime Minister: We are pledged to join the exchange rate mechanism when the Madrid conditions are fulfilled, and we shall join it when they have been fulfilled. It is clear that some of our colleagues in the European Community wish to go further than the exchange rate mechanism. The proposals outlined in Delors stages 2 and 3 were debated in the House, and my understanding is that a move towards a single currency—with a board of bank governors not democratically accountable to anyone—was totally rejected. That being so, we wish to find a way forward with which other countries in the European Community—as well as Britain—could agree, and which would satisfy the demand for some kind of common currency throughout the Community.

We have put our proposals before the Community, and I am sure that they will be fully debated. We do not wish to adopt a single currency with a board of central bank governors who are not democratically accountable. We are prepared to have a common currency, provided that it does not lead to any inflation. That would mean our having a hard ecu.

Q3. **Mr. Radice:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Radice: In view of the new Government figures on increases in high street spending and borrowing, and reports that the Treasury has revised upwards its fourth quarter inflation estimate, is not it clear that the Government's policy of relying entirely on high interest rates is not working?

The Prime Minister: No. The economy is extremely strong and very dynamic and there are more jobs, higher output and a higher standard of living than ever before. Of course it will take time for a high interest rate to work. That is not the only policy and I am surprised that that has escaped the hon. Gentleman. He knows full well that there is a budget surplus. That, too, is part of the policy.

Mr. Ashby: My right hon. Friend has often said that for every right there is a corresponding duty. Will she alter the rules so that those claiming benefit should first have to produce a certificate saying that they have registered for the community charge?

The Prime Minister: That would be a needless extra bit of bureaucracy. We are very pleased that the overwhelming majority of people properly registered for the community charge in spite of Opposition forebodings to the contrary. We believe that the overwhelming majority as citizens will pay it, and we hope that a bigger percentage will pay the charge than used to pay rates.

Q4. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Fyfe: Will the right hon. Lady give a straight answer this time? If doctors, nurses, medical staff and patients are against opting out, will she listen to them?

The Prime Minister: No hospital is opting out. All are in the health service. If the professionals wish to apply for self-governing status, the application will come to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health who, after a period of consultation, will make his decision. It is quite clear that the Opposition do not want people to have choice. They are socialists to the backbone.

Q5. **Mrs. Peacock:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Peacock: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in the past 12 months of freedom from union domination and restrictive practices, Britain's docks have moved from strength to strength? Is not this anniversary of the abolition of the dock labour scheme—[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."]—a suitable moment to reiterate the superiority of free enterprise over socialism and trade monopoly?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. It is one year today since the dock labour scheme was abolished. Since then productivity has raced ahead, ships have been loaded and unloaded far faster, we have the lowest strike record in Britain, and the hinterland of all the ports is flourishing. It was a good day when we abolished that scheme and we note that the view of the Opposition was to call that abolition an act of wilful sabotage against the country's economic interests. Wrong again, they were.

NHS Trusts

The following questions stood upon the Order Paper:

2. **Mr. David Nicholson** (Taunton): To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on progress towards setting up national health service hospital trusts.

3. **Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo** (Nottingham, South): To ask the Secretary of State for Health what will be the effect on services to patients in those hospitals which choose to become national health service hospital trusts.

6. **Mr. Cecil Franks** (Barrow and Furness): To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects the first national health service trusts to be in operation.

7. **Mr. Harry Barnes** (Derbyshire, North-East): To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many expressions of interest in the formulation of self-governing hospital trusts have so far been received.

10. **Mr. Roger Stott** (Wigan): To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his Department's latest information on the total expenditure incurred so far on preparation for self-governing hospital trusts.

15. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell** (Blyth Valley): To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence of the views of community health councils regarding the formation of self-governing hospital trusts is available to his Department.

21. **Mr. Robert N. Wareing** (Liverpool, West Derby): To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last had discussions with the chairman of the Mersey region health authority; if the opting-out of hospitals on Merseyside was discussed; and if he will make a statement.

3.32 pm

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I shall answer these questions together.

On a point of order, I should like to give the House an explanation which Opposition Front Bench Members have requested about the adoption of this procedure. Last night, when I started the final detailed preparation for answering parliamentary questions, I discovered that there were 32 questions on the Order Paper about applications for national health service trust status. Last night there were eight such questions in the first 25. It became quite clear that, if we tried to handle those in the course of ordinary parliamentary questions, first, most hon. Members would not get an adequate reply to their questions—*[Interruption.]* They are about to get more than adequate replies to any questions that are forthcoming. Secondly, it was also clear that no other subject could sensibly be dealt with during health service questions. For example, we would not have reached the questions on junior doctors' hours and on eye tests which the Opposition regard as important.

I regret that this is an Opposition Supply day because I realise that that has caused some difficulties, but it was obviously for the convenience of the House to handle these questions at this stage.

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Secretary of State, in his apology to the House, conceded that the device that he has adopted has caused offence. He proposes to answer not one question but seven linked together. That is not for the convenience of the House; it is an abuse of the procedures of the House. It is inevitable that that abuse will take time out of the debates on the motions on education and housing, tabled in the Opposition's name—time that was available to the Secretary of State during health questions. He will not remove that offence by making a statement to the House under the guise of giving an answer to questions on the Order Paper. He knows perfectly well that by using such a device to make a statement he is avoiding the need to give the Opposition advance notice of the text, and he is denying the Opposition the right to respond immediately, which is presumably why he has chosen this method of smuggling in a major statement on a controversial issue. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I invite you to reflect on what additional protection is necessary——

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): This is not a genuine point of order.

Mr. Cook: I am addressing my question to Mr. Speaker, if the hon. Gentleman will listen.

What additional protection is necessary to defend the rights of this place against a Government who, despite a majority of more than 100, constantly seek devices to prevent the Opposition from getting a fair hearing in the Chamber?

Several Hon. Members: Further to that point of order——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall not take any more points of order at this stage. Of course it is up to the Government how they link the questions. I was aware of the decision, and that was why I suggested that the Government consult through the usual channels as to whether this was an appropriate method to deal with the matter.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am grateful to you for giving me the opportunity to put on record the fact that this procedure is not acceptable to the Opposition, and we made that clear from the outset. It is clear that, before today was allocated as an Opposition Supply day, the questions were on the Order Paper. In any preview of today's business at Question Time, the Government would have foreseen this difficulty—long before it was known that Tuesday would be an Opposition Supply day. This is a squalid device on the part of the Government's business managers to prevent the effective use of time by the Opposition on a Supply day, and no one should be in any doubt about it.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I am not taking any more points of order on the matter. We must get on.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The National Health Service and Community Care Act gives me the power to establish NHS trusts, by order, as self-governing units within the national health service. NHS trusts will not opt out of the national health service, and they will continue to provide treatment free of charge, but they will be given substantial freedom to manage their own affairs. In particular, they will be free to determine the terms and conditions of service of the staff

they employ, to acquire, own and dispose of assets, to borrow money and to retain surpluses. We intend that trusts should use their powers to improve the quality of the health care which they provide and to respond more effectively to the needs of general practitioners and NHS patients.

We intend that the first NHS trusts should become operational on 1 April 1991, and I have now invited formal applications. Units will be able to apply for trust status at any time, but those units intending to become trusts from 1 April will wish to submit their applications as soon as possible.

One hundred and ninety nine NHS units have expressed interest in NHS trust status. They represent a wide range of units—single hospitals, groups of hospitals and non-hospital facilities. I understand that about 60 to 70 of the units which have expressed interest——

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This is not good enough. This is a statement.

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I remind the House that it is not for me to say——

Mr. Haynes: It is for you.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Hon. Members must reflect, if they are concerned about protecting the Opposition's time, that a statement would take much longer than questions answered together—*[Interruption.]*

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will take the points of order provided that hon. Members reflect on the fact that they take time out of the Opposition's Supply day. Mr. Haynes.

Mr. Haynes: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This is shameful and you are allowing it to go on. It is time that you put your foot down because the Government are running all over us. They did it last night and you did not do anything about that. They introduced amendments——

Mr. Speaker: Sit down. How on earth can the hon. Gentleman make that charge about last night? I was not in the Chair last night.

Mr. Haynes: But you knew about it.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Gentleman withdraw that dastardly charge against me? I was not even here.

Mr. Haynes: I accept that you were not in the Chair, Mr. Speaker, but I still say that you knew what was going on last night. You always know what is going on in this place, and you know what is going on today, but you have not done a damn thing about it.

Mr. Speaker: I hope that the House will reflect quietly on this. This is an Opposition Supply day. *[Interruption.]* It is up to the Government to decide whether to make a statement or to answer questions at the end of Question Time. A statement would probably take half an hour and questions taken together after Question Time would take about 15 minutes. The House can decide what it wants to do.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am in the middle of attempting to answer, in effect, 32 parliamentary questions. The answer is therefore undoubtedly lengthy, but all the points that I am covering relate to the questions on the Order Paper. If the Labour party prefers to get excited about procedural matters rather than matters of substance, it is free to do so. If it is worried about wasting its Supply day, it has the simple remedy of not asking any supplementary questions.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We are clearly in difficulty over this, but if it would help the House the Secretary of State can make his answer and I will treat it as a statement. If it will help the House, I will do that.

Mr. Robin Cook: I am obliged for that suggestion, Mr. Speaker. Of course it is implicit in what you have just said that what the House is now hearing is not an answer to parliamentary questions but a statement. The Secretary of State has already been speaking for more than two minutes——

Mr. David Shaw: What is wrong with that?

Mr. Cook: That is a question that the hon. Gentleman must address to his Secretary of State because the Secretary of State is well aware that this is a matter of major interest to the House on which, had he wished to make a lengthy statement, he could have arranged to do so. As you will be aware, Mr. Speaker, the procedure for making statements contains within it certain protections for the rights of the Opposition, one of which is that the Opposition receive advance notice of the text that the Secretary of State is to share with the House. The device that you are proposing, which is to treat the statement as a statement, while recognising the reality of what the Secretary of State is up to, does not contain that protection of the rights of the Opposition.

I therefore submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that since it would appear that you are now persuaded that what we are hearing is not a parliamentary answer but a statement, the appropriate thing to do would be to invite the Secretary of State to take away his statement, to return with it—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] I am addressing my remarks to the Chair, not to Conservative Members. I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, but some Conservative Members appear to think that they are the Speaker and so are answering my question.

Would not the appropriate course be to invite the Secretary of State to come back tomorrow with a statement which will protect the Opposition's right to see the text in advance and enable the House to proceed with the important debates in Opposition time on Opposition motions?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am on my feet.

Clearly the House is in difficulty on this matter. It appears that communications between the usual channels have broken down, which is a serious matter. When I heard about the matter at lunch time, I understood that the usual channels had come to an agreement on it. Those hon. Members whose questions are on the Order Paper today have a right to have their questions answered. If communications between the usual channels have broken down on whether to have a statement or to have

[Mr. Speaker]

supplementary questions, we should hear—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] Because they have a right to put their questions.

We should hear now what the Secretary of State has to say. I will call those hon. Members and then we shall move immediately to the Opposition's Supply day.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have a very long list of hon. Members who wish to participate in the debate, and it will be difficult for me to call them all.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that it will be helpful.

Mr. Winterton: I am sure that it will be helpful, and I am seeking your advice and guidance, Mr. Speaker.

Many hon. Members who have been in the House for a few years are aware that quite a number of questions on a particular subject can be tabled to a Department on any one day. From what has happened today, are we to understand that if six, seven or eight questions are tabled on one subject to a specific Minister, the Government of the day can adopt the procedure that they have adopted today, which is to make a statement in all but name and therefore deny the Opposition the opportunity of having knowledge of what is to be said?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Hon. Members must allow me to answer. It is in order to pursue such a procedure under our rules, as they stand at the moment, although it is unusual to answer quite so many questions. That is why I suggested that the matter should be agreed through the usual channels, and a resolution reached that would be to the convenience to both sides of the House. I must ask the Secretary of State to continue.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I will——

Mr. Wareing: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will take it later. The hon. Gentleman must sit down.

Mr. Clarke: I will accept your ruling, Mr. Speaker, and resume. I gather that we are now in a mixture of answering questions and making a statement. Of course it would have been possible to make a statement, but the effect of that would have been to take more time out of the Opposition's Supply day. It would also have deprived the hon. Members who have tabled questions of a reply to them.

Some 199 NHS units have expressed an interest in NHS trust status. They represent a wide range of units, single hospitals, groups of hospitals and non-hospital facilities. I understand that about 60 or 70 of the units that have expressed an interest in trust status are likely to submit applications in the first wave. The first three applications from Mersey region were handed to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health yesterday. When applications are submitted, I shall direct regional health authorities to have public consultations on the applications and to report the results to me.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Why should we put up with this sharp practice? It is disgraceful.

Mr. Wareing *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must sit down.

Mr. Clarke: Regional health authorities will decide who should be consulted, taking account of the facilities offered by the proposed trusts and the patients served. However, we made it clear that those consulted should include the health authorities and family health service authorities concerned, staff of the proposed trusts, general practitioners and the local public. I shall decide whether to accept applications on the basis of consideration of the application documents, comments received by regional health authorities in local consultation and any other relevant information. No group will have a veto over my decision, which will be based on my assessment of whether, in the light of all relevant factors, NHS trust status for a particular unit will benefit NHS patients in that locality. We have made it clear that the cost of implementation of the NHS review will not be met from—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is absolutely intolerable and more bad behaviour on the part of the hon. Members concerned. They know the situation perfectly well. The Secretary of State must be allowed to finish his statement. *[Interruption.]* I know that it is not a statement, but has the right hon. and learned Gentleman finished his remarks?

Mr. Clarke: The establishment of NHS trusts will represent a major step in improving the quality of care available to NHS patients, and I welcome the enthusiasm with which groups of managers and clinicians have been working on preparing their applications.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That was a very long answer.

Mr. Wareing: You allowed it.

Mr. Speaker: Allowed? The hon. Member knows perfectly well that my position has been made clear. The Government have a right under our existing rules to do what they have done. It is for the usual channels to consult on this matter. That they have broken down is very serious, but it is not my responsibility. The hon. Member is a member of the Whips Office, and he should know.

Mr. David Nicholson: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for that comprehensive reply. Does he acknowledge that these reforms must be justified by the assurance of better services to patients? In particular, will he confirm that one of the advantages of the reforms will be that NHS trusts will be free from interference from such people as Chris Wright, known as "the prat in the hat"? He is a former parliamentary Labour candidate and a Labour appointee to Croydon health authority, who is under a life ban from Crystal Palace football club and was one of the ring leaders of the hooliganism in Sardinia last month.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Just because there has been a very long statement, hon. Members must not abuse the House by asking very long questions, because that is just as bad.

Mr. Clarke: If Mr. Wright had succeeded in his aim of being elected as a Labour Member of Parliament, he

would have felt quite at home in the demonstrations that we have just seen of Labour's approach to matters of consultation on NHS trust status.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend that the only basis for judging applications for national health status, self-governing status or any other reforms is whether or not they are likely to lead—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must warn the House that the next action I shall take will be to suspend the sitting until right hon. and hon. Members have calmed down. That will take even more time out of the Opposition Supply day. Therefore, I am reluctant to do that.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: If I am right in believing that the services provided by trust hospitals will be effectively by contract with the district health authority acting on behalf of the national health authority, and if, on advice—for example, from their own medical or surgical faculties—such hospitals want to provide additional services such as heart surgery, as they wanted to do in Nottingham but were denied by the regional health authority, will they have that kind of independence?

Mr. Clarke: Those hospitals, like all other hospitals——

Mr. Faulds: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I will take points of order afterwards.

Mr. Faulds: On a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not taking points of order now, and I will not be bullied by the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds).

Mr. Faulds: This is quite disgraceful.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I order the hon. Member to resume his seat.

Mr. Faulds: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am not having this.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Harry Barnes.—*[Interruption.]* Order. I suspend the sitting for 10 minutes until this matter is sorted out. This is an intolerable breakdown of the usual channels. I ask them immediately to get together to sort out this matter.

Grave disorder having arisen in the House, MR. SPEAKER, *pursuant to Standing Order No. 45 (Power of Mr. Speaker to adjourn House or suspend sitting) suspended the sitting for 10 minutes.*

Sitting suspended at 3.54 pm.

On resuming—

Mr. Speaker: I understand that the usual channels have now had an opportunity to discuss the matter. The Government have applied to make a statement about it tomorrow. Of course I shall ensure that those hon. Members listed on the Order Paper for linked questions today will be called on that statement. It is now in the best interests of the House that we move on.

Mr. Robin Cook: May I briefly welcome——

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): On a point of order——

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman may be seeking to make a point of order, but I did not call him.

Mr. Douglas: Why are you always——

Mr. Speaker: I did not call the hon. Gentleman. Please sit down.

Mr. Cook: May I welcome your statement, Mr. Speaker, which provides a sensible way of proceeding this afternoon? This exchange, and the outcome, represent an important defence of the rights of this place.

Mr. Douglas: I trust, Mr. Speaker, that the unfortunate precedent that you tried to establish of making an answer to a question a quasi statement——

Mr. Speaker: I must ask the hon. Gentleman to sit down, please, while I explain to him what happened. It is not for me to grant leave to answer questions at the end of Question Time or even statements; that is entirely for the Government. At lunch time, when I heard about the large number of questions to be answered at the end of Question Time, I immediately sought to discover whether it had been agreed between the usual channels. I was assured, after some negotiations, that it had been arranged. As I understand it, that information was incorrect; but it is nothing to do with me.

Mr. Douglas: During the interchange subsequent to the Secretary of State trying to give an answer to a question, you, Mr. Speaker, with great respect, indicated that you were going to take answers to questions as a quasi statement. I trust that we start de novo and that what you said is expunged from any scintilla of precedent of the House.

Mr. Speaker: I was merely seeking to be helpful to the House. I am not part of the usual channels; perhaps it is a pity that I am not. I was trying to see how it might be possible to get on with the business.

Mr. Faulds: I am most regretful that I had to cross swords so noisily with you, Mr. Speaker, but may I say in defence of you that it is quite clear from what has transpired that you were misled by the Government into thinking that there was an agreement when there was no agreement between the two parties? The proceedings went ahead because of the usual deceitfulness of Ministers.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I was not misled; I was perhaps misinformed.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: It is fair to say that you, Mr. Speaker, and the House were let down by the fact that the usual channels did not function as well as they should have done. That involves all of us; there were distinct misunderstandings on both sides. It was only just before 2.30 pm when I was warned that there was any doubt about this procedure, and I thought that I would resolve it by the first explanation that I gave. Plainly, that was a mistake and we all proceeded on mutual misunderstanding. The usual channels have now worked very well by restoring order and allowing a statement to be made in the usual way tomorrow.

Dr. Cunningham: This place operates by consent and can operate in no other way. When consent and agreement are trampled on by a Government determined to impose their will on the House regardless—*[Interruption.]*—oh, yes, regardless of whether there is agreement, breakdowns

[Dr. Cunningham]

occur. I hope that we can now proceed with the business and deal with this important matter in the appropriate way with a statement tomorrow.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &C.

Ordered,

That the draft Air Navigation (Noise Certification) Order 1990 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c. *[Mr. Patnick.]*

Former Cabinet Ministers (Interests)

4.8 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to prohibit former Cabinet Ministers, within a period of five years after leaving office, from accepting any employment with or payment from a company which was privatised while they were members of the Cabinet, or which had a commercial or contractual relationship with a Department of State for which or in which they had Ministerial responsibility.

There is considerable unease that Cabinet Ministers can, shortly after leaving office, join companies that were privatised when they were in the Cabinet and, in some cases, when they were the Ministers who carried through the privatisation measures.

My Bill would exclude former Cabinet Ministers from being involved in such companies for five years and would ensure that former Ministers would not be able, for the same period, to join any company that had a commercial or contractual relationship with the Departments for which they had had ministerial responsibility. That would be a fair way of dealing with the issue and I can see no reason why anyone should think otherwise.

The right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbitt) joined the board of British Telecom in November 1987. As Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, he had been responsible for privatising that company three years previously. The right hon. Gentleman then became Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and chairman of the Conservative party. He left the Government in June 1987.

The right hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker) became a director of British Gas on 2 June this year, having left the Government just a few weeks earlier on 30 April. British Gas was privatised in 1986 when the right hon. Gentleman was Secretary of State for Energy, after which he became Secretary of State of Wales.

I have written to all these right hon. Gentlemen to say that I would be mentioning their names. The right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) joined the board of National Freight. He had been Secretary of State for Transport until a year before the privatisation of that company, he had been in the Cabinet when the company was privatised and he left office only this year.

Lord Young was Secretary of State for Trade and Industry until 24 July last year. As we know, he has become the new chairman of Cable and Wireless. While he was Secretary of State, Lord Young granted Cable and Wireless a personal communication licence, which caused a great deal of controversy at the time. British Telecom, for example, said at the time that the Minister had unduly favoured Cable and Wireless. I cannot, of course, say whether the accusation was right. I want to remind the House of the date of his leaving the Government. Lord Young resigned as Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on 24 July last year. The previous day, *The Sunday Times* carried an article stating that Lord Young might well choose to go to Cable and Wireless to succeed Lord Sharp as chairman. I cannot say whether Lord Young will now join the board of British Aerospace.

There are guidelines for ex-civil servants. Although I believe that those guidelines could be tougher and could be implemented more vigorously, at least they exist. The guidelines state that on promotion to grade three, a senior civil servant must sign a notice saying that he has read the rules, which state that it will be necessary,

"to obtain the assent of the Government before accepting within two years of resignation or retirement offers of employment in business and other bodies and in semi-public organisations brought into being by the Government or Parliament."

I believe that the period should be increased to five years and that the rules should be applied more vigorously.

If it is necessary for former senior civil servants to sign such a declaration and for such guidelines to exist the same I believe should apply to former Cabinet Ministers. Why should there be a difference? Bearing in mind what has happened recently, there is all the more justification for changing the rules or the law in this matter. The Bill would of course apply to all former Cabinet Ministers.

Several names of former Labour Ministers have been bandied around by Conservative Members and we may hear some of them today if the Bill is opposed. Lord Robens has been mentioned. Labour Members may not be the best people to defend some of those named who have changed their political allegiance. Lord Robens, however, was appointed by a Conservative Government to be chairman of the National Coal Board in 1961. The industry had been nationalised in 1946 and Lord Robens had been out of office for 10 years.

Lord Marsh became chairman of British Rail in 1971. The railways had been taken into public ownership in 1948. Lord Marsh was appointed by a Conservative Government and, as was the case with all the appointments of former Labour Ministers that I have mentioned, his appointment could have been debated in this House. Those appointments were subject to public accountability.

Lord Glenamara, formerly Ted Short, has also been mentioned. It is true that he became chairman of Cable and Wireless in 1976 and that he had been Postmaster General, but he had left that office in 1968—eight years before he became chairman of a public concern.

I hope that we shall not be told that very few letters have been received on this subject and that there is, therefore, no need to take any action. How many letters had hon. Members received before it was decided to set up the Register of Members' Interests? It was recognised that there was an abuse; something was wrong, and we had to put our house in order. That is why the register was set up; it was not a question of waiting for letters to be received. How many letters were received before the guidelines for ex-senior civil servants were established? Very few, I imagine. Government and Opposition alike recognised that it was wrong that former senior civil servants should immediately on retirement join companies with which, in many cases, they had negotiated while in public office.

We have recently been witnessing what I would describe as the politics of the pork barrel. Such practices are indefensible. The very idea that a Minister can privatise a company and then, shortly after leaving office, become the director or chairman of that company, is unacceptable to the people of Britain.

The right hon. Member for Chingford wrote a piece in the *Evening Standard* defending himself. I doubt whether many of his colleagues would be too keen to rush into print to defend him. It is interesting to note that, three days later, there appeared in the same newspaper a cartoon, which showed the board of a company waiting to start a meeting. One of the directors was on his feet, saying, "I am very sorry. We have just had a telephone message from the chairman. He has not yet quite resigned from the Government." That illustrates rightly the cynical attitude that many people take to what has been happening.

Perhaps we shall be accused of mischief making and told that this is just an Opposition ploy. My response to that is simple: end the indefensible practices and the politics of the pork barrel and we shall not have any mischief to make over this.

I have no illusions. I know that even if my Bill is carried today, it is not likely that, in a Tory-dominated House of Commons, the Cabinet will give me the time necessary to make progress on the Bill, although I should add that if I were given parliamentary time, I should be willing to listen carefully in Committee to arguments in support of any amendments tabled by Conservative Members. But, as I said, I have no illusions. I have merely put down a marker by highlighting the practices of the Tory Government and some of their former Ministers. I have illustrated a need for a change in the rules, and, although I know that it will probably be a Labour Government who introduce the reforms that I have advocated, there is no doubt in my mind that what I propose is required by the public.

Even Conservative newspapers that have carried editorials on the subject—papers which rarely, if ever, support the Labour party—have concluded that what has been happening is unacceptable. In my view, it is also indefensible and I therefore ask the House to give me permission to bring in my Bill.

4.17 pm

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): First, let me make it clear that I have no personal interest in this matter. I had entertained hopes of high office, but when, in that connection, I saw my name on the front page of *The Sunday Times* my hopes were instantly dashed. I therefore have no interest in the matter.

My initial reaction—like that of many hon. Members—was to dismiss a Bill brought in by the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), whom Lord Wilson of Rievaulx once described as the silliest man in the House of Commons. Most of us would not necessarily wish to detain the House on such a Bill. To be absolutely honest, I believe that Lord Wilson was being characteristically kind. The hon. Gentleman may be silly: I do not know. A lot of hon. Members on both sides of the House might just qualify for that title. But I think that the Bill is complete humbug. It is appallingly sanctimonious and it is typical of what we have come to expect from the hon. Gentleman.

My right hon. Friends can all look after themselves. I do not think that my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) and my noble Friends in the other place need any help from me.

As we are in the business of relating a few histories, I thought that I might relate one or two myself. Forgive me. I do not want to go over the ground that the hon. Gentleman covered when he talked about people such as Lord Glenamara, but he was selective in what he said. It is indeed true that the former Ted Short, who, incidentally, is a former deputy leader of the Labour party, appears, if I am correct, to have gained his extensive industrial experience as the headmaster of Princess Louise secondary school in Blyth. That was pre-LMS—local management of schools—so goodness knows how he would fare now.

Having relinquished that role, Lord Glenamara became chairman of a company called Cable and Wireless. On the

[Mr. Steve Norris]

basis of his experience, it may be true that, as was alleged at the time, he did not know his cable from his wireless. Whether or not that is true, it is true that Lord Dick Marsh joined the board of British Railways. However, what we should reflect on is that the noble Lord, after ministerial experience at the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Technology, the Ministry of Power and the Department of Transport, became chairman of the British Railways Board. As the hon. Gentleman singularly failed to mention, he went on to hold, by my calculation, 15 other chairmanships and major directorships and is, incidentally, still, as I understand it, an adviser to Nissan, which broadened my understanding.

We were told of Lord Alf Robens——

Mr. Winnick: A member of the Tory party.

Mr. Norris: Yes, indeed. That is absolutely right. Lord Alf Robens, having been Under-Secretary at the Ministry of Fuel and Power, became chairman of the National Coal Board. However, Lord Robens was a director of Vickers and of Johnson Matthey. Does not every picture tell a story? He was also a director of a company called AMI, whose business is private hospitals. My goodness me, as far as I am aware, that is the same Lord Alf Robens.

Then, of course, there is Lord Eric Varley, the man who landed the taxpayer with £1·6 billion worth of guarantees under the Varley-Marshall plan. Having had a spell at the Ministry of Technology and then as Secretary of State for Energy and Secretary of State for Industry, he went on to become chairman and chief executive of Coalite. That is a rather useful juxtaposition—energy, industry, and then the board of Coalite.

Also, sadly, there was the late Lord Frank Beswick. Having been Parliamentary Secretary at the Ministry of Civil Aviation in the Labour Government, he went on to become chairman of British Aerospace—useful—and special adviser to the chairman of the British Aircraft Corporation. Then there is Edmund Dell. I delved and I found Dell. Having been a Minister in the unlamented Department of Economic Affairs, he became Minister of Technology.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I do not take points of order in the middle of ten-minute Bills. I shall take it at the end.

Mr. Norris: Practically every one of those gentlemen is distinguished by having been in the Ministry of Technology. It is extraordinary that, even now, none of us can remember what the Ministry of Technology was supposed to do or indeed did, but they have all been Ministers there. Edmund Dell went on not to run a private hospital, but to be chairman of a merchant bank, which is all jolly good stuff.

I do not want to confine my remarks to past Members of the House, because we have enough evidence of current useful industrial interchange on Opposition Benches at the moment. We have directors of insurance companies, airlines, radio and television companies, computer companies and publishing companies. I do not have time to mention them all, but I have the names if my hon. Friends would like them. It seems to be a classic exercise in, "Don't do as I do, do as I say." I suspect that that saying motivates many of the Labour party's policies.

The entry in the Register of Members' Interests for the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone), who is a director of a publishing company called Localaction Ltd., says:

"It is a company formed to cover the publication of my book and any other major writing."

What an interesting thought. I see a seamless stream of writers, Nietzsche, Marx, Lenin, Socrates, Livingstone—that has a certain ring about it.

Eighteen Opposition Members are paid advisers to trade unions and to commerce. I note that the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) is in his usual place and I am sure that he would defend his role as adviser to the Association of University Teachers, as the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) would defend his role as an adviser to NATFHE—the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education—and the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) would defend her role as adviser to the Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association. All would say that they were entirely objective in the advice they gave and that if they were Ministers in a future Labour Government and in charge of the Department of Education and Science their previous jobs would not, of course, have the slightest influence on their judgment. Why on earth does the hon. Member for Walsall, North argue that the same is not the case for those right hon. and noble Gentlemen on both sides of the House who have gone on to give industry the benefit of their experience?

The real truth is simple—it is the old politics of envy again. The hon. Member for Walsall, North is distinguished, so far as I can determine, by two things—one, that he has never done a real job in his life and, secondly, that every year he loses the Association of Professional, Executive, Clerical and Computer Staff—APEX—elections to Roy Grantham.

The Bill reveals a simple truth about the Labour party. No one who is seriously involved in business would pay for any Member of the Labour party to do any job other than chopping sticks. No Opposition Member, including the shadow trade and industry team and the shadow Treasury team, has the slightest idea of the requirements of management. The Labour party cannot see enterprise and success without wanting to attack them—it does not seek to foster them. When industry and commerce look around for talent, energy and entrepreneurial skill it is no accident that they find those qualities in overwhelming abundance on the Conservative Benches.

Every other country in Europe recognises the interchange between the Government and industry. They appreciate that it is vital, healthy and necessary to sustain industrial and commercial growth. That also leads to a greater understanding in national Parliaments of industrial and commercial issues.

I believe that we should treat the Bill with the contempt it deserves. It is a typical exercise in humbug and the politics of envy. It has no place in logic and I invite my hon. Friends to treat it with the contempt it so richly deserves.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 19 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business), and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: Who will prepare and bring in the Bill?

Mr. Winnick: We have just witnessed a shocking abuse of our procedures. The hon. Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) is a twit, because he has not answered my argument.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is in order for hon. Members to speak against a ten-minute Bill, provided that they register their objection. It is not always necessary to have a vote. That practice is enshrined in our Standing Orders, but it might be as well for the Select Committee on Procedure to consider it for the future.

Mr. Winnick: I am most grateful to you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Withdraw the word "twit".

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have heard worse expressions in the House.

Mr. Winnick: It is mild I agree, but I am a moderate chap.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. David Winnick, Mr. Andrew F. Bennett, Mr. George J. Buckley, Mr. Terry Davis, Mr. Don Dixon, Mr. Frank Cook, Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, Mr. Doug Hoyle, Ms. Joyce Quin, Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse, Mr. Martin Redmond and Mr. Alan Williams.

FORMER CABINET MINISTERS (INTERESTS)

Mr. David Winnick accordingly presented a Bill to prohibit former Cabinet Ministers, within a period of five years after leaving office, from accepting any employment with or payment from a company which was privatised while they were members of the Cabinet, or which had a commercial or contractual relationship with a Department of State for which or in which they had Ministerial responsibility: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 20 July and to be printed. [Bill 176.]

Mr. Speaker: I know it is nearly the start of the summer holidays, but we should contain ourselves until the end of the month.

Opposition Day

[17TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Schools

4.29 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): I beg to move,

That this House is profoundly alarmed at the crisis in the nation's schools and the collapse in teacher morale, the serious problems of retention and recruitment, the deteriorating state of school buildings, and the under-funding of the system; condemns Her Majesty's Government for its lack of ambition and leadership for the nation's young, for pushing through changes which are adding to the crisis, for the fact that one-third of children are getting a raw deal, and that fewer young people stay on in full-time education than in any major competitor country; and calls for action now to raise the standards of education and to invest properly in the nation's future.

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister. A large number of hon. Members wish to participate in this debate and, sadly, as a result of our late start, it will be impossible to call them all. I shall be able to call many more if speeches from both the Front Benches, and also the Back Benches, are brief.

Mr. Straw: This late start owes nothing to the endeavours of the Opposition and everything to the attempts by Conservative Members to sabotage an Opposition day yet again.

Across the country there is a rising sense of crisis in our schools. It is a crisis recognised in all areas by people of all political persuasions. It is a crisis for which the Government are overwhelmingly responsible. Some 11 years ago, this Administration came to power promising to promote higher standards of achievement. Similar pledges were made in 1983. The 1987 Conservative manifesto stated:

"The time has now come for school reform."

We do not know how many votes were garnered on the promise of those so-called reforms. We do know what has happened. Ill-considered, meritricious and often contradictory changes have turned out to be a lethal cocktail which has brought the school system to a lower point than at any time since the war.

The Government's prospectus for the system has clearly failed. The Secretary of State knows that. In April, *The Independent on Sunday* stated:

"Many of the school and college changes introduced by Kenneth Baker when he was Secretary of State for Education are falling apart. His successor, John MacGregor, is increasingly preoccupied with a damage limitation exercise."

The scale of the crisis caused by that damage can scarcely be exaggerated. Every day, I receive letters and reports from head teachers, governors and parents, worried sick about their children's education. Those representations come more often from traditional Conservative areas than from Labour's heartlands.

The chairman of governors of a large and successful secondary school in Cheltenham wrote to me:

"the supply of teachers"—

even in her area—

"is becoming such a problem that the state education service is under threat."

I have a letter from the headmaster of Hyde primary school in Hampshire, which has no physical education

[Mr. Straw]

hall, kitchen, dining area or playing fields and has outside toilets for boys. The headmaster said that inadequate funding under the local management for schools formulae was causing him to "cut back staffing". That point is underlined in a survey published today by the National Association of School Masters/Union of Women Teachers. It shows that well over 3,000 jobs are likely to be lost as a direct result of the introduction of the local management of schools.

School buildings across the country are in an appalling state. There is a £3 billion backlog. *The Bucks Herald* led its issue of 7 June with the headline, "Crumbling Schools Crisis" and quoted the county architect, John Stewart, as saying:

"We are rapidly reaching the point . . . where we can no longer keep pace with the progressive dilapidation of the buildings under our control."

Saving money, making do and mend, is a constant theme of the reports and letters that I receive. *The Mail on Sunday* led its edition of 27 May with the headline:

"The Scandal of Our Schools."

It stated:

"Britain's State education system is in danger of collapse," according to disturbing new research commissioned by the National Foundation for Educational Research. It continued:

"Only huge contributions from parents are saving schools from a complete breakdown."

The research that the paper quoted found that one third of all money spent in schools on books and equipment came from parents, who were providing nearly £40 million for primary schools alone.

What a mockery all that makes of parental choice, of which we hear so much from the Secretary of State. The choice facing many parents is no choice at all—the "choice" of paying up a second time for essentials for their children's education, which they thought they had already paid for once through taxation.

The very principle of free state education is being whittled away by the Government. For example, what kind of choice have the parents of children at Crawford primary school in Southwark? One class there has had four teachers this term, and the children were told a couple of days ago that they would have to be sent home until September. There are overwhelming teacher shortages, because teachers' salaries are insufficient. Some secretaries in the area are paid more than they are, and the Government have poll tax capped the local education authority.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that when I visited a London school when Labour was in office I found that one class had had the misfortune to have seven teachers in one term? We all agree that it is extremely difficult to teach in London, and that is one of the reasons why the Government have introduced education reforms. No one condones the present position; however, the problems were infinitely worse under Labour, and were not solved under its Administration either.

Mr. Straw: The hon. Lady is wrong. As anyone involved in the education system knows, the position was infinitely better under Labour.

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): Does my hon. Friend agree that it is an appalling indictment of the system that parents have had to take over and teach children at Crawford primary school? They have been told that otherwise the children will have to be sent home, and there will be no more schooling for them until next term, at the beginning of September. Have not the Government been appallingly complacent in ignoring the problems of teacher shortages in London, especially south-east London?

Mr. Straw: I agree with my hon. Friend. The Secretary of State for Education and Science has shown abject complacency: he has washed his hands of responsibility for what is happening, not only in inner London but in many other parts of Britain where he is seeking to ensure that authorities spend less than they do now. He is more concerned about the level of poll tax bills than about ensuring that children receive a decent education.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): The hon. Gentleman is making a case for massive extra expenditure. How much would he spend if he were Secretary of State for Education and Science, and why is the Leader of the Opposition doing so much to suggest that a Labour Government would not spend those vast sums?

Mr. Straw: I was hoping to quote the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) later in my speech. In a fine speech at Chatham House, he said that there must be an increase of one third in spending on state education. He caustically asked any of his hon. Friends who might challenge that policy whether any of them, or their children, had ever been inside a state school.

My answer to the hon. Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) is that, just as the Leader of the House cannot say what tax rates will be—even on the day before the Budget—I cannot say exactly how much we shall spend when we are in government, in two years' time. With the backing of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition, I can say for sure that a Labour Government will spend more on education and training, because it is essential for the economy of this country and its survival that we start investing in the nation's future, instead of undermining it.

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for reading my speech—let alone quoting from it—but I fear that he may have inadvertently failed to give the House the full flavour of what I said. I said that I was in favour of increased spending on education, but emphatically not in favour of putting any money at all into the failed education philosophy represented by the Labour party.

Mr. Straw: I know what the hon. Gentleman said, but I was going to send the hon. Gentleman a few tracts so that he would realise that we are thinking along the same lines.

So tight is the financial squeeze on primary schools that, on average, they are given less than the cost of four Mars bars a week to spend on books and educational equipment for their children—a point eloquently made by the president of the National Association of Head Teachers.

Some reports of school responses to the squeeze have a grotesque, pathetic flavour. *The Daily Telegraph* reported on 23 June that the Chilvers Coton first school in

Nuneaton saved money by cutting paper towels in half but had stopped the practice after two pupils had contracted hepatitis.

These accounts of life in the English schools system in 1990 are confirmed by a succession of official reports. The Government-appointed teachers' pay committee in its report in February said that teacher morale was lower even than in 1989-90. That was also recognised by the Select Committee. There was also a stark message from the teachers' pay committee that the pay award forced through the House three weeks ago would lead to a real pay cut for almost every teacher.

Some 50 per cent. of newly trained teachers leave the profession within five years. The proportion of graduates entering teacher training has halved in eight years and at Cambridge university it halved in a year last year. The Secretary of State denies that there is a problem. He held a press conference on Friday to announce the success of recruitment advertising by Saatchi and Saatchi. He is so complacent about teachers and teaching that in the litany of self-congratulation in his amendment there is not a single mention of teachers.

If it is all so good out there, will the Secretary of State now guarantee to every parent that no child will be without a properly qualified, permanent teacher in front of the class in September? I invite the Secretary of State to answer that question. He does not respond, so I shall repeat the question. I am asking for a simple reply. He says that there is no problem and proclaims the success of Saatchi and Saatchi's advertising. Will he guarantee to every parent that no child will be without a properly qualified, permanent teacher in front of the class in September?

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Straw: No, I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman. I am waiting for the Secretary of State to answer my question. The Secretary of State has been given two opportunities to reply and has failed to do so.

The most damning part of the Government's record is the report from Her Majesty's senior chief inspector of schools which stated that, in terms of educational standards, 30 per cent. of pupils—over 2 million—were getting a raw deal. What an indictment of the Government after 11 years in power. The Secretary of State's amendment refers to the local management of schools and the national curriculum.

Mr. Greenway *rose*——

Mr. Straw: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman, but, before doing so, I remind Conservative Members that, thanks to the Government, this is a short debate.

Mr. Greenway: The hon. Gentleman's dismissal of the efforts of teachers and his slighting of their efforts will be bitterly resented in common rooms throughout Britain. *[Interruption.]* I hope that the hon. Gentleman will have the courtesy to listen. I know that basically he is a courteous man. When he and I first met we were attacking wicked cuts in education by the Labour Government of the day. At that time he had the courage to stand up to his party, but he seems to have lost that courage. The hon. Gentleman will remember that in 1976 there was such a shortage of teachers that those of us who were running schools had to scour the streets in an effort to find people. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Gentleman must respect the Chair and I hope that he will do that in future. Interventions must be brief.

Mr. Straw: I made a mistake in giving way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I distinctly heard the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway), whom you have just rebuked, say that you deserved it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I did not hear the remark, but I saw the hon. Gentleman making gestures that were clearly discourteous to the Chair. I hope that I shall not have to endure a repetition of that.

Mr. Straw: The Secretary of State's amendment refers to the local management of schools and the national curriculum. In both cases the Government have taken a good idea and nearly murdered it. Centrally dictated formulae for funding which take no proper account of a school's circumstances are barmy. A national core curriculum could and should be a guarantee of education entitlement for all children. There is a role for testing and assessment, and it is to diagnose children's strengths and weaknesses, and to provide information to parents and teachers on children's progress and on the performance of schools. However, Ministers have allowed this national curriculum and the formal testing associated with it to get completely out of hand.

On Friday the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science, the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth), spoke about "wieldy and intimidating tests" which the Government have imposed by way of a pilot scheme on about 400 schools. He said that those tests for seven-year-olds would have to be reduced. Apparently even the Prime Minister has had second thoughts. In April she told *The Sunday Telegraph* that she wondered whether the Government were "doing it right" on the national curriculum. The answer to the Prime Minister's question is that her Government are doing it wrong and, despite the Secretary of State's blandishments, they continue to do it wrong.

In a thinly disguised attack on his predecessor, now the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Secretary of State announced in February

"measures to cut the burden of paperwork on schools caused by the Education Reform Act."

He claimed that that measure would save 150,000 sheets of printed paper. That sounds impressive, but it works out at just six sheets per school. It pales into insignificance compared with the 1,438 sheets of paper which almost every teacher has received and has to absorb under the national curriculum. That compares with more than half a billion sheets of paper which the system as a whole now has to digest.

The day after his damning report of the state of English education the senior chief inspector of schools gave an interview to *The Daily Telegraph*. He described the national curriculum and the local management of schools as a gamble. He said that in the short term it would exacerbate

"teacher shortages and resourcing difficulties."

[Mr. Straw]

He was right. Ministers have been gambling with our children's education. Their behaviour is made all the more culpable by the fact that the spin of the wheel, the gamble, is always with other people's children and never with their own.

When the Opposition say that most Ministers have educated their children in the private sector the discomfort of Conservative Members is patently obvious. In February *The Sunday Times* said that, of 21 Cabinet members with children, 20 had sent their children to private schools at an average cost of a place today of £4,200 a year. That is twice the average of £1,900 in the state system. All three of the Secretary of State's children went to private school, as did both children of the previous Secretary of State.

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East) *rose*——

Mr. Straw: No, I will not give way.

If those Ministers who sent their children to private schools were to apply the same policies and financial constraints to private schools as they apply to the schools which educate 95 per cent. of the country's children, they would be beyond reproach. In truth, they apply a double standard of breathtaking proportions which so mocks those in the maintained sector as to be immoral.

The national curriculum applies by law to state education but not to private schools. Rigid formula funding is imposed on state schools, but, under the assisted places scheme, no formula applies to state funding of private schools. The actual costs of up to £7,000 per day place are paid wherever they are incurred. Local authorities are poll charge capped for spending £1,900 per pupil while the state funds fees in private schools at two or three times that level per pupil. The standard spending assessments for education are set so low by the Secretary of State that local education authorities would have to cut millions from their budgets and sack thousands of teachers to get anywhere near those levels. However, private schools are able to raise fees well above the level of inflation.

Mr. Paice: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Straw: No.

Pay increases for teachers in state schools are held below the level of inflation, while private schools and city technology colleges are able to pay more to get the best. Private schools can use their influence to raise millions of pounds for laboratories and equipment while state schools are starved of cash. The conclusion to be drawn from such double dealing is that, like other people, Ministers want the best for their children but they believe that they can have that only if they pay for the best: for small classes; well-equipped laboratories; well-maintained buildings; and well-paid teachers. But it is different for other people's children. Ministers claim that they can get the best in larger classes and crumbling buildings, with too little equipment, too few books, and a demotivated and underpaid teaching force.

Another consequence is that by boycotting the maintained system Ministers send out a clear message that they lack serious personal commitment to state education and that they are as profoundly ignorant of its achievements as they are of what needs to be done to sustain and improve it.

Mr. Paice: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Straw: I have already explained to the hon. Gentleman, although I realise that he does not like it, that I am not going to give way any more because of lack of time. He should make his own speech. Perhaps he might complain to the Government Whips about their attempts to sabotage this debate earlier.

The Sunday Times recorded in February that the Secretary of State sent his son, who is now grown up, to Highgate school, which is on the border of the London boroughs of Camden and Haringey. Fees at that school amount to more than £4,000 per pupil per year, and many of its pupils are subsidised by the state through the assisted places scheme.

How can the Secretary of State justify poll tax capping Camden and Haringey local education authorities, which are spending £1,200 less per child in their charge than he thought it right to spend on his child? Would he be happy to have his child educated with the level of resources that the Government have dictated is sufficient for poll tax capped authorities to spend in the north, the north-west, Yorkshire, Derbyshire, Greater London and Avon?

I hope that the Secretary of State will now respond to a second question, because his amendment claims that there have been

"lasting improvements in standards in schools"

in the past 11 years. If, as the Secretary of State claims, 11 years of Tory Government have led to lasting improvements in the state system, is that system now good enough for him to have his child educated by it? I invite the Secretary of State to reply to this critical question about whether the Government apply one standard or two to the education of our children. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] For the second time today, we have seen the Secretary of State refuse to answer questions—first about whether he could guarantee that every child in a state school will have a teacher in September; and secondly about whether, after 11 years of Tory Government, the state system is sufficiently good to educate his children or those of his Cabinet colleagues. What a lack of confidence that displays in the system over which he and his colleagues have presided for 11 years.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): My hon. Friend may not have heard several Tory Members accusing him, from a sedentary position, of personalising the debate and of attacking only the Secretary of State. Does my hon. Friend realise that 250 Tory Members have been to public school and received private education? As a section of society, they are not prepared to give our children the same facilities, the same pupil-teacher ratios and the same start in life that 250 of them received.

Mr. Straw: I entirely accept what my hon. Friend says.

Mr. Paice: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Straw: No. I have given way more to Conservative Members than to my hon. Friends.

By any serious international standards, the state to which the Government have reduced the education system is a disgrace. "National scandal" was the phrase used by Derek Jewell, the chairman of the Headmasters'

conference of private schools, to describe state funding of the system which, as a proportion of national wealth, has declined in the past 11 years. We need a Government with a clear ambition for the nation's young people, ready to set targets for raising academic performance and the percentage of young people staying on at school, with clear mechanisms for delivering those targets. We need a Government committed to investing more in young people's education, and equally committed—by example, leadership and systematic appraisal of performance—to ensuring that we get more out of that investment and end the enormous and unacceptable variations in performance between otherwise similar schools. We would get all that from a Labour Government, but the Secretary of State has no ambition and no leadership: he is a Treasury placement so uninterested in the effect on children's lives of the policy to which he is a party that he could not even bring himself to meet education representatives from poll tax capped authorities.

Incredibly, instead of using demographic decline to secure a once-in-a-lifetime boost to the staying-on rate after 16, without substantial extra cost, the Secretary of State in his public expenditure White Paper plans to cut 80,000 places in full-time education for 16 to 19-year-olds, and he stands supinely by while the Secretary of State for Employment cuts nearly £300 million from the budget for training young people.

As ever, as the Government flounder, Ministers start to blame each other.

"Senior Conservatives are alarmed by Labour's growing lead in the polls over the government's education policies," reported *The Independent on Sunday* on 18 June.

"The shift of opinion in Labour's favour has been greater than on any other issue. . .The Prime Minister and Kenneth Baker blame John MacGregor the Secretary of State for Education for failing to promote Government changes".

A month ago we learned from a report which has the fingerprints of the Conservative party chairman all over it that the Secretary of State was to be given a new public relations minder—a man called Robin Light—as Central Office was so worried about the Secretary of State's performance.

To add insult to injury, we read in yesterday's diary in *The Times* of an attempt to bail out the Secretary of State:

"Conceding that education is their weakest area, a number of Tory MPs say Mrs. Currie should join John MacGregor's team and add flair and excitement to a lacklustre department."

I do not wish to intrude on private grief, but the piece continued:

"MacGregor, who as agriculture minister had to take much of the flak over her salmonella-in-eggs gaffe, might suggest another description."

It also raised questions not only about the future of the Secretary of State but about that of the Minister of State and the Under-Secretary of State. Although Conservative Members may want them to go, we want them to stay, because every time they open their mouths they raise our lead in the polls.

In a catalogue of failure, few policies have failed so monumentally as opting-out. In 1987, the Prime Minister predicted that by the next election—which will be next year or the year after—most eligible schools would have opted out of local authority control. That would amount to thousands. The dice have been heavily loaded in favour of opted-out schools. The advice that the Department of Education and Science has issued to schools has been so biased that even the Tory-controlled Association of County Councils has protested. Despite that, not thousands, not hundreds but only 44 schools have opted out, with more in Tory-controlled than in Labour-controlled areas.

So the Prime Minister, who is pathologically obsessed about local education authorities, announced off the cuff to a conference 10 days ago that opting out is to be made easier, and that the local government finance system will be rigged so that poll tax can be reduced where schools opt out. When that emerged, the Secretary of State was reduced to getting his press officer to telephone journalists to tell them that there is no difference of opinion between him and the Prime Minister.

If there is no difference of opinion, will the Secretary of State tell us now, or in his speech, how the scheme for cutting the poll tax is to work, how the new arrangements for opting out are to work and how such further upheaval squares with a categorical undertaking that he gave in an interview on 9 March, that

"No new school reforms would be introduced by a Conservative government until 1994 at the earliest"?

That the centrepiece of the Government's answer to the educational challenges of the 1990s should be fiddled ballots for opting out is a mark of the mediocrity to which their education thinking has now been reduced.

It first dawned on this country towards the end of the last century that the rise of Germany as an industrial power had been built upon superior investment in education and training. Then other countries such as Japan, the United States, France and Italy overtook us. Our £20 billion trade deficit is paralleled by an even bigger deficit in the education and skills of our young people. If we are to compete as well as to give our young people their birthright, we must invest in their education and training. We need an end to the Government and an end to their wilful damage of our education service. We need a Government who are committed to a state education system, who use the system and who have real ambition for the nation's young. The only way to achieve that is to have a Labour Government.

4.59 pm

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. John MacGregor): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"congratulates the Government on its programme for securing further lasting improvements in standards in schools through its policies for the national curriculum; assessment and testing, increased parental choice, and greater autonomy for schools; notes increased recurrent and capital expenditure since 1979 in real terms per pupil of 40 per cent. and 13 per cent., respectively; notes widespread public support for the Government's reforms and welcomes the significant increase in staying on rates among 16 and 17-year-olds in the last two years and in the numbers going on to higher education which show the success of the Government's policies; and contrasts this inspiring programme with the failure of the Opposition to produce alternative proposals offering similar leadership for the nation's young.".

The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) made a profound speech. However, having listened to his speeches since I became Secretary of State, I am bound to say that they have three characteristics. First, the hon. Gentleman always uses the same material and it is getting pretty tired and trivial now. Secondly, his sole preoccupation seems to be to string together every negative quotation and every negative statistic that he can find—and they can be found

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in every country and in every education system—and by lumping them all together he seems to think that he is making some sort of contribution to the education debate. Let me tell him quite clearly that he is not. The picture that he gave today is unbalanced, incoherent and a travesty of what is happening in our schools.

Ms. Harman: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. MacGregor: We have heard that this is a short debate, but I shall give way just this once.

Ms. Harman: Is the Secretary of State aware that in my constituency alone six primary schools regularly send children home and that six and seven-year-olds go to school only to be told again that there is no teacher for them? What will the Secretary of State do to guarantee a decent education for Southwark children?

Mr. MacGregor: I shall come to that point in due course, because we have been doing a great deal. But it is a travesty to suggest that what happens in some schools in Southwark is typical of what is happening throughout the country.

The hon. Member for Blackburn completely failed to acknowledge the substantial progress that is being made. He has given no credit, please note, to the teachers for their many recent achievements. His sole intent is on black headlines and never mind the real story. He is the classical perpetual Opposition spokesman.

Thirdly, once again the hon. Gentleman has failed to answer the key question that has been put to him so often from the Conservative Benches—what would Labour actually spend? It is not enough for him to claim that resources are insufficient when his own policy document is long on platitudes, short on costs and takes refuge in those all pervasive words "as resources allow".

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): The Secretary of State uses those words.

Mr. MacGregor: I do not use those words. The Labour document is riddled with that phrase, and I know perfectly well why.

Mr. Griffiths: I remind the Secretary of State that when he appeared before the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts he referred to expanding education as soon as resources allowed on more than one occasion when he was challenged by Conservative Members. He can check the record. He used those words.

Mr. MacGregor: Of course, I believe in spending as resources allow, but the big difference is that, by its hints that it will spend more, the Labour party somehow pretends that that does not matter. But the record shows that this Government have been spending more on education than the previous Labour Government did because we have been improving the resources. That is the key difference. The question that the hon. Member for Blackburn never answers is what a Labour Government would spend. The answer is clear from his silence in every debate that we have had—not a penny more. That simple fact destroys the whole of his speech.

On an earlier occasion I described a decade of action under this Government: to improve education standards, to extend opportunity and choice and to improve the management of steadily increasing resources. I deal now with the ground that we have covered in the past year.

First, the programme for the national curriculum is well on target. There is absolutely no retreat. The House has approved programmes of study for English, maths, science and technology. We are completing work on geography, history and modern languages. The proposals are rigorous and have widespead support. We are taking practical decisions on arrangements for assessment, ensuring that they achieve their objectives in a workable way.

On assessment at seven, it is right to try different types of schemes. They are being piloted in 2 per cent. of schools. They are not in full application and they are not being reported. We shall be assessing the pilot schemes and I can assure the hon. Gentleman that I am determined that that assessment will be carried out in a workable way. But it must be real assessment, which improves standards and —I think the hon. Gentleman agrees with this—which achieves the results that we seek. We must strike the right balance and we shall do so.

In the classroom, Her Majesty's inspectors report excellent progress in the range and quality of work in the core subjects. There was not a word from the hon. Gentleman about that. There is a marked improvement in curriculum planning. I meet many teachers who are making good use of that national framework for exercising their professional skills. That has been a major programme of work and reform and it will continue to be so for some years ahead.

In April, all but a handful of local education authorities introduced schemes for local management of schools. That gives schools fairer shares of the education budget and much greater autonomy in the management of their affairs. In itself, it does not alter the total resources available, but it distributes them in a more open way, based on better and clearer criteria. One in eight schools already have delegated budgets. Next year, it will be one in four. That will reduce local bureaucracy. It has made schools and local education authorities more accountable and it has enhanced the position of head teachers and staff in line with changes in the pay structure that reward leadership and responsibility.

Ms. Harman: The Secretary of State does not know what he is talking about.

Mr. MacGregor: If the hon. Lady talks to teachers in schools that have piloted local management of schools during the past few years, they will tell her of the benefits.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. MacGregor: No, I shall not give way. I have already said that I would not give way again.

During the past school year we have lifted artificial limits on the places available in popular secondary schools. By this September the number of grant-maintained schools will have increased from 18 to 44. The number of applicants to those schools has risen sharply —by 40 per cent. on average this coming September. There has been a remarkable change in atmosphere and morale and proposals are already coming from another 16 schools.

The same goes for city technology colleges. Four more will open next term to join the four already in operation. Again, the demand from parents for places for their children in those city technology colleges is high.

I am not surprised that the hon. Member for Blackburn is so implacably opposed to that policy. He cannot bear the thought that those schools are proving so popular. The Labour party prefers the monopoly supply of a uniform product. It likes to think that it knows what is best for children and is determined to deprive parents of that choice.

We have set in hand a major programme of work towards further improving the standard and relevance of post-16 education and the proportion of young people who benefit from it. Those improvements start in schools. We have introduced the general certificate of secondary education and the technical and vocational education initiative. That has markedly increased standards of attainment.

In 1989, the proportion of candidates achieving grades A to C increased from the previous year by 3·5 percentage points to 46 per cent. It is encouraging that many more young people are staying on in full-time education. To listen to the hon. Gentleman, one would not think that such things had happened. He does not like hearing about them. He prefers to talk his way through them.

The first year after the introduction of the GCSE saw the participation of 16-year-olds rise to 52 per cent. In the second year, 1989-90, provisional figures suggest that as many as 56 per cent. of 16-year-olds are now engaged in full-time education. Provisional figures from the largest examining body, the Associated Examining Board, suggest that the number taking A and AS examinations is likely to be the highest ever even though there are fewer pupils in the relevant age group. All of that is working through to substantially higher numbers going into higher education —more than 1 million students now compared with 750,000 in 1979. The number is increasing markedly year by year, with an increase of about 10 per cent. in the past year in the number going to universities and polytechnics. There is a clear sign that that will continue next year.

We have now implemented this year's pay settlement, based on the interim advisory committee's admirable report, enabling us to introduce further improvements to the career structure, local flexibility and rewards for responsibility and classroom skills. All of that, to use the report's own words, can surely be described as far reaching.

Mr. Straw: Will the Secretary of State now answer the question that I put to him twice during my speech? If things are so good for the teaching profession, can he guarantee that no child will be without a permanent properly qualified teacher in front of his or her class this September?

Mr. MacGregor: Did the Labour Government ever give that guarantee, and would one ever do so in future? I shall deal with the position of teachers later, but I will tell the hon. Gentleman now why that is a false question. There are problems in some geographical areas and in some skills. Some issues of considerable standing reflect not simply on the education system but on the geographical area in which they arise. We have been taking a number of actions to deal with those problems, at a time when recruitment for all sorts of occupations is becoming more intense. I am not prepared to be unrealistic and to give such a guarantee, but we are doing a great deal to address the issues.

That question was about as silly as the hon. Gentleman's other question, which I shall now answer. I sent half of my children to state schools and the other half to independent schools. That was a considerable time ago. It is right that people should have that choice. If I had children now, I should happily send them to the many excellent schools in Norfolk. However, at the time I was concerned about the quality and direction of education that was being provided in the borough, and I exercised choice, which I think is a parental right. We have the assisted places scheme to extend the range of choice. I note that the hon. Gentleman went to Brentwood school in Essex, which takes pupils on the assisted places scheme. Would he deny others the opportunity to give their children the education that he had, by abolishing the assisted places scheme? That is one of the questions that he must answer.

Mr. Straw: I am delighted to answer the question. The reason why I am in the Labour party and not in the Tory party is that I want every child to have a similar opportunity with a similar level of resources. The test is not where someone went to school, but where he sent his children to school. Let us consider the example of the school that the right hon. Gentleman's son attended. Some £4,000 per pupil is spent by the state at Highgate school, while the Government are poll tax-capping two London boroughs, Haringey and Camden, which are spending £2,800 per pupil—£1,200 less. How is that justified?

Mr. MacGregor: I have already written to the hon. Gentleman about that. He has completely missed the point about parental choice and opportunities for different sorts of education. The hon. Gentleman knows that I have written to him saying that the comparisons being made were bogus because he failed to take into account parental contribution and other considerations. I shall repeat what I said in my letter to him. Once an allowance is made for those areas of spending, there is little difference in the average payment made in support of an assisted place and the average secondary unit cost. That deals with that point.

I have just completed wide-ranging consultations on the future pay mechanisms for teachers with a view to introducing legislation next Session. We are continuing with—indeed, adding to—a substantial package of measures on teacher recruitment, including investing in measures to tackle shortages in particular subjects, and an advertising recruitment campaign, which is having an excellent response, but which, typically, the hon. Gentleman tries to denigrate. Those are just a few of the many very positive areas of achievement and progress in the past year.

There is one new announcement that I wish to make this afternoon. I am today writing to the local authority associations setting out my proposed support grants programme for 1991-92. There are three background points that I wish to stress before giving the detailed figures. First, as announced earlier this year, I am accepting the recommendation of a recent efficiency scrutiny that the education support grant and local

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education authority training grant scheme should be brought together into a single programme. Next year's grant programme will reflect that.

Secondly, it must be borne in mind that that programme is small in relation to total spending on schools, which this year will amount to well over £11,000 million. The actual expenditure on the subjects that I am about to announce will often be a good deal greater than the amounts supported under the grant programme itself, because a great deal will come out of that £11,000 million as well. Nevertheless, the programme has an important effect in ensuring targeting of significant sums on specific aspects of policy.

Thirdly, I held meetings with local authority representatives earlier this year during which I said that the specific grants programme should be more effectively concentrated on fewer items of high priority, and I suggested those that I had in mind. There was general agreement with the views that I expressed.

I now propose a programme that will support no less than £364 million of expenditure in 1991-92. Of that, more than £270 million will be targeted on the education reforms of the 1988 Act, which we are now putting in place. That is a major funding boost. In 1990-91, education support grants and training grants are already supporting more than £190 million of spending on reforms. The programme that I am announcing today increases that by almost £80 million, or 40 per cent.

My proposals include almost £90 million of spending on activities to improve school management, including support for local management of schools, management training for school heads and other staff, and training and support for school governors. They include £170 million for activities underpinning the national curriculum, including a new £35 million activity to help get the new national curriculum assessment arrangements into place, a new activity to help schools buy more books, more support to help schools to buy information technology equipment, and more support for preparing teachers to teach the national curriculum.

The focus of the grants programme is very much on the education reforms. However, as in previous years, I intend that the grants should also cover other key areas. I am proposing a substantial increase in support for teacher recruitment. That will help local education authorities take steps to draw into teaching more mature entrants and former teachers, through setting up creches, taster courses, keeping-in-touch schemes, counselling services, and so on. There is a new activity to help local education authorities to improve provision for the under-fives, especially through better planning and co-ordination of work across the maintained and voluntary sectors. Full details of my proposals have been placed in the Library.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley) *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me, but I should not give way again.

The grants programme that I am announcing today will provide significant and essential underpinning of the Government's education policies. It will ensure that funds are directed purposefully and effectively to where they are most needed. The £364 million is vital further support for schools and colleges that are already working so hard, helping them to make a real success of the reforms.

I shall now deal with some of the hon. Gentleman's specific charges. He referred to Her Majesty's inspectors' annual report and others. It is typical of him to be highly selective in what he quoted, so I shall cite some of the main findings to get the perspective right, and they are the main findings. Some 70 to 80 per cent. of work seen across schools and colleges was satisfactory or better; one third was good or very good. The beneficial impact of the Education Reform Act 1988 is already beginning to show. The implementation of the national curriculum is beginning to bring about specific and general improvement. The benefits of the GCSE and TVEI continue to be felt. That is all stated in the report.

Primary schools have made a rapid and effective start to implementing the national curriculum in the core subjects. Both in post-16 and in higher education, the general picture is that some 80 per cent. of what HMI saw was judged satisfactory or better. The quality of teaching and learning in further education colleges is generally satisfactory and slightly better than last year—just over 80 per cent. of the lessons were of good quality. The great majority of heads welcome the opportunity that local management of schools presents to control their budgets.

I could continue, and I think that it is right to do so, to put the perspective right because the hon. Gentleman always draws attention to the bits that could be improved without recognising all the things that have been done and the great improvements that have been made. It is demoralising for teachers if he continues constantly to emphasise that when there is so much good happening in the system. There will always be much more to do, improvements to be made, standards to be raised, new challenges to be met and new teaching methods brought in by technology to be exploited. We are doing a great deal to continue the improvement process.

The overall conclusion of the report states:

"The overall picture is of a service in which most of what is done is of reasonable quality or better. That is a sound basis for improvement and change and should be recognised as such."

Opposition Members do themselves no credit and earn no thanks from the many hard-working and dedicated teachers whom I meet by constantly dwelling on the negative. They should do as we do, and accentuate the positive while taking effective action to improve what is poor.

On resources, the hon. Gentleman's speech contained nothing new—although I listened carefully to what he said. He asserted, by implication, that schools were starved of resources. He knows that that is not true. They are better staffed and better provided for than ever before. The pupil-teacher ratio is an all-time best. This is the bit that the hon. Member for Blackburn never likes to hear. Funding per pupil has risen more than 40 per cent. in real terms since 1979-80. Overall spending on the various sectors of education has also risen in real terms. There has been a 58 per cent. increase in provision for the under-fives, a 33 per cent. increase for special schools, 17 per cent. for primary schools, 12 per cent. for secondary schools, and more than 20 per cent. for further and adult education.

It costs nothing for the Labour party to say that it will spend even more "as resources allow". No one believes

Labour anyway. Labour might pretend that it will spend even more "as resources allow", but we all know what that meant under the Labour Government of the 1970s. It meant positive reductions in some education programmes and a much smaller increase than we have achieved in others.

We all want education to benefit from increased prosperity. The Government's reforms will help in addition to get better value for the money already invested.

There are many more things that I could say, but in the interest of allowing other hon. Members to speak, I shall not respond to other charges made by the hon. Member for Blackburn. However, I shall address recent claims that local management will force schools to make thousands of teachers redundant. I have seen claims that tens of thousands would be made redundant—at one point the figure given was 70,000, but it has been whittled down and down. That simply is not the case. I quote:

"Local management of schools serves as a convenient whipping boy for those unwilling to face up to the realities of falling rolls and surplus places."

Those words are not mine but come from an editorial that appeared in *The Times Educational Supplement* at the end of last month. In none of the cases of teacher redundancies reported in the press so far has the treatment of teacher salaries under local management of schools been a contributory factor.

What are the facts? First, vacancies. There are 400,000 teachers, and under this Government there have never been more than 2 per cent. of so posts vacant. The figure remains below that—and in many authorities, well below. What we must tackle is uneven distribution, particularly in inner London and in certain subjects.

Secondly, the number of teachers leaving the profession has not changed significantly for 10 years although migration from inner London has increased. But recruitment has also increased steadily. This year, 21,700 students started initial teacher training courses, which was 2·5 per cent. above target—and we are increasing the target. Primary recruitment was up by 13 per cent. Applications to postgraduate certificate of education courses starting in September are currently 5 per cent. up on this time last year. About 25,000 people enter or re-enter teaching each year.

The problem is local and subject-specific, and I agree that there are subject-specific issues. The reason is that the skills concerned—mathematics, physics and technology —are precisely the skills for which over decades we have not been producing enough people. That problem is now being addressed by the national curriculum, GCSE and TVEI. In an expanding and prosperous economy, they are also the skills that are in high demand. Our approach involves target-specific recruitment measures, including bursaries, which have improved the position, and the licensed and articled teachers scheme to bring back into teaching people who are more mature. In that context, the high response that we received in the recruitment advertising campaign from people aged over 26—graduates and non-graduates alike—was significant. Clearly, that is a well-targeted approach.

As to teachers' pay, there is more local flexibility and a willingness to pay more on a higher-grade scale for skills that are in short supply—which is what every other employer has to do. The recruitment campaign is designed not only to improve the status of teaching with the slogan that we have chosen but to attract more recruits, as every employer is now doing. Every employer is making the same approach. Those are the right ways of tackling the problem. Attendance at the various roadshows that we have run this year has also been very positive—75 per cent. up on last year.

The response that we are receiving to that targeted programme demonstrates that teaching as a career is attractive. I want to go on and on making it more attractive, including the perception held by the public at large. It would make much more sense if the hon. Member for Blackburn joined me in saying that "Teaching brings out the best in people," as the slogan says, and that teaching as a career is on the up.

That returns me to the remarks of the hon. Member for Blackburn, who never acknowledges the substantial achievements of recent years. Apart from the fact that the Labour party has nothing distinctive to say now about the great education reforms that we are carrying through, there are two fatal flaws in Labour's approach that undermine the hon. Gentleman's position. First, there is a clear policy distinction. The hon. Gentleman would abolish grant-maintained schools, city technology colleges and the assisted places scheme. That is because they give power and choice to parents. I warn the hon. Gentleman that he is making a big mistake. I suggest that he talks to parents, teachers and governors who pioneered the first grant-maintained schools and CTCs, and to pupils on the assisted places scheme who were given the opportunity and choice to which their parents want to contribute all that they can. If the hon. Gentleman does that, he will learn more about that which he is so anxious to destroy and how successful it all is.

Secondly—and I make no apology for returning to this —I must ask what the hon. Gentleman's policy is on resources. The only attack that he could develop today was that the Government are not spending enough on education. On the previous occasion when we debated education issues, I challenged the hon. Gentleman to explain Labour's position on resources for teachers' pay. He said that Labour would allow either free negotiations between teachers and employers or a review body without any cash limit. The morning after that debate, I wrote to the hon. Gentleman asking him to clear up the confusion between his statement and the phrase "as resources allow". I have now received a reply:

"Cash limits would apply in the normal way"—

if it were a local authority negotiation—

"or (if we inherited an interim advisory committee arrangement) as they do in respect of employees covered by Review Bodies."

So there would be cash limits "as resources allow". Still the hon. Gentleman has not answered my question and that of my hon. Friends. Is he promising anything in terms of extra money? His is a bogus attack.

The Government have a coherent policy for schools that is already achieving substantial results, and it will continue doing so. Standards will continue to rise. There will be greater diversity of schools, greater choice for parents, and the guarantee of a balanced curriculum for all pupils, with clear expectations of what they can achieve. That is why I urge the House to support the amendment.

5.27 pm

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): The Secretary of State appears to be benign, rubicund and charming, but the same old vicious policies emerge as were

[Mr. Martin Flannery]

embraced by his two predecessors. The Secretary of State says that there is no crisis. We chose the title of the debate, which we had to initiate because the Government never wants to debate education. We have to do that out of the small amount of time at our disposal, and today half an hour was pinched out of that, so it is again a very short debate.

We chose the theme of the crisis in our schools, because there is a crisis, and we know that that theme would find a response throughout the country. We knew that it would, if I may dare to use a pun, ring a bell—especially among the teaching profession.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) correctly said, there is no crisis in your schools. The crisis is in our schools—in the state education system. You do not have a crisis. You have the money, and you send your kids to your schools. Most of you went to the same schools yourselves.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Member is not bringing me into his argument.

Mr. Flannery: I thought, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that my remarks were absolutely accurate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member keeps referring to me.

Mr. Flannery: I meant to refer to Conservative Members, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is Conservative Members who send their children to their schools, and who then cut and cut money from the schools that our children attend.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House spent almost 300 hours examining the Education Reform Bill. As I have said before, it is a deform Bill. It deforms the education system and everyone knows that it does. As the Act unfolds it becomes more desperate. The Minister says that he intends to recruit more teachers and has new methods of recruitment. He knows as well as I do that all he needs to do to recruit teachers is give them better conditions and wages and restore their negotiating rights. Britain is the only country that has withdrawn teachers' negotiating rights. We were condemned by the United Nations for doing that and so violating ordinary trade unionism.

We have seen long years of attacks on the teaching profession led by successive Ministers. Lord Joseph, then Sir Keith Joseph, led the way with vicious attacks against the profession. He was followed by the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker)—his constituency is aptly named—who is now chairman of the Conservative party. He launched deadly attacks all the way through. Teachers deeply resented those attacks which underestimated the teachers and, even more, undervalued their profession. They were hurt and they are bitter about it to this day. No matter what the Secretary of State says, the fact is that teachers have had to put up with attacks. Teachers were demeaned. Parents and other people were virtually asked by the Conservative party to undervalue and constantly attack the teaching profession.

Now the Secretary of State praises teachers. He says that he talks to tons of teachers. A while ago we found that he never talked to anyone in his constituency. He talked only to people in other constituencies. He should talk to teachers. They would ask him why they have no negotiating rights over their salaries. They would ask why there is a shortage of teachers not only in certain subjects but overall. They would ask him why the Select Committee issued an important report on teacher shortages, of which he seems to have taken no notice. The report was produced by not only Opposition Members but Conservative Members, who have a majority on the Committee. The Committee knew about the shortage of teachers and also knew that there was a crisis in that shortage.

The Secretary of State knows about the local management of schools. Often it is mismanagement of schools. In our city of Sheffield no school has opted out, *and none* has in Leeds or Wakefield. The idea has been spread that lots of schools are opting out. Only 40 throughout the country out of the thousands of schools have opted out. Yet the Secretary of State says that it is popular. We can formulate our own conclusons based on——

Mr. Batiste: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Flannery: No, I shall not give way. The hon. Gentleman must excuse me. I want to make a few points.

The assisted places scheme has been mentioned. A great deal of money has been spent on it. The Government's expenditure plans show that when the assisted places scheme started in 1984-85 £22 million was provided for the scheme. In 1985-86 a total of £30 million was provided. In 1986-87 it was £38 million. In 1987-88 it was £46 million. The next year it was £51 million. The year after it was £59 million. That comes to £246 million of our money spent in private education that was taken away from the education of our children. In the next three years another £192 million is to be spent—£62 million, £60 million and £70 million. Added to the £246 million, that comes to £438 million.

The city technology colleges scheme began with £1 million. Then the figure increased to £14 million and for this year it is £37 million. It is planned to increase it to £45 million, then £50 million and then drop to £40 million. That comes to £187 million, making a grand total, with the £438 million, of £625 million spent on CTCs and the assisted places scheme. That money was taken away from our children and put into private education. Schools near the CTCs suffer. The CTCs benefit from resources which should go to our schools.

The Secretary of State talked about local management. We have had letters from schools all over our city of Sheffield saying that they will have to sack teachers. The Secretary of State knows that as well as I do. He gave figures to show how few teachers have gone. He knows as well as I do, as an experienced teacher, that he should count how many teachers have gone at the end of this term when they are not hired for next term.

Many small schools have budgets which are £13,000 lower than last year. That is true of all primary schools. They will all have to sack teachers. Morale is lower than ever because teachers do not know who will be sacked. I have spoken to many of them. They are worried and miserable about whether they will be sacked, because they have already been told that somebody will be sacked. That is happening throughout the kingdom. The Secretary of State knows as well as I do that that is superimposed on the shortage of teachers which is implicit in the Select Committee's report. Those are the facts and they should be borne in mind.

Other features of the crisis in our schools are crumbling school buildings and endless bureaucracy. My hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn mentioned some of the documents that make up that bureaucracy which are sent round to teachers. Teachers have told us and the Conservative party that merely to carry those documents home at night and take them back to the classroom is a new chore. They have to read all those documents. Under the heading "Teachers" the chief inspector's report says:

"If actually carrying out assessments, recording and reporting outcomes and accounting for what has been done do turn out to be overly prescriptive and inquisitorial, not only will the quality of teaching and learning be adversely affected but the competence, professionalism and creativity of the teaching force may be undermined. Ultimately, the effective implementation of the Education Reform Act will depend upon the work of teachers who are trusted to use their pedagogical skills and experience in the interests of their pupils and the nation, with a minimum of external checks and balances, but who are properly accountable for what they do. Too much prescription and too detailed an external scrutiny of the work of teachers will lead to impossible workloads; bureaucratic inflexibility, and a de-skilled teaching force."

Increased bureaucracy and the fear of being sacked are the fundamental reasons for low morale among teachers and in schools.

We hear constant attacks on local education authorities. The LEAs are elected authorities which have existed for many years. They understand the problems of great cities. They are talked about as if they were villains of the piece by people who do not even send their children to LEA schools.

Mr. John Butcher (Coventry, South-West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Flannery: Not just now.

That criticism is hard on people who, with little or no pay and often voluntarily, devoted their lives to the education of our children for all these years. LEAs were not set up solely by the Labour party. They were supported by Tories of the past and Liberals of the past.

Mr. Butcher: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Flannery: I am not giving way. If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, other people wish to speak and I want to put these points over.

The Government have introduced testing at seven and then more testing at later stages. There is a lack of funds for schools. They attack LEAs. The Government attempt to persuade schools to opt out by giving them inducements. All those factors have caused teachers' morale to fall to its lowest ebb. It is not for nothing that my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn said that teachers are not mentioned in the Government's amendment to our motion. Their amendment is glorious and lyrical. As I said, it could be set to music. It has nothing to do with reality in our schools. It was thought up to fox people into believing that the Conservative party is doing something good for our children.

Our people from Sheffield insist on coming down to London and meeting the five Labour Members and the one Tory Member who represent Sheffield constituencies in a room in the House and the Minister is invited to attend. At first, we planned to meet just one or two people, but then demands came from all over Sheffield. As the Minister probably knows, the local newspaper, the *Star*, which is a very powerful newspaper in South Yorkshire, is helping us because those running it believe that there is a crisis in our schools. That is happening all over Britain. If the Minister does not know it, in heaven's name why is he the Minister? Everyone else knows it. If he can talk that crisis out of existence he had better get on with it.

Practically all primary schools in Sheffield will be losing teachers. Parents are demanding to lobby the Minister and I am inviting him to meet them on 11 July to discuss some of those problems.

Bureaucracy, form filling, testing and endless reports are hindering the education of our children. In the primary schools there is practically no non-contact time. Teachers have no time away from the children. They have meetings before school, after school and at lunchtime. They spend their time trying to take lessons and share out classes when teachers are away because they are so tired. Now, supply teachers are being used to fill permanent vacancies. The Government's answer is to scour Europe and other countries for teachers when we have about 100,000 teachers who are willing to return to teaching if they get a decent wage, negotiating rights, resources and schools that are not crumbling. More teachers are needed now. We need more money and more resources urgently.

The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey), who has a fixed smile on his face, can go on smiling. There is a crisis and all the laughter and smiling will not stop it. Teachers need to be treated as professional people; wages and conditions must be improved, and crumbling schools must be repaired. The Conservative party should address those problems to achieve what we want for our children. Failure to do that will develop the present crisis into a catastrophe by the autumn term if something is not done. Never mind the Minister's lyrical concepts; the Government's failure to treat state education as an immediate priority will alienate more teachers and parents. The Government's amendment pretends that there is no crisis. There are none so blind as those who refuse to see.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the House of Mr. Speaker's earlier appeal for brief speeches.

5.42 pm

Mr. Malcolm Thornton (Crosby): During our brief education debates, I sometimes wonder what those who spend their lives working in education, the parents of the children in our schools and the teachers who devote their efforts and show great commitment to our children will think when they read our debates. So much of what we hear is a sterile and weary repetition of party points which have little or nothing to do with the real problems which are recognised by many hon. Members. Those problems must be addressed seriously, responsibly and with planning and forethought.

Everyone who knows anything about education knows that the leads and lags in the system are enormous, and long-term improvements have to be initiated some years beforehand. Equally, when standards have fallen and problems have arisen in the system, the roots of those problems can be found in decisions that were taken many years ago. Those who want to address the problems would do far better to learn from the lessons that history has taught us and to try to see where we went wrong so that we can avoid making the same mistakes in future. Personal attacks about where people send their children to school

[Mr. Malcolm Thornton]

have nothing to do with the debate. More than 90 per cent. of our children are and will continue to be educated in the state sector and we must all strive to ensure that the state sector is made as good as possible.

I bitterly resent the sweeping statements about Conservative Members and their attitudes not only to their own children and generally. I am probably one of the few Members of Parliament who can claim day-to-day responsibility in a large educational unit. I have been chairman of the governors of one of the largest primary schools in the country for 16 years. It has been a pilot school for local management of schools: we have a large staff and large numbers of pupils. The school is in an area of social change and we have experienced many of the problems that are inherent in the education system. I am familiar with them and deal with them most weeks of the school year. This Friday, I shall be there looking at staff appointments, so I can claim some knowledge of the system and direct week-to-week contact with teachers.

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Thornton: I am sorry, but I must get on, as many other hon. Members wish to speak.

One of the essential ingredients in our attitude toward educational reform must be common sense. So much of what we do in education concerns common sense. It does not involve party dogma, systems or listening to conflicting advice from expert after expert, by which politicians of all parties have been seduced on far too many occasions. All too often the teachers in the classroom can teach us what we need to do to provide the best education for our children.

We hear a great deal about the problems created in LMS. Too much is owed to the vagaries of local authorities and what they are doing apart from their education policies which affect their overall expenditure.

We should try to address the future while learning from the past and we should recognise certain essential facts. The Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts, to which the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) referred, recently produced a report. No one who served on the Select Committee would say or would expect me to say, as the Committee Chairman, that there are no problems in our schools. The hon. Gentleman mentioned non-contact time in primary schools. Wearing my school governor's hat, I can talk about those problems from personal experience. But that does not mean that the reforms should be written off or that the changes that we are trying to bring about will not result in an improvement.

However, I would stress one matter to my right hon. Friend the Minister. Those reforms will be delivered only by ensuring that there are enough teachers to deliver them. We must recognise that there are not sufficient teachers in certain areas. I recognise that coverage is patchy and that there are subject shortages, but there is enough evidence to suggest that to make these essential, widely welcomed reforms work we must will the resources. To deny them is to deny the education system and our children the opportunities of building on the recognition that, for too many decades, the education drift has been allowed to go unchecked.

I said that much of what is said in these debates is sterile and pointless. There is agreement among people who care about education, about children and about the delivery of education that a well-qualified, well-remunerated and properly motivated teaching force is the way forward. If we can achieve that and stop the endless bickering about who was responsible for this, that or the other, we can make some progress. If people outside can see the House responding to genuine concerns, as it can and should, we will do education a great service indeed.

5.51 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): The debate is about the crisis in our schools. I believe that there is a crisis and that, above all, it is a crisis of morale among many teachers, if not all, because of their difficulties in implementing Government reforms which, whether they agree with them or not, they believe have been introduced at a pace beyond their ability to cope. Yet, at the same time, they must ensure that children receive the correct level of education and care.

I am conducting a tour of schools in Cornwall, and visited three different schools only last Friday. It confirms that professionals working in the service—parents, pupils and councillors—are aware of the crisis but are astounded that the Government appear to believe that the solution is more bureaucracy, more gimmicky initiatives and more central control, whereas, in truth, more investment is desperately needed.

That shows the difference of opinion between those who are directly involved and the Government. I do not want to get into a debate about whether or by how much the Government have increased investment, but I stress that the more teachers I talk to, the more anecdotes I can give the Secretary of State and hon. Members of the need for still more investment to meet the objectives laid down by the Government.

It is extraordinary, given that the principle of the national curriculum has such widespread support, that the Government have managed to create a curriculum that has received such widespread criticism.

There is much support for the principle of a national curriculum, and my party was the first to make a manifesto commitment to it. But the structure that the Government have fronted—I say "fronted" because I am not sure that it is entirely the Minister's fault that it has got out of control; it may have more to do with how the National Curriculum Council works—is far too extended and extensive and teachers are struggling to control it because it is far too prescriptive. We favour a national curriculum that offers a framework of educational aims and objectives, not one that lays down every dot and comma of what each teacher should be doing and ignores the principle that teachers should be trained to present skills in an individual way and that classrooms should not be treated as factories, where everybody must do everything the same way in a repetitive system.

The opportunities for local variation and flexibility, which should be central to the national curriculum, have been squeezed out by the Government. The recent survey on reading skills has caused much concern. Whatever the background and the reasons for the fall-off in reading skills—I accept that the Secretary of State will want to know much more about it—the report makes it clear that it may have been caused by particular systems and styles

of teaching. If the Government get it wrong, squeezing everybody into the same straitjacket may lead to squeezing them into the same faults. My concern is that the national curriculum ignores the principle of diversity and choice as protection against everybody getting it wrong, even at the risk that some teachers may get it wrong some of the time.

Mr. Harry Greenway: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that teachers should be allowed individuality in their teaching methods and approaches, but does he accept that it is not unreasonable to set common aims for teachers and children under the curriculum?

Mr. Taylor: I agree. The problem is how much the aim is common and how it is defined. The curriculum and the testing system under it is so detailed that it does not allow teachers enough flexibility. They cannot afford the flexibility and time necessary to make it work.

The reports of teachers I speak to—I speak to many—are precisely in those terms. That is the major criticism they make, whatever their original opinion of the national curriculum. They say that the learning process is being hindered by the detail and testing process in the national curriculum and that the normal good practice of teacher-parent dialogue gives parents more information about how their child is doing than do the raw results of testing.

The Government claim that testing will lead to higher standards, but I fear that it may lead to lower standards. The British Dyslexia Association has advanced that argument on behalf of those about whom it is particularly concerned.

Although it is good that testing of seven-year-olds has been restricted to only the core subjects, the bureaucracy of administering the tests means that there is a risk of insufficient attention being given to the foundation subjects. There is a danger that teachers will be forced to teach for tests, which will not stretch the most able but will brand many as failures at an early age. The regimentation of the standard assessment tasks diminishes the role of teachers and denies their professional judgment and diagnostic skills. The testing arrangements do little to determine the needs and ability of individual pupils, because administering them for a class of 30 childern is highly unlikely to leave time to use them for diagnostic purposes to help children overcome individual problems.

The problem of stress among teachers cannot be ignored. Even if all the other factors that I have mentioned can be put right and teachers become used to the curriculum, the stress and the difficulties that teachers are under could gravely damage the pupils now experiencing the implementation of the process, precisely and simply because it is being pushed through so quickly.

I and other Liberal Democrats believe that national testing before GCSE is inappropriate and that a more developed record of pupil achievement, involving not only the teaching staff but pupils and parents, would have been a better way forward. Ministers do not accept that position, but there is room for them to slow the pace of change in the classroom to allow the teachers to have a real chance of making testing effective for present and future pupils.

The whole problem has been exacerbated by the morale of teachers, who are suffering from the burdens imposed on them. A major investment is needed not only in cash, but in time and care for those teachers and their professionalism to combat the growing problem of teacher morale. The falling morale among teachers especially saddens me, yet the Government seem determined to ignore the difficulties that teachers are facing and to heap more and more work on to them.

One head teacher in my constituency wrote:

"The workload is becoming almost insurmountable for all of us—we will work for the sake of our pupils, but these excessive demands, lack of time and preparation to complete everything within government issued deadlines will result in the continued erosion of the teaching profession, and you will find that existing expertise, dedication and professionalism will recede."

Another head teacher said:

"I have a good many years left to give to education but my enthusiasm for teaching cannot go on indefinitely unless the Government provide significant additional resources to enable us to implement the National Curriculum in a professional manner."

We recently debated in the House the Government's decision not to implement fully the award recommended by the teachers' pay review body. I said then that I had spoken to head teachers and other teachers who were leaving the profession in Cornwall. Cornwall is not an area in which it is especially difficult or unrewarding to teach; on the contrary, we have some of the best education in the country. I went home after that debate and on the Friday I visited another school. Blow me down, once again the head teacher said, confidentially, that he was giving up and taking early retirement because of the burdens that he faced. There is a real problem; it is not just make-believe. All of us who speak to teachers and head teachers find the same problem.

Another issue which is less important, but which should not be ignored, is pay. Teachers have such commitment to their pupils that they are willing to work for lower salaries than they could obtain elsewhere. None the less, the way in which the comparable level of their salaries has been eroded is a direct sign to them that they are undervalued. In its report on teacher supply, the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts said:

"The government should implement the IAC's recommendations in full without delay."

The Government are not doing that. The failure, year after year, to give teachers a fair deal over pay will do nothing to solve the morale problem or the supply crisis. The Government have a duty to establish a political climate in which the professional status and authority of teachers are held in high regard. The Government have failed even to try to do that. They have a duty to restore professionalism to the job.

The Government should look again at the proposals from many quarters for the establishment of a general teaching council. That would be the clearest sign we could give that we see teachers as professionals in the community. I see that the hon. Member for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks) is in his place and I see that he agrees with that point. There is wide agreement among all parties in the House and outside that that is the way to go forward.

Both the hon. Member for Cornwall, South-East and I have had Adjournment debates on the crisis of the quality of Cornish school buildings in which teachers have to teach. That is on the record so the hon. Gentleman need not look too bashful. We know that in Cornwall we need to spend £100 million to bring the schools up to the level that the Government set in 1981 for schools to achieve by 1991. However, the county has been allowed to spend only

[Mr. Taylor]

£6·522 million for 1990-91. It is simply impossible to reach the minimum standards that the Government say should be achieved. Will Ministers cut the standards? Will they review the standards that they believe are necessary for education, or will they accept the fact that for the indefinite future teachers will teach in surroundings that are inadequate by the Government's own standards? *On the* current levels of spending, we cannot meet those minimum standards. Ministers have repeatedly refused to put in the extra money necessary to meet the shortfall. I do not deny that some money is going in, but in Cornwall we can now offer only lower standards for the future.

Time after time, the Government have been warned that the crisis in our schools is weekly becoming more acute. Rather than recognise the problems and listen to teachers, the Government are obsessed with gimmicky initiatives such as the assisted places scheme and the city technology colleges, which fail to tackle the real needs. They have also heaped further burdens on to an already stressed and devalued teaching profession by the bureaucracy of an over-prescriptive and underfunded national curriculum. All the evidence and experience of the past year shows that the Government reforms are causing chaos. It is imperative that Ministers think again, slow the pace of change and give the education service the priority and funding it deserves.

The miracle is that, despite the pressures and lack of resources from which they have suffered, teachers are still doing a superb job in our schools. On that at least I agree with the Minister. Their commitment to their pupils and their schools is unwavering. If the Government showed only half that commitment to state education, a debate on the crisis in our schools would not be necessary.

Between now and the general election—and afterwards —my party will make it clear that if improving our education system means spending more money and raising taxes, we shall not flinch from doing so because we believe that investment in our young people is a priority for which raising taxes should not be dodged if it is necessary. I feel sympathy for Labour Front-Bench Members who are not allowed to say that in this debate but who believe that as well. I hope that they can persuade their leadership to allow them to say it too as they approach the general election.

6.6 pm

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): The real crisis in our schools would be the one that would occur if Labour Members ever won power. The House was not surprised to learn of the negative attitude displayed by the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) because the whole of the Labour party's education policy is negative. Labour Members would abolish the grammar schools, the grant-maintained schools, the city technology colleges, the assisted places scheme and, as we have heard this afternoon, even the independent sector. The Labour party has become the party of abolition; Labour Members would even like to abolish choice itself. They want the uniform greyness of mediocrity.

The Government remain committed to improving the quality and standards of the state education system in which the majority of our children are educated. I need hardly remind the House that in 1976 the then Prime Minister, Lord Callaghan, called for "a great debate" and that is what he got. There was no action, but plenty of talk. The present Government have acknowledged that there are problems and have introduced, alongside other measures, the Education Reform Act 1988. The thrust of the Act was to restore choice to parents.

We believe that parents are the best guardians of education. Most parents know best what is right for their children, so parents should be trusted *and involved in the* education process. The Labour party seeks to thrust the nation's children into one type of school——

Mr. Nellist: Good schools.

Mr. Pawsey: —irrespective of ability, preference or need. I hear Opposition Members endorsing that by saying "good".

Mr. Nellist: I said, "Good schools".

Mr. Pawsey: The hon. Member for Blackburn mentioned ambition. Indeed, the Labour party is ambitious; it is ambitious for itself. Labour Members want office and they are prepared to promise anything and to jettison anything if it means that there is a chance of their gaining power. The Labour party has also discovered standards and Labour Members talk about introducing an education standards council. I must remind them that that idea has been dismissed by the teachers' unions as a gimmick. Labour Members talk about a parent-school contract, but they forget that the present Government have already enshrined in law rights for parents. The Labour party is talking about introducing five-subject A-levels, which would undermine one of the accepted and established beacons of academic excellence.

Conservative Members stand for choice, and more parental choice will ensure an improvement in standards. Parents naturally want the best for their children. In the independent sector, for example, as we have been repeatedly reminded by the hon. Member for Blackburn, parents are prepared to pay for choice, and to pay heavily. In the state sector, parents are willing to invest their time, their interest and their commitment.

I believe that parents will be the great engine of educational change. The hon. Member for Blackburn criticised the introduction of grant-maintained schools. I believe firmly in grant-maintained schools and I am anxious that Ministers should drop the artificial 300-pupil threshold for entry. Let us see more schools, more smaller schools and more village schools applying for grant-maintained status.

We should remember, however, that such reforms take time and that it is now only two years since the passing of the Education Reform Act 1988. Only now are we beginning to see the introduction of local management of schools and only now are the first grant-maintained schools beginning to emerge.

Mrs. Wise: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr Pawsey: No. The hon. Lady must forgive me, but many of my hon. Friends wish to speak.

The national curriculum is bound to encounter some teething troubles before it is accepted. But let no hon. Member doubt our commitment to improving the quality and standard of state education.

On 7 June we debated teachers' pay and conditions. There is no doubt in my mind that the teaching profession

is no longer as attractive as it was 20 or 30 years ago. In those days, teachers were on a par with doctors and architects. That is no longer the case and much of the responsibility for that loss of esteem must lie on teachers' own shoulders. As I have said before, if they wish to be treated as professionals, they must act as professionals, and professionals do not march, demonstrate, strike or obstruct.

Like my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, I believe that the vast majority of teachers in Britain are committed both to their profession and to the children in their charge. It is unfortunate that the efforts of the majority are undermined by the efforts of a militant left-wing minority. Anyone who doubts that has only to remember the appalling scenes that recently occurred at the teachers' conferences, where the general secretary of the National Union of Teachers was howled down by a militant left-wing mob of his own members. Teachers are to education what the house is to home. One cannot have one without the other, and I should like teachers to occupy once more their old and coveted position in society.

There are problems in our schools, and some of them have their roots in increasing indiscipline. Indiscipline and an attendant lack of respect are increasingly to be found both in the home and at school. But it would be wrong for society to place all the responsibility for school problems on teachers' shoulders. Parents must understand that they have duties and responsibilities as well as rights and that they cannot abdicate them as soon as their children go through the school gates.

Education is a partnership between parents and teachers. I am delighted to see my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) in his place, because he has made just that point in many of our education debates. Too often the partnership between parent and teacher deteriorates into a casual association that takes place once a year. We need to restore respect for teachers, and respect must be earned. Boys of 13, 14 and 15 can be difficult and unpleasant—well able to turn a teacher's life into something of a nightmare. In such cases, firm discipline is required, and I fear that such discipline is missing from many of our state schools.

Teaching is best achieved in a firm, disciplined framework, both at home and at school. When that framework is absent, chaos begins. We need to go back to some of the basics, both in teacher training and in the classroom. Over the past 25 years, teaching has suffered from too many experiments and too many theories——

Mr. Robert Hicks (Cornwall, South-East): Hear, hear.

Mr. Pawsey: I am delighted to have my hon. Friend's support.

Too many proven methods have been scrapped, on the scantiest of evidence, for the new fashion of the day, and children's education has suffered as a result. But my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is not a fashionable man and he is not a theorist. What we need now is not more innovation but a period of consolidation. Under my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, that is what we will get —to the benefit of our children and to the benefit of the nation's schools.

6.15 pm

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): It has been a revelation and a source of amazement to me to hear hon. Members' deliberations on the state of our education system. One has only to visit half a dozen state schools to realise that everywhere disillusioned teachers are struggling to provide a good education for the children in their charge and finding that their task is made more difficult by the Government's action.

In the past decade, we have suffered a cut in investment in the education service and in the future of our children. We spend less of our GDP on education today than we did under the Labour Government, and it is the under-resourcing of the service that is causing so many of the difficulties.

What state can our education service be in when we read of parents being asked by school governors to lob in £50 apiece for teachers to be employed? Do we realise the depth of the crisis when we read that parents in Harpenden, that citadel of Conservatism, have set up Harpenden Parents Against Education Cuts because of the way in which local management of schools is working?

Mrs. Wise: My hon. Friend referred to local management of schools. He may or may not be aware that, in the past day or two, chairmen of boards of governors have received letters from the National Association of Governors and Managers pointing out to them that, because of LMS, they now face a great risk of being sued for negligence, errors and omissions, and inviting them to take out insurance against such claims. Does my hon. Friend agree that that will create a crisis of confidence among school governors equal to that among teachers, and that it is greatly to be deplored?

Mr. Griffiths: I had heard about that, although I had not seen the document until my hon. Friend produced it. It appears in any case to be another unthought of consequence of the Government's reforms that will cause great aggravation in the education system. They are already causing aggravation for teachers and that is why we have a growing crisis of teacher supply in the United Kingdom. The problem is particularly severe in inner London; indeed, in boroughs such as Southwark and Tower Hamlets it is a scandal. It is beyond belief that any Education Minister can stand at the Dispatch Box and not suggest positive solutions to the problem. It is a national scandal. The problem is steadily spreading its tentacles to other parts of the country.

At one time, we were principally concerned about maths and science, but we now find that there is a shortage of skilled and qualified teachers of modern languages, design and technology, and music—half the subjects in the national curriculum. Is it any wonder that there is a crisis in our schools today? On DES teacher training targets, we are 27 per cent. short in maths, 23 per cent. short in physics, 16 per cent. short in modern languages, 42 per cent. short in chemistry, and 22 per cent. short in technology. There has been a failure to meet DES targets, and the problem will get much worse before it gets better. That failure can be seen in Wales, fabled for its teachers, where teachers are provided as if they were on a conveyor belt. In Wales, local authorities are experiencing difficulties in recruiting secondary school teachers, qualified Welsh language teachers, and science, maths and modern language teachers. They are lucky if one or two

[Mr. Griffiths]

people apply for such posts. The difficulties are to be found everywhere. Morale is low and the profession overburdened.

The praise that the Government heap on teachers is rather like the praise that the generals heaped on the soldiers in the trenches in the first world war. It came from people who were strategically inept, had a poorly paid soldiery and were poorly equipped. That is why, in the past six months, the so-called "escape committee" has increased the number of people wanting to join from the profession from 700 to 3,000. Teachers are disillusioned because they are being asked to do too much too soon and too quickly, when their pay is too little too late and too slow—staged payments of a cash-limited pay award. There is worse to come.

In my county, teachers will lose their jobs as about half of our primary and secondary schools have had savage reductions in their budgets because of formula funding and the LMS scheme, which the Welsh Office forced on my local authority of Mid Glamorgan. That has adversely affected our schools.

LMS is not about giving parents and governors the chance to run their own show; it is about exposing schools to formula funding, which means that they will be closed. There is no doubt that small schools will close in the near future.

On nursery education, poll tax-capped authorities will consider areas in which, at the moment, provision is non-statutory, so there will be cuts. It is salutary to think that poll tax-capped Labour authorities are among the best providers of nursery education. It is no coincidence that Tory education authorities are the worst providers of nursery education.

Throughout the education system, teachers are struggling to provide a high-quality service, when virtually everything that the Government are doing is counter-productive. We have a legacy of crumbling schools, crumbling teacher morale, teacher shortages, teachers not being taught, classes without teachers in front of them, and change for the sake of change. Parent governors are thoroughly disillusioned and say that their meetings are about finance and not about education. They can foresee the day when they will ask not who is the best but who is the cheapest when they appoint teachers. That is our education service—the cheapest.

6.25 pm

Mr. Robert Hicks (Cornwall, South-East): I shall make just two general observations about the current position of education, based on my impressions in visiting schools and talking to parents, teachers and governors, and certainly not from the point of view of an expert. I shall also raise one specific requirement for Cornwall.

First, as has been mentioned, there is no denying that our primary and secondary schools have been subjected to a period of significant change, not least because of the provisions of the Education Reform Act 1988. I have no objection to the majority of the measures. Indeed, I warmly welcomed the introduction of the concept of a national curriculum and local school management. Of course there will be teething problems and certain genuine difficulties, and they will all require careful consideration. It cannot be denied, however, that the changes have meant extra responsibilities and an increased work load for teachers, parents and children. That fact must be recognised by all of us who are anxious in the widest sense for the future education of our children.

The scheduled time scale for the changes has always worried me. The rate of change demanded of teachers and children alike has been onerous. Furthermore, as a direct consequence of the time scale requirement, the necessary advice, information and procedures to be adopted have not always been available to schools. That has undoubtedly caused additional anxieties. That is why we now need a period of consolidation—indeed, tranquility—in our schools. As legislators, we owe that at least to our teachers and children.

Fortunately, there is evidence that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State understands that requirement. His remarks about assessment today confirm that impression. Consolidation does not mean weakening or losing the basic objectives that we seek, or even the momentum that is essential to implement the changes. Common sense dictates that consolidation is required to maximise the effects of the changes.

My second general point is about teachers. I mean no offence, but we all know that a small minority of teachers, or perhaps their representatives, are a nuisance to the teaching profession. They do untold damage to the teachers' cause. I ask Ministers and colleagues to recognise that the great majority of teachers are hard-working, committed and anxious to provide the best possible standard of education for our children.

I hope that the independent negotiating machinery to determine teachers' salaries and conditions, whether it takes the form of a teachers' council or some other form, will soon be restored. Certainly we have been given some firm promises on that by my right hon. Friend. It is essential that the new framework provides the necessary ability to restore the morale of teachers. It is essential for public confidence that we are perceived as a Government who recognise the crucial work undertaken by teachers, as demonstrated by the establishment of the new framework.

Two years ago, almost to the day, I had an Adjournment debate on the county of Cornwall's school building requirements. Since local education authorities will soon be finalising their applications to the Department for next year's financial allocations, I want to use this opportunity to emphasise the need for Cornwall to receive a meaningful capital allocation to sustain a rolling programme of new school building, accommodate the rising number of pupils and bring about the replacement and improvement of existing school stock.

I remind the Minister that there are 33 secondary schools in Cornwall and nine, including Liskeard in my constituency, still occupy split sites. In 1973 I took a delegation to see the Secretary of State for Education, now my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, on behalf of the Liskeard school. We are still waiting for results.

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): Promises, promises.

Mr. Hicks: It is all very well for the hon. Gentleman to say that, but I remind Opposition Members about the delegations that one took to see their education Ministers: their promises were not delivered either.

I want my right hon. Friend to ensure that sufficient allocation is made so that we can make the maximum use

of scarce financial and human resources. The problems caused by split-site schools do not allow for the maximum use of those resources.

In 1992 Cornwall's primary school population will exceed 40,000 pupils—the highest figure ever achieved. Undoubtedly that will exacerbate an already difficult situation. Our chief education officer estimates that there are some 50 projects that would merit urgent priority if sufficient funds were available. He also estimates that 50 per cent. of those projects can be classified as major—costing more than £200,000.

Our county has always been a modest-spending area and it does its best to top up the Department's allocation. This year the county will spend £14 million thanks to the use of capital receipts and reserves, compared with the Department's allocation of £6·5 million. Last year the corresponding figures were £8·9 million and £6·1 million. Each year the council's education committee faces an almost impossible task—some might say that it is invidious—in determining priorities. I have not mentioned the new building regulation requirements that could add a further £70 million to our financial needs.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Apart from the problem of split-site schools, does my hon. Friend agree that the tremendous legacy of old schools from the Victorian era, particularly in our villages, means that it is necessary to get on top of that problem once and for all?

Mr. Hicks: My final remark answers the point that my hon. Friend has rightly raised. The current building requirements in Cornwall are the price we have had to pay for the relative lack of activity in that regard in the 1950s and 1960s. That does not absolve us, however, from our responsibilities to our children in the 1990s.

6.34 pm

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): The debate coincides with an article in *The House Magazine* by the Secretary of State for Education. The Secretary of State begins his contribution by describing his aims as follows:

"To encourage all children to achieve the highest level of their different abilities and discover and develop their own particular talents, thereby acquiring the wide range of skills and abilities they will need to deal with the many and diverse challenges which lie ahead."

If that was true, there would be no difference between us and we would happily agree on the definition of what education should provide for our children. However, there is no consensus between us, for three reasons.

The first is on philosophical grounds. The Government aim to create an education system that is designed not to develop the potential of each child, but to fit this generation of children to the short-term needs of their friends in business. That is what LMS and city technology colleges are all about: they are aimed at creating a generation of managers and technicians to run industry and commerce in the future. In recent years the privatisation and the orientation of education towards the needs of business have been the Government's themes.

Secondly, if what the right hon. Gentleman said was true, we would have a well-paid and well-motivated teaching profession, enjoying high morale. We have exactly the opposite. That profession is suffering a haemorrhage. My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) has shown me an article which says that six out of seven primary school teachers in one school in Lambeth intend to leave that school in the next three weeks. Come September there will be one teacher for those children.

Thirdly, there is no consensus between us because of the way in which the Government have dealt with the needs of local authorities to repair, renovate and even maintain the fabric of the schools in which our children are taught. The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey), who comes from my part of the country, spoke about standards, grey uniformity and choice.

One part of the national curriculum relates to the teaching of computers—it is covered by the information technology section. I have a photograph from my local paper, the *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, that shows children of the Chace primary school in Willenhall, in my constituency, being taught computing in toilets. After 11 years of a Tory Government children are being taught in the loo. How can those children be assessed on their ability to absorb in those conditions? The photograph could not show the open drains, nor pass on the smell that will come with hot weather. How are teachers supposed to inculcate in those children the sense of wonder and awareness of the world when they are sitting in a toilet learning about computers? "Our Crumbling Schools" is not just the title of an article in that local newspaper or a campaign of the Labour party, but reality for children in the city of Coventry and elsewhere.

In the past three years my local authority has bid for £11·8 million, £16 million and £12·4 million from the Department of Education and Science for essential repairs. If those repairs are not carried out, it will severely impair the ability of teachers to deliver good quality education and, as a result, morale will go down.

My hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) has already mentioned a school in Nuneaton, of which the Minister will be aware, where children have caught hepatitis A because there is no soap in the toilets and the paper towels have been cut in half. The north Warwickshire district medical officer said of the outbreak:

"Financial cuts in education, where children are only allowed half a paper towel, no adequate soap and no, or poor quality, toilet paper made the problem more difficult."

The savage cuts in, and under-provision for, education are now to be exacerbated by poll tax capping. More than £200 million has been cut from the education spending allocation in the 20 authorities affected. In the past three years Coventry has bid for about £40 million—we were allocated £10·6 million. Last year we were awarded £1·96 million—15 per cent. of what the council bid for. It was the lowest allocation to any council in the west midlands; and of the 109 education authorities in England and Wales, only 14 are worse off than Coventry.

I was talking to parents in my constituency, and to governors of Chace primary school at Willenhall, over the weekend. The toilets, where computer studies classes take place, are out of date and smelly. When it rains, teachers have to put up with puddles inches from the computer terminals. The rain also comes into the school on to the carpeted areas where children are supposed to sit and listen to stories. The female staff toilet is now a store room for computer and games equipment and the caretaker's room is a storage area for science equipment. The library, where remedial teaching takes place for those with difficulty in learning how to read, consists of half the main hall. There is a curtain down the middle of the hall and physical education classes are conducted in the other half.

[Mr. Dave Nellist]

It is hard to imagine how somebody like the elderly lady I spoke to the other night, who is a volunteer, going into that school to help with remedial teaching, manages to teach in half a school hall, separated from the PE class by a curtain.

Her Majesty's inspectorate is worried about Chace primary school, which is one of numerous crumbling schools in our cities. It is not one of the schools visited by the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth), the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science, when he came to Coventry. He and other hon. Members from my area know that we are not talking about a left-wing authority or a city council that has ever disobeyed a single Government instruction during the past 11 years. It has never been anywhere near being rate or poll tax capped.

The local paper has provided the Under-Secretary of State with a dossier of what is going on in Coventry. What is he going to do about it? How do the Government decide on allocations that leave schools in Coventry lacking such facilities? Why is Coventry the area with the lowest budget in the west midlands and the 15th lowest in the country? How are such positions reviewed? How can we get the money this year so that bairns of five, six or seven years old in such schools in Coventry may have decent facilities in which to be taught this year? That is what the debate is all about for me. Those are the most important years in a bairn's life. It is when the mind blossoms and awareness develops.

I am proud and lucky. I have four healthy bairns growing up and being educated in Coventry. However, in Coventry there are parents with children at schools in which, according to the local newspaper survey, the stench from decaying toilets causes regular outbreaks of sore throats and stomach bugs. How are kids supposed to learn in such conditions? It does not happen in Harrow, Eton, Marlborough or Charterhouse and the private schools that I have visited as a speaker, where the walls are panelled in oak, as are the walls of this place.

The average spent on children's education in this country is just over £1,900 per child. In Avon, a poll-tax-capped authority, the figure is £1,870. The Government spend money on their assisted places schemes to send kids to the private school of Charterhouse. They spend £7,200 per child, four times what they say is too much to spend on our kids in state education. That is why an HMI report this January stated that one third of secondary schools, in which 1 million children are taught, have accommodation so unsuitable that the quality of the children's education was being "adversely affected".

This year, Coventry asked for £12·2 million. We were allowed—note the word "allowed"—to spend £1·96 million. But the Government are spending £7·65 million—four times that amount—on one city technology college in Nottingham. It is not that the Government do not have the money; they are hypocritical. We have a Government education team that does not care about the 95 per cent. of children in the state education sector. Why not?

The reason the education team do not care is that the Government are at present engaged in precisely the same pre-privatisation rundown that has occurred in every nationalised industry prior to privatisation during the 11 years of this Government. It is a simple exercise designed to make the product—the Government call it a product—the education system, unworkable and unpopular among parents so that they cry out for privatised control. That is not yet working. The Secretary of State has offered parents of this country an opportunity to opt out, but out of 4,257 secondary schools in England and Wales, only 40—less than 1 per cent.—have asked to go private, and not a single primary school has done so.

During their period in office, the Government have cut the proportion of public spending on education and science, and increased money for private schools. They have closed 1,575 primary schools and 312 secondary schools, and opened a handful of elite city technology colleges. They have cut back expenditure on text books, and put up the price of school meals; and, according to *The Times Educational Supplement* last Friday, there has been a 3·2 per cent. fall in the average reading ability of seven-year-olds. Millions of ordinary families cannot get nursery education or care, which would not only be good for the children, but would open opportunities for parents, particularly women. Only one quarter of the three and four-year-olds in this country receive any form of nursery education.

Education should be about a lifetime for people to go in and out of education as they need it. But it is not. There are few nurseries for our bairns to attend, and colleges, polytechnics and universities, where grants have been cut by one quarter, then frozen and—if the regulations are passed—from this summer, even benefits will be taken away from students. When dealing with our children's education, the Government cut funds, but when dealing with their children's education, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hillsborough said, they are prepared to spend an extra £0·5 billion on assisted places.

Socialists believe that education is a right. The Government believe in privilege. As soon as we get rid of the Government and have a decent, socialist Government, we can once again make education the right that it should be.

6.46 pm

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): This debate is about the crisis in our education system. The view that there is a crisis is held by parents and teachers throughout the country. A striking factor in the debate was the utter complacency of the Secretary of State. The way in which he described our education system and the activities taking place in our schools would not be instantly recognisable by teachers and parents. That shows the great divide, the gulf, that exists between the Government and the teachers and parents of this country.

I suspect that there is one point on which we can agree with the Secretary of State, but he comes to that position with a record behind him. He has, to use the criminal jargon, some form. Nevertheless, we welcome the fact that he now holds a slightly different view. He told us that teachers were a key resource and we had failed to sing their praises. He should go back and read all the education debates during the past few years because he would then realise that Labour spokesmen, on each and every occasion, have sung the praises of teachers and recognised the tasks and burdens carried by them.

The Secretary of State now says that teachers are doing a good job. This is where his form is relevant because it is this Secretary of State's Government who have done so

much to undermine the morale of teachers throughout the country. The Secretary of State's Government—we must remind ourselves of this, because it is an essential part of the current malaise in schools—took away from teachers the basic human right to bargain and negotiate freely with their employers. The Secretary of State's Government took every available opportunity in the House and outside to denigrate teachers' professionalism. That reached its height in the middle of the last decade and has had a remarkable impact on morale. The Secretary of State's Government have, on every possible occasion, refused to work with teachers and go with the grain of teachers' professionalism in developing the systems of both testing and the national curriculum.

The hon. Members for Crosby (Mr. Thornton) and for Truro (Mr. Taylor) said that there was a need for a general teaching council. We echo those views because we believe in teachers' professionalism, and have been saying so for some time. We welcome the Secretary of State as a partial convert, but he has a long record to get rid of before he becomes a true convert.

A key element of the debate involves resources. The picture painted by the Secretary of State was that all was well in our schools and there was no problem. When my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) asked about schools in Southwark, he had a simple response. He said that the Government did not generalise, Southwark had its own peculiar problems and so we could not argue about teacher shortages there. I wish that the Secretary of State would put that argument to the parents of those children in Southwark, who do not know whether they will have teachers in the classroom this autumn. Why does he not go down to the east end of London and visit the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), and talk to the parents of the 300 children in Tower Hamlets who still do not have a school place because of the teacher shortages?

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): My hon. Friend rightly referred to the national scandal that more than 300 children are now out of school who have the right to education in our school system. Is he aware that, exactly a year ago, I took a deputation to the Secretary of State's predecessor to explain to him in detail the problems and the shortages, and that nothing has happened since? Will he join me in pressing the Minister to give an immediate, serious pledge and guarantee that a target date and timetable will be set, at the end of which my constituents' children will have the right to the proper state education that is guaranteed for all children in this country?

Mr. Fatchett: My right hon. Friend has made a powerful intervention. Certainly I join him in asking the Secretary of State whether he is prepared to make that timetable commitment. We noticed earlier that he was not prepared to give parents a commitment about the availability of a teacher in every classroom this autumn; will he now give a commitment to the parents of Tower Hamlets, and to the 300 children who have no teachers? I shall give way if he wishes me to, but once again the House and my right hon. Friend will notice that he has no interest in these matters, and is not prepared to give any commitment. *[Interruption.]* I repeat that, if the Secretary of State wants to make the commitment, I shall give way —but, by pointing a finger, the Secretary of State suggests that the Minister of State will do it. We look forward to that, and I am sure that my right hon. Friend will want to intervene.

The argument about resources was not addressed by the Secretary of State. We all know why he was appointed. The previous Secretary of State was full of ideas, none of which—as we all know, and as the Conservative party regrets—worked effectively in practice. This Secretary of State was appointed to do the Prime Minister's bidding. While he is doing that, he himself is never bidding for education, or for resources for the education system.

Let us have a look at what the present Secretary of State has agreed to. He has agreed to standard spending assessments for education: if they had been followed by local education authorities, that would have meant a £1·4 billion cut. That is how hard the right hon. Gentleman fought for education. He said that my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) was wrong to compare levels of expenditure in the maintained sector and on the assisted places scheme. However, he is never prepared to argue for the children in rate-capped authorities who, halfway through the school year, will have their educational resources cut. Where has the Secretary of State been? He has simply rolled over for the Treasury and the Prime Minister.

This afternoon, the Secretary of State made a major announcement. The nub of his speech—his pot of gold —was the amount of money that he had for the system. He said that he was announcing expenditure for 1991-92 of £364 million, through the educational support grant system. I thought that he was being generous to the education system, so I went to the Library and examined the figures for this year's expenditure. They come to £357·7 million. The right hon. Gentleman has therefore announced an increase of £6·3 million—or 2 per cent.— when inflation is running at nearly 10 per cent. As always, he has announced a cut in real terms. Again, if he wishes to intervene I shall gladly give way.

This is the Secretary of State who tries to give the impression that he argues with his ministerial colleagues on behalf of education. Hon. Members who heard his opening contribution will remember that he said that he had argued for the success of TVEI and for additional resources. Where was he when the 22 authorities embarking on TVEI had their expenditure reduced by 50 per cent? Was he knocking on the door of the Department of Employment, saying that it was crucial education expenditure? We have not heard a squeak from the Secretary of State: yet again he has failed to stand up for the education system, and for what is good in it.

Against that background of a lack of resources, we must make another criticism of the Government's record. It concerns the confusion and lack of clarity in their thinking. With the complacency that was characteristic of his speech, the Secretary of State said that there were no problems with the local management of schools. Obviously, neither he nor any of his hon. Friends has been to any of the schools that my hon. Friends and I have visited, and talked to teachers, governors and parents. If they had, they would know that there are massive problems, and that schools are finding it increasingly difficult to meet their budgets. The Secretary of State knows that the Coopers and Lybrand report warned him that local management of schools could work effectively only if there were adequate resources in the system. Those resources are not available.

[Mr. Fatchett]

There is also confusion about testing and the national curriculum. In an interview with *The Sunday Telegraph* at Easter, the Prime Minister said that she had never expected the national curriculum to work out as it had. That is typical of the Prime Minister: it is abundantly clear that she does not lead her own Government when there are any difficulties. However, she has one advantage over the Secretary of State: I suspect that he still has no idea how the national curriculum will work out in practice.

There is a problem in every school in the country. Teachers are being bombarded by material without any sense of direction and purpose from the centre. On top of that, children are to be tested at the age of seven. There seems to be a difference of opinion between Ministers on that point. The Minister of State—who may be making a valedictory speech in a few minutes—said, in an interview with the *Today* newspaper a few weeks ago, that testing was being piloted and that no decisions were being taken, although she did seem to favour a rigorous, detailed system. Last Friday I was delighted to see the Under-Secretary of State in Leeds. I suspect that, if the newspaper reports are correct, he is the only junior Minister in his Department who can be confident about his future. He said that testing was to be slimmed down. Whose version is the reality? Which is the Government's version? Is it the Minister of State's version, or the Under-Secretary's? Why do we not hear a word from the Secretary of State? The reality is that teachers do not know what is expected of them in the autumn of next year.

Our indictment against the Government is a powerful one. It is about resources, confusion, drift and a lack of leadership. Any country that wants to build for the future realises that education is the investment for the future: investment in education today is the guarantee of economic success tomorrow. That is recognised by the French and the Germans and by people in the developing countries of south-east Asia. It is recognised by all economically successful countries. The only people who fail to recognise the importance of education are the Government and their Education Ministers. The clear message is that we need a change of education policies and a Labour Government to safeguard the future and our children.

7 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): The substance of the debate, couched in terms of an Opposition motion that does nothing to value teachers' efforts or to encourage parents and children, should have given the Opposition an opportunity to outline some new policies. However, not one Opposition Member has offered a concrete suggestion that would lead to any change for the better. They said that the most important anouncement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on education support grants and education authority training grants was rubbish.

Without exception, Opposition Members have dwelt on their determination to put the clock back. They say with pride that history will repeat itself. They would diminish parental choice, as they did before, by the abolition of the direct grant schools which many of them were privileged to attend. They would threaten local education authority maintained grammar schools, the very schools which provided education for children whatever their background and parentage. They would undermine the reforms that have been broadly welcomed by schools and parents alike. The hopes that schools and what is taught in them would take the direction that many teachers have been looking for for years would be dashed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton) was right to condemn Opposition rhetoric. He was also right to emphasise that time is necessary to repair the damage that has been done over years to the education system, and right to dash the assumption that only socialists send their children to state schools. That is a disgraceful assumption, and it is absolutely untrue. It is in the interests of all hon. Members to strive for excellence in every school.

My hon. Friend the Member for Crosby spoke about the local management of schools and said that local authorities themselves must be given the opportunity and urged to deliver to the schools the most that they can. The only way to ensure that our reforms work is to allow schools to govern themselves and use the resources that are available to them. He said that we must ensure a sufficiency of teachers for the system. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has done that by properly addressing the problem with great urgency and giving it high priority.

The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) made an interesting point on the national curriculum. I am glad to know that he is in favour of the concept of the national curriculum but sad to learn that he has not troubled to study the way in which it is being introduced to our system. There is much flexibility. Much of the national curriculum produced by the working group is on the established principles and methodology that teachers have been using for years. The curriculum draws together into a coherent programme study and syllabuses for children throughout the years that they are at school from the age of five to 16. It certainly enables teachers to use their skills and their own style of teaching. Those who seek to slow the pace of reform simply wish to prevent the children of this generation from benefiting from our reforms.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) was right to point to the uniform mediocrity of a blanket system. He was also right to draw attention to the measures that successive Conservative Governments have introduced. Parents are the key to improvement, and if they are allowed to choose what they want for their children they will choose academic standards.

I direct the attention of the Opposition to an Islington school that has recently had a change of head teacher. It is in one of the inner-London areas that we have heard about in the debate. Parents are flocking to that school to which the head teacher has introduced old-fashioned ideas of academic standards, uniform, and good behaviour. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. There are many meetings going on in the Chamber. The hon. Lady deserves to be heard.

Mrs. Rumbold: That boys' school in Holloway deserves to be seen as a model for parents who are considering what kind of school to choose for their children. I was delighted to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth supporting the grant maintained schools.

The hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) rather mischievously misunderstood the principles of local management of schools. The Welsh Office does not deliver the formula for such management. The county sets the formula and delivers the money to the schools. The hon. Member for Bridgend should be sure of his facts before he makes mischievous statements to the House and to the wider world.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks) will be glad to know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State recognises the importance of allowing schools to have lighter burdens within the reforms. He accepts that in the schools and for teachers there must be a lightening of the burden. We also recognise that our teachers are professionals. They can be sure that the Government are committed to the return of their negotiating rights as and when agreements have been reached.

I have visited a number of schools in inner London. I admit that I have not been to schools in Southwark, but I have certainly visited Hackney, Camden and Tower Hamlets. The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) does a great disservice to the elected members and the director of education in Tower Hamlets who have been working ceaselesaly to ensure that they will have sufficient teachers.

Mr. Shore: It will not do to pretend that I am blaming my local education authority. I am not. It is doing its best, as ILEA did before it. The real trouble is that the Government have not backed the authority's efforts and given it the resources to take children off the streets and into the schools so that they can receive the education not only that they deserve but to which they have an absolute right.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government have recognised exactly that problem by making quite sure that authorities have a substantial capital allocation for rebuilding schools and building new ones.

Mr. Fatchett: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Rumbold: No, I will not give way to listen to a catalogue of disaster. There is no truth in the Opposition's charges. A bird's eye view of what a future Labour Government would do as resources allowed shows that they would return everything to where it was 11 years ago, and that will cause nothing but damage. By contrast, during the last decade the Government have striven to meet the needs of children of all abilities. Apart from the reforms of the Education Reform Act 1988, our policies have enabled more children to stay on at school after GCSE and more people are going to university.

We are not in the least bit complacent. We shall continue to pursue policies that will free our schools and our children from the stranglehold of bureaucracy. They will allow choice for parents and freedom for professional teachers to do their job in the way that they think best. Most important, our policies guarantee that children will receive a high quality, broad and balanced education. I urge the House to support the amendment.

Mr. Nellist: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. By leave of the House, I should like to ask the Minister to respond to the questions that I put to her.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have heard the hon. Gentleman's point, and it is not a point of order.

Mr. Nellist: On a point of order.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has already spoken. If he has a point of order, it should be addressed to the Chair and not to the Minister.

Mr. Nellist: In this sort of debate, Madam Deputy Speaker, as the Clerk in front of you will no doubt confirm, if I use the phrase, "with the leave of the House" —as has been done in other circumstances—I am allowed to speak a second time. That is what I am trying to do.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am giving the guidelines to the hon. Member. If he asks for the leave of the House, only one voice has to be raised in opposition for it to be refused. If the hon. Member is asking for the leave of the House, I must put it to the House.

Mr. Nellist: With the leave of the House——

Hon. Members: No.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. There can be no further point of order about the leave of the House.

Mr. Nellist: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Is it a new point of order?

Mr. Nellist: Yes.

Madam Deputy Speaker: In that case I must hear it.

Mr. Nellist: Following your ruling, which I accept, Madam Deputy Speaker, if the Minister asks, with the leave of the House, to speak again, will it be in order for her to answer the questions that I put to her, because I am the only hon. Member whom she has not answered?

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is very hypothetical.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 214, Noes 287.

Division No. 281] **[7.10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John

Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Martyn Jones and Mrs. Lila Golding.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*

Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thumham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and Mr. Irvine Patnick.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House congratulates the Government on its programme for securing further lasting improvements in standards in schools through its policies for the national curriculum, assessment and testing, increased parental choice, and greater autonomy for schools; notes increased recurrent and capital expenditure since 1979 in real terms per pupil of 40 per cent. and 13 per cent., respectively; notes widespread public support for the Government's reforms and welcomes the significant increase in staying on rates among 16 and 17-year-olds in the last two years and in the numbers going on to higher education which show the success of the Government's policies; and contrasts this inspiring programme with the failure of the Opposition to produce alternative proposals offering similar leadership for the nation's young.

Housing

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Mr. Speaker has selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

7.23 pm

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): I beg to move,

That this House condemns the Government's incompetence and indifference in the face of the mounting housing crisis which is evident from growing homelessness, soaring mortgage costs and rents and the lack of affordable accommodation in urban and rural areas of Britain; and notes the failure of the Government's chosen instruments, as evidenced by the financial crisis of the Housing Corporation which is undermining Housing Associations, and the failure of the Housing Act 1988 to achieve its targets on Housing Action Trusts, Tenants' Choice and Assured Tenancies.

Homelessness and unmet housing need may not directly affect as many as are affected by the problems of the national health service or the education service, but the scale of those problems means that homelessness and the housing problem must take their place among the major social issues which Britain faces.

There are various ways of measuring the problem. The first is to look at the Government's homelessness statistics. Those figures, which were running at a high level last year, already show a dramatic increase for the first quarter of 1990. They show that for the year as a whole it is likely that no fewer than 150,000 households will be accepted officially as being homeless. On the usual extrapolation of those figures, that means that about 500,000 people are now regarded as homeless. Of those households, 33,000 are in some form of temporary accommodation and about 12,000 are in unsatisfactory bed and breakfast hotels. Those figures represent an increase of about 500 per cent. since 1982.

In anybody's language, those figures are shocking, but they are only a fraction of the true measure of unmet housing need. Ministers will understand well that the figures do not measure those who applied to be treated as homeless but were not accepted, and that figure in turn is also at a shockingly high level—nearly 300,000 households at an annual rate this year.

That figure does not include those who simply do not fall within the official definition of homeless. In other words, the young single homeless do not appear in the statutory figure and it does not include those who are now widely described as the hidden homeless. A recent survey in London estimated that figure at about 300,000. Those are the people familiar to many hon. Members on both sides of the House, those who present themselves at their surgeries—young couples, perhaps with a young baby, compelled to live apart, each with his and her respective parents and families who are compelled to move from one temporary address to another, begging the charity of friends and relatives. One of my constituents has no address; he simply lives in a car. He, too, does not appear in the homelessness statistics.

The statistics do not tell the full story, but part of that story is told by the evidence of our own eyes. It is told through the evidence of the homelessness which we now see in the streets of our great cities. It is worth making the point in parenthesis that, although we tend to regard homelessness as an urban problem—indeed, as a London problem—the problem of homelessness among young people is rising faster in areas outside London than in the capital city.

The sight of young people sleeping rough, alongside those who are mentally and emotionally incapable of looking after themselves and those who are the victims of changes in the income support rules or who are inadequately provided for in the wake of the care in the community provisions, is truly shocking. It is little wonder that the Government have reluctantly decided that that daily witness to the growing problem of homelessness—the sight of young people begging on our streets by day and sleeping on our streets by night—is too great a blot to be tolerated and that they have to do something about it.

The £15 million measure announced by the Minister for Housing and Planning about 10 days ago at the Institute of Housing, while welcome, is no more than a street cleaning exercise. That is an inadequate response to a problem which demands much more than cosmetic treatment.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): We note the way in which the hon. Gentleman has opened his speech. I hope that before he sits down he will set out the sort of money that he would expect to spend if he were on the Government Front Bench.

Mr. Gould: I hope to meet the hon. Gentleman's points before the end of my remarks.

Perhaps the most compelling evidence for Members of Parliament is that presented to us through our postbags and at the surgeries which most hon. Members hold in their constituencies. I hold regular surgeries, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman does in his constituency. In recent years I have noticed a worrying and remorseless rise in the proportion of cases brought to me which involve housing needs. I estimate that perhaps 70 per cent.—sometimes more, but certainly 70 per cent.—of all my constituency cases involve some degree of unmet housing need.

By the end of a long evening—perhaps three or four hours—considering such a range of problems, I feel profoundly depressed. That must be an experience common to hon. Members on both sides of the House, when we not only witness a parade of human misery, which is depressing in itself, but have to acknowledge that we cannot do anything, even in conjunction with a hard-working local authority, to alleviate the problems of most of those people. The all-too-predictable and depressing aspect of the housing crisis is that it hits those who are most vulnerable.

A recent and good Department of the Environment survey showed that only 3 per cent. of the homeless had incomes at or above the national average. In London, a similar survey showed that fewer than 4 per cent. could afford to buy or rent homes in the private sector. We are dealing with people who are at the bottom of the income scale and, in many cases, are already vulnerable because of a physical or mental incapacity that makes it difficult for them to handle their affairs properly. We are often dealing with people who, by reason of membership of a minority, ethnic or otherwise, are likely to be discriminated against and to find themselves at the bottom of the pile. I fear that those groups are strongly represented in the numbers of those who are increasingly finding it difficult to be adequately housed.

Britain is a rich country, still full of resources—at least according to some Conservative Members—and at the end of a decade of prosperity. It has certainly had an unprecedented bonus from North sea oil—perhaps £120 billion to £130 billion of North sea wealth that was not previously available. How is it that a country that spends a great deal, perhaps notoriously, of its natural resources on housing and on subsidised housing can fail to provide adequate housing for a substantial minority of the least fortunate citizens in our midst?

The facts that underline the problem can be simply stated. The problem arises, not surprisingly, because there is a shortage of housing at prices that people can afford. That shortage arises primarily because we have not built enough homes. Housing completions for 1989 made a total for that decade that was the lowest peacetime total of housing completions since the first world war. That failure occurred right across the board. If the trend established by the preceding Labour Government had been maintained this Government would have built an additional 600,000 houses. They would have reduced by 200,000 the number of houses that lack one basic amenity. There is a substantial shortfall because of the Government's failure to maintain the record established by the previous Labour Government.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): The hon. Gentleman must be a little more than fair. If we compare the past 10 years with the 10 previous years—which is what he was trying to do—surely he would agree that in that first decade many of our cities were just slum clearance areas. They were demolishing old houses and replacing them. There was an agreement between the Conservative and Labour parties in the city of Nottingham that, by the end of the 1970s, it would be out of the replacement era and would no longer be building 2,000 houses a year. It would be a different scene. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman is comparing like with like.

Mr. Gould: I am more than happy to be fair to the hon. Gentleman, but I think that being more than fair is a little more than is called for. I do not think that he can sustain his argument. It would be a valid argument if there was now no unmet housing need. However, we are far from that. The whole point of the problem that I have described is that there is a growing homelessness problem, which cannot be denied. While that is the case, the pressure, the demand, and the need to build more houses remain and grow.

I do not think that the hon. Gentleman can explain the worst record of his Government in the way that he has attempted to do. The facts are clear. Under the six years of the preceding Labour Government, housing completions averaged 230,000 per year, but during the 10 years of this Government for which we have figures, the average annual total was 170,000. That is a substantial shortfall. It goes a long way towards explaining why there is the degree of unmet housing needs that Britain currently faces.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): If there were no slums, and if the number of households was the same, the point made by the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) would have validity. However, the rate of household formation has changed, and that must be taken into account. That is what causes part of the pressure of the unmet housing need. The hon. Gentleman ignored that.

Mr. Gould: My hon. Friend is right. The rate of household formation has risen for a variety of unfortunate reasons, such as marriage breakdown. There is now the relatively new or at least increased phenomenon of evictions and mortgage repossessions. All those factors have increased the need for additional housing, which is why the shortfall becomes so important.

The failure to build houses over that period extends right across the board. The private sector did well for a short time, but, as everybody knows—and it hardly needs reinforcing—it has now fallen victim to the regime of high interest rates and its contribution to the housing scene has been much reduced since mid-1988.

Housing associations, on which the Government pinned such great hopes as the main providers of social housing, have been hard hit—not only by high interest rates, but by the recently discovered problems of the Housing Corporation. No proper explanation has yet been offered about whether those problems are the result of mismanagement, bad luck, or simply having to grapple with the environment created by the Government. What is known is that even if the housing associations were freed from the problem of the difficulties of the Housing Corporation, they could not hope to meet more than a fraction of the shortfall, even at best. We also know that because of the Housing Corporation's difficulties, the Government's forecasts of completions by housing associations for the coming two years are now not worth the paper they are written on. I hope that when the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment replies to the debate he will inform the House, the housing associations, and all who depend on them for social housing of the new forecasts. I suspect that he will have a sorry story to tell—that is, if he is prepared to come clean. We certainly expect him to give us the figures.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): If the hon. Gentleman checks the record, he will see that I am not unsympathetic to the points that he made at the beginning of his speech. However, his policy appears to be spend, spend, spend; build, build, build. Does not that ignore the problem of 100,000 empty council properties and over five times that number of empty private properties? Should not we use the resources available at present to solve the problem?

Mr. Gould: If the hon. Gentleman checks the record, he will know that I take the view that one property empty for no good reason is one too many. I do not dissent from the need to impress on local authorities, private landlords, housing associations, the public sector and, not least, Government Departments that it is a shocking betrayal of the homeless to keep properties unnecessarily empty.

The hon. Gentleman must accept that even if we were to squeeze that figure, and even if we could persuade his right hon. and hon. Friends to do something about the high rate of housing stock kept empty by Government Departments, we would still not have done enough to make good the failure to build the houses that we need.

The picture is at its bleakest in local authorities. The private sector has fallen short, housing associations have been crippled even in respect of the relatively unambitious total set for them, but local authorities—despite all their efforts and against their will—have been forced to cut housing provision dramatically.

The figures are shocking. In 1976, local authorities in England completed 105,000 houses. Last year the figure

[Mr. Gould]

was down to 16,000. It is scheduled—as Ministers will agree—to fall still further in the current year, and if the present Government remain in office much longer, no doubt it will be destined to disappear altogether. That is where the shortfall arises and why, particularly in social housing where the need is felt at its most acute, we are confronted by today's problems. Hon. Members do not face those problems, but they are faced by the homeless.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): My hon. Friend has been describing the plight of the homeless, but does he agree that many other people, although not homeless, desperately need adequate rented accommodation? Is not the situation made worse by the lack of local authority building on any significant scale? There has been none in my borough for 11 years. The Government say that housing association provision can take the place of local authority dwellings to some extent. In 1978, under a Labour Government there were nearly 18,000 starts, but in 1989, before the Housing Corporation's present crisis, the figure was only 9,600. Does not that prove that even housing associations are not achieving anything like the number of starts, or providing anything like the accommodation, that they did under a Labour Government?

Mr. Gould: My hon. Friend is right, and I am grateful to him for that information. We have yet to hear the Minister's predictions for housing association completions over the next two years.

It is a question not just of the shortfall of supply but of the affordability of housing. The impact of high mortgage interest rates on home owners is well known. I suspect that it is felt by a number of hon. Members, who will not need too much persuading of the severe repercussions of that development. Home ownership, so long held up as the great objective not only of Government policies but of all right-thinking people, has become an impossible dream for many—and an impossible nightmare for many more. I refer to the people who find it extremely difficult to maintain mortgage repayments.

Many households and families whose budgets have been totally destroyed by the impact of high interest rates do not figure in any official statistics. At the fringe, there is the small but inexorably growing number of people who are substantially in arrears with their mortgage repayments. The number of those who have arrears of six months is growing all the time, as is the number of repossessions.

It would be a mistake to imagine that the impact of high interest rates has been felt exclusively by owner-occupiers. Rents, too, have risen sharply, across the board. It is difficult to measure the rise in the private sector, but rents of housing associations—on which so many hopes were pinned—have also sharply increased, by 24 per cent. last year alone. That is because those associations are directed increasingly to raise capital on the open market, so they, too, pay high interest rates.

In the public sector, as among the private rented sector, tenants have faced substantially increased rents. My hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) has done excellent work in detailing the impact on one local authority area after another. No doubt he will say more about that issue later. It is clear that many local authorities have found it extremely unpleasant to be forced to push up council rents against their own better judgment. It is worth recalling that the west Oxfordshire Tory councillors who resigned the Tory Whip did so not just because of the poll tax but because they resented and were unwilling to comply with the direction to force up council rents to market levels. They pointed to the impact of ring fencing on the housing revenue account, and of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 in directing local authorities to raise rents to market levels.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): We know that what is vilified by Labour spokesmen this year will become conventional Labour wisdom next year. Will the hon. Gentleman go through his entire speech, as he did at the Institute of Housing conference, without making one policy suggestion or stating what a future Labour Government might do?

Mr. Gould: If the hon. Gentleman will contain his impatience and allow me to proceed, I will rapidly reach the point that will satisfy his request.

Inadequate supply and increasing housing costs go some way to explaining the crisis but not why it exists. No Opposition Member supposes that the Government deliberately created it. Rather, it is the consequence of a failure of analysis and the priority given to ideology. The Government have been misled by their own obsessions. As in other areas, it is not the Government but the most vulnerable who are paying the price for the Government's mistakes.

I do not expect to carry Conservative Members with me when I make that assertion, but I hope that they will listen—particularly when I concede, as I have on other occasions, that we, too, have been guilty in the past of approaching housing from too ideological a viewpoint. We used to believe that only local authorities could provide social housing and that the intrinsic merits of public sector rented housing should override individual preferences. We recognised our mistakes, and I hope that the Government will do likewise.

The Government's first mistake was a mirror image of our own. They held, for reasons of ideological obsession, that local authorities had no role to play in housing provision. That is why we saw a shocking decline in new house completions for which local authorities were responsible during the 1980s. That is why local authorities had their allocations cut and why their ability to borrow on the capital market was reduced. That is why they are subjected to the lunatic control that prevents them from spending their own capital receipts on housing provision. That shows how far the Government have been prepared to press their hostility towards local authorities, in an attempt to eliminate them from their essential role in meeting housing need.

The Government's second mistake was excessive reliance on the private sector. No one disputes that it has a role to play, but, as is currently evident, the private sector is vulnerable to volatile market conditions, and is unable to sustain output when interest rates rise. The encouragement of house price inflation that was meant to sustain a boom has produced a bust instead. It was a mistake to assume that the private sector could carry the load by itself.

The private sector itself acknowledges that truth. Unlike the Government, private companies in the

construction industry admit that, while they can do a certain amount of work themselves, in many cases the price of success for them is co-operation and partnership with the public sector. They appreciate that, although they have capital and expertise to contribute, that is not enough by itself and that only local authorities in most cases have the land, land assembly powers, powers over planning, development, and most of all the democratic legitimacy —the accountability to their local communities—that allows them to provide and guarantee developments that are in the interests of those local communities.

The Government's third mistake of an ideological nature was the belief that the market can always provide. Given the peculiar and convoluted structure of housing finance, and the structure of land prices and building costs, there is no way that the private market can meet the need for social housing. The Ministers must know that, because a study commissioned by their Department and carried out by Price Waterhouse last year demonstrated that a married man with two children on an income just above housing benefit level could afford a two-bedroomed house for his family and pay a private sector market rent for it in only two cities in Britain—Leicester and Newcastle. Elsewhere, the private sector simply does not provide housing to such a family at a price remotely in relation with its ability to pay.

The Government's fourth mistake is obsession with tenure. They believe that changing tenure is somehow a solution to the problem of housing shortages. Whatever its merits or demerits, selling council houses does not add a single new unit to the housing stock. Indeed, it makes the management of existing stock in the public sector so much more difficult. Again, I suspect that many Conservative Members understand the experience that my local authority has. As family houses have been sold from the housing stock and the local authority has been prevented from replacing those houses, and making good that loss, it has become impossible to pursue the sensible management of the housing stock in the interests of the tenants.

Previously, it was possible to put young, married, childless couples in high rise blocks. When the couple had children, they could be moved down to a flat or maisonette with a garden. As their children grew up the family could be put into a family house. When the children left home and the parents retired, the couple could be put back into a flat, as they wished. That was a sensible progress in the use of the housing stock, but it has ground to a halt because losses have been sustained to the housing stock but nothing has been done to replace the housing lost. The system now condemns young mothers with growing children to a permanent future in a flat at the top of a high rise tower block.

I am aware that the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) can hardly contain his impatience, so I shall tell him what I believe is the way forward. It could be embraced by the Government as well as the Opposition. We must approach the provision of housing free from ideological preconceptions. We must use in as flexible and pragmatic a way possible all the instruments that lie to hand. That means that we shall encourage the private sector to make its contribution in what under a Labour Government would clearly be a more stable interest rate and investment climate.

We would encourage the private sector to enter into partnership arrangements with local authorities and housing associations so that each could make their proper contribution to the joint enterprise and provide the houses that are needed. We should extend and encourage the role of housing associations. I hope that we shall be assured this evening that the problems of the Housing Corporation are of short duration and that the Government will come to the aid of their favourite instrument. We shall encourage local authorities to resume their essential role in meeting the need for social housing. We shall begin by progressively relaxing and removing the controls that prevent local authorities from spending their capital receipts. About 8·5 billion is held by local authorities. In many cases they would be willing, indeed keen, to spend a proportion of that money on the provision of housing and, in particular, on a programme to relieve the immediate problem of homelessness.

We calculate that it would be possible to establish—indeed a Labour Government would immediately set in train—a scheme that would produce 50,000 houses at a cost of only a small proportion of the capital receipts held by local authorities. In case anyone asks what that figure is, I should mention that it is £1,850 million. That would be an immediate solution to the homelessness problem. We would then progressively further relax constraints so that local authorities could draw on the skills and resources required to enable them to make a proper contribution.

We should not only approach the matter free from prejudice but encourage a level playing field in terms of subsidy so that people can really choose which type of tenure they prefer. Housing should be free from the imbalance that currently disfigures our housing finance. A huge and growing subsidy is provided to owner-occupiers. Admittedly that is a reflection of high interest rates. That provided a substantial financial incentive until recently to those who were tempted to buy their own homes.

Mr. David Nicholson: What are you going to do?

Mr. Gould: What we intend to do and have committed ourselves to do is to reduce and remove the excessive subsidy to those at the highest level of the income scale who receive tax relief in proportion with the size of their income. The first essential step which should be taken and which will be be useful in restoring the balance that I have described is to reduce mortgage tax relief to the standard rate of tax. We also believe that we should remove the idea which so informs the Government's housing policy, that to rent one's home is somehow an inferior or second-best form of tenure.

I am glad to see that Ministers are avid readers of "Looking to the Future". Many of our proposals are designed to narrow the gap between tenants and owner-occupiers in the control that they have over their housing conditions.

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gould: The hon. Gentleman must let me complete this point.

We believe that it is right to increase tenants' control and rights so that they can again choose in accordance with their personal preferences and circumstances the form of tenure that suits them best. They should not be driven by their inadequate rights as tenants and the inadequate subsidy that tenants receive in comparison with owner-occupiers into making arrangements to purchase a house which, for many of them, proves disastrous.

Mr. David Martin: The hon. Gentleman mentioned "Looking to the Future" and referred to ideology. How will the Labour party carry out the following policy described in that document? It says:

"We are also looking at ways of extending the right to buy to private tenants who have rented for many years from a non-resident business landlord."

Would not that finally kill off any incentive for such landlords to provide housing? Does not it prevent any choice in that area of housing for the future?

Mr. Gould: I cannot understand how the hon. Gentleman can support the right to buy in respect of one group of landlords but deny it in respect of another. As to whether it is right or proper to deter the private landlord, I have no objection whatever to the private sector providing accommodation for rent to those who wish to rent at a market price. However, for the reasons that I gave earlier, the notion that the private landlord can provide housing for those who need social housing—those who cannot pay the market rent—is completely misplaced. If the hon. Gentleman continues to hold that view, that takes us a long way towards unravelling the mystery, which perhaps is not much of a mystery, of why the Government's housing policy is in such disarray and disaster.

Housing provision is not a difficult issue.

Mr. Douglas French (Gloucester): Is that it?

Mr. Gould: It is an issue that is often clouded and made more difficult by putting political labels on it. We should accept that the private sector can help, but that it cannot do everything.

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gould: No. Let me complete this point.

There is a role for the public sector and for housing associations as well as for the private sector. We should accept that the market can fix the price of some but by no means all property either for rent or for sale. We should accept that there is and will remain a substantial need for social housing at non-market prices. We should accept that individual preference rather than political prejudice should determine the form of tenure and that, apart from the pattern of subsidy and the restrictions placed on the rights of tenants even for individuals, at different times and in different circumstances during their lives they will want to choose different forms of tenure. We should make that choice as easy and real as possible.

We should recognise that the housing problem affects not only the homeless and those in inadequate housing, but the operation of our economy. In many parts of the economy inadequate housing affects labour mobility and makes it more difficult to attract essential public sector workers such as teachers, nurses, bus drivers, train drivers and so on.

Unless we get to grips with the problem we shall be doing a disservice to the homeless and fatally handicapping our economy and our society. No Government can claim to have served the country well if a minority of its most vulnerable citizens cannot find decent housing. No Government can claim success if the number of homeless continues to grow, as it does. Therefore, I hope that the Minister for Housing and Planning will not claim success on behalf of the Government but will seriously address an issue of great importance and pressing urgency which is a growing blot on the Government's 11-year record.

8 pm

The Minister for Housing and Planning (Mr. Michael Spicer): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"congratulates the Government on the success of its housing policies, which have extended the benefits of owner-occupation to two-thirds of all households, achieved better value for money from over £6 billion a year of public expenditure, increasingly focused this assistance on those most in need of it, and greatly widened freedom of choice for tenants in the public and private rented sectors."

The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) began his speech with a reference to the facts and so will I. He referred in particular to statutory homelessness. I shall happily give way to the hon. Gentleman if I am wrong, but I think that I heard him say that there were 500,000 statutory homeless. Last year 132,000 people were accepted into statutory homelessness.

Mr. Gould: With respect to the Minister, he may be confusing the number of households with the number of individuals. Shelter is very clear that it is permissible and indeed proper to multiply the number of households by a figure of just over three to produce the number of individuals who are homeless. I was referring to the number of individuals.

Mr. Spicer: The one fact about the 132,000 households accepted into statutory homelessness that the hon. Gentleman failed to mention is that they were provided with homes.

Mr. Gould: Let me put it on record for the sake of those who are trying to follow the debate that the Minister has got off to a most unfortunate start. On the central question of the statistics that tell us the extent of homelessness in Britain—the numbers accepted by local authorities as officially homeless—the Minister simply does not understand his own figures.

Mr. Spicer: I understand the figures perfectly well. I also understand that those 132,000 households were found homes. Of course, we must consider how many people are in temporary accommodation. I totally accept that 40,000 people—not 500,000 people or millions of people as we hear from Opposition Members and their supporters outside the House—are in temporary accommodation and that 12,000 people are in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. I agree that that is 12,000 too many. That is why we are spending £250 million directed specifically at helping those in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. Between 1,000 and a maximum of 3,000 people are sleeping rough on the streets of London and about 2,000 people are sleeping rough outside the metropolis. I concede that there are also a number of people sharing houses and flats unwillingly. The House is addressing itself to the reasons behind those facts.

The hon. Member for Dagenham implied that not many new houses have been built since the Government took office. In the past 10 years 1·6 million new houses have been built—additions to the housing stock—while the population of the country has risen by less than 1 million. The number of houses per head of population has risen quite considerably in the past 10 years. So why is there such pressure?

Mr. Rooker: That is pathetic.

Mr. Spicer: It is not pathetic to argue that the housing stock per head of population has risen considerably, when an essential element of the Opposition's argument is that the housing stock appears to have deteriorated.

Mr. Rooker: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Spicer: I shall give way in a moment.

When one asks why there is pressure on housing in Britain and throughout the western world, the answer is extremely clear, although the hon. Member for Dagenham skirted around it. There are new social circumstances, particularly as, sadly, many families are breaking up. It is a phenomenon in the western world and cannot be ignored. Whereas in the past a family required one house, now in some cases a family requires two, three or even four houses. Undoubtedly, as a result of families breaking up throughout the western world—if the hon. Member for Dagenham has visited other countries he will have found out for himself—there is a growing social change that is creating pressure on housing.

Mr. Rooker: I noticed the ease with which the Minister moved from numbers of homeless households to discussing population. Of course, the population has increased by only 1 million, but the Minister should be examining household formation. Once in a while a Minister has to make up his mind about whether the Government plan to bring in more restrictive divorce laws. Families have always broken up. Until the late 1960s the law did not prevent families from breaking up but people were forced to continue living together and were unable to start new lives. Will the Tory Government accept modern reality? They will have to make sure that there are more houses or introduce more restrictive divorce laws. Those are the only alternatives to the present difficulties.

Mr. Spicer: I was simply going through the facts. There are increasing numbers of break-ups in families and that is putting pressure on the housing market. Of course, the Government have to respond to that pressure. I shall explain to the House precisely what we propose to do. It will not be the same menu as that of the Labour party; I shall come to that in a few moments.

Undoubtedly, there is a need for massive public spending, and that is happening. We are spending £3 billion subsidising the housing revenue accounts of local authorities. Of £3 billion of capital allocations, more than £1 billion is currently being spent on housing associations through the Housing Corporation. I should tell the hon. Member for Dagenham, in direct reply to the question he asked in his speech, that we are confident that, for a variety of reasons, output will rise to 40,000 in the next two years. That is a considerable amount of subsidised building.

Mr. Gould: The Minister has given us an important answer. That figure, if it is to be believed, is most encouraging. How soon does the Minister envisage that the Housing Corporation, which has had to put a stop to housing association new investment for the time being, will overcome that problem and resume normal business? My conversations with those involved suggest that there is no early prospect of that happening, which would mean a substantial reduction in the forecast to which the Minister refers.

Mr. Spicer: Labour spokesmen completely ignore the reason why there are reschedulings of allocation at the moment. Completions have speeded up and are happening at a much faster rate than was originally planned. That is good news for people being housed, but of course we have to bring the process under cash control. Completions are coming through at different times under the old and new allocation procedures, but the rate of completion is being maintained, so I have given the hon. Gentleman the reply for which he asked.

A massive amount is spent—this is often ignored by the Labour party—on subsidised housing. There are two principles by which we operate those subsidies. First, we target them on those who need them most. That clearly has implications for our attitude to rents and to housing benefit and support, which we want to be channelled through the ring-fencing mechanism to those who need it.

Secondly, by changing the emphasis through the housing associations and the Housing Corporation we shall attract more private finance. We estimate that three quarters of all new build by the housing associations will attract private finance. Therefore, the taxpayer will get better value for money than with local authority finance.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): The Minister has carelessly thrown out figures on the public sector. Will he address the dispute without the Conservative party? Both sides agree that public investment in housing has been cut from 7 per cent. about 10 years ago to 1·5 per cent. That is a pretty dramatic cut. The Conservative-controlled Association of District Councils, the Conservative-controlled London Boroughs Association and many Conservative councillors say that the Government have cut too much in housing, hence the problems in west Oxfordshire that my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) referred to. What is the Government's position? Are they saying that the ADC and the LBA are wrong or right? If they are saying that they are right, where will the additional funds—estimated by the ADC to be between £35 billion and £50 billion—come from?

Mr. Spicer: The Government's massive spending programme must be considered in the context of other policies. We intend to continue with the galvanisation of the private sector, by which we shall ensure increased home ownership.

I am pleased that the Labour party has apologised to the country for the mistake that it made in opposing the right to buy. One wonders whether there are more apologies to come for further mistakes. We are long-suffering about the Labour party, but I thank it for apologising to us and to the rest of the country for being wrong about the right to buy. As it presumably now knows, there are enormous benefits in people owning their home, given the sense of pride and independence that flows from it.

We have raised the percentage of home ownership from under 60 per cent. to almost 70 per cent. That must be good.

Mr. Gould *rose*——

Mr. Spicer: I shall continue, otherwise other hon. Members will not be able to speak. The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) can reply to my remarks at the end of the debate.

[Mr. Spicer]

We shall ensure that access to home ownership stretches to those who are on lower incomes. That is one of the reasons why we are considering ideas such as rent to mortgage, extending shared ownership arrangements and part equity. I agree with the hon. Member for Dagenham that under a sound and balanced housing policy there must be a thriving rented market. That is why we intend to revitalise the private rented sector. *[Interruption.]* Opposition Members look askance, but I shall return to the private rented sector.

As a part of our panoply of policies to meet some of the pressures on the housing market, we are considering planning procedures and intend to introduce a Bill to make them much more efficient, in the interests not only of development and housing but of maintaining the countryside and environment. We want to achieve a balance as efficiently as possible. The hon. Member for Dagenham nodded his head when I mentioned the possibility of a planning Bill. I hope that that means that we shall receive the Opposition's co-operation on it.

Mr. David Nicholson: Will my hon. Friend undertake to consult hon. Members, particularly Conservative Members, about the planning legislation? Conservative Members have considerable experience of planning disputes. We do not wish to see lots more housing or other development on green-field sites in our constituencies.

Mr. Spicer: New planning legislation will ensure that the balance between development and the preservation of the environment is maintained.

My hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) earlier mentioned the national scandal of the 750,000 empty houses. It is a priority of the Government to ensure that those houses are properly used. My hon. Friend rightly said that 100,000 of those empty houses are in the possession of councils.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Labour councils.

Mr. Spicer: Yes, mainly Labour councils. Those housing authorities should be putting those empty houses to good purpose. We intend, when considering subsidies, to take into account how local authorities use their local housing stock, and we certainly will not subsidise empty council houses. We shall assume that they are earning rent when we allocate subsidies.

I agree that we must address the problem of the 600,000 empty houses in the private sector. Overwhelmingly, what lies behind that figure is hostility, which has built up for many years, towards the landlord and the private rented market. That does not exist in other similar countries. In the United States, the private rented share of the market is over 30 per cent.; in France, which is similar, it is over 30 per cent.; and in Germany it is over 40 per cent., but here it is about 7 per cent., although as recently as 1950 it was 50 per cent., and at the turn of the century it was 90 per cent.

Mr. Winnick: Does the Minister accept that the private rented sector does not provide the accommodation that is desperately needed? I looked at the advertisements in today's *Evening Standard*. It is true that there are places to let, but there are no flats for less than £140 a week. The people who can afford that are able to own their own home and to obtain a mortgage. What use are those advertisements to the people who simply cannot afford to pay £100, or in some cases more than £200, a week in rent?

Mr. Spicer: In a moment, we shall find that the hon. Gentleman has made my point for me. The collapse of the private rented market is especially tragic for single people who have traditionally depended on it for housing. There are signs that the Housing Act 1988 is bringing life back into private renting. I want to speed up that process considerably.

I want, therefore, to announce a six-point plan for reinstating the private rented sector and for giving self-confidence back to the private landlord. First, we shall give the widest possible publicity to the provisions of the Housing Act 1988. It was a well-balanced piece of legislation which introduced tough measures against unscrupulous landlords who bullied their tenants while giving new rights to landlords to set market rents and to repossess their properties. We shall, in the near future, be publishing a easy-to-read booklet on the new rights that have been given to landlords.

Secondly, as from next April, we shall be speeding up the legal procedures by which disputes about rent between landlords and tenants are settled. Thirdly, we shall be discussing with building societies and finance houses any remaining reservations that they may have about the letting of property in which they have an interest. Fourthly, we shall be discussing with housing associations how they can help on a fee-earning basis with the management problems associated with letting property. Those are sometimes perceived to be especially acute by elderly landlords. Fifthly, we shall maintain the pace of our new lodgers initiative, which is making it much easier for people to rent out rooms in their homes. Sixthly, in the context of our single homeless initiative, we shall focus attention——

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Spicer: No, I shall not give way.

In the context of our single homeless initiative, we shall focus attention especially on the better use of space above shops. That will be done with the assistance of the greater help provided by the new renovation grants regime as applied to landlords. As I said, there are signs of life already returning to the private rented sector and this plan will speed up the process.

However, one major problem remains—the blight placed on private rented housing by the Labour party. According to the published document, Labour would once again intervene in fixing rents.

Mr. John P. Smith (Vale of Glamorgan): Read it out.

Mr. Spicer: I certainly will read it out. It is good stuff and it makes good reading. On page 26, under the heading "Tenants", the document says:

"Labour will ensure that rents are set at levels which people can afford."

Labour also intends to sequester properties. The document says:

"We are also looking at ways of extending the right to buy to private tenants who have rented for many years from non-resident business landlords."

I shall not read the whole document as those sentences stand for themselves.

The measures of sequestration and of the reintroduction of a form of rent control would probably be enough in themselves to kill off the private rented sector. However, in this matter as in others, it is the secret manifesto that worries one most. The hon. Member for Dagenham has sounded reasonable and balanced, and he has used words such as "flexible" and "pragmatic". However, that is one public face of the present Labour party. Another public face is revealed by a document that I have here, which has been circulated by the Labour research department at Labour headquarters. It contains several proposals. On tenure, the document says:

"All tenants and licensees of non-resident landlords will have the right to full security of tenure . . . But Labour will go beyond simply restoring succession rights to the pre-1989 position; we will extend them in both the public and private sectors. Any partner of a tenant should have the right to succeed to the tenancy on the tenant's death . . . If the tenant has no partner, any person who has lived as part of the tenant's household for six months should have succession rights . . . Labour believes a minimum of two successions should be offered. This would allow, for example, one partner to succeed the other, and, in turn, for one of their children to succeed them."

So much for tenure.

Mr. Rooker: What is wrong with that?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Spicer: On rent controls, the document says:

"The disastrous deregulation of housing association and private rents will be ended by Labour. Rents will, once again, be set independently of the landlord."

In other words, there will be fixed rents.

On the allocation of tenancies, the document says:

"all non-resident landlords should be obliged to observe the principle of equal opportunities in the allocation of housing on the basis of race, gender, sexuality, age and disability."

On the right to buy, the document says:

"Labour's aim is to extend the principle of the Right to Buy to many private tenants currently denied that right."

There may be doubt about what the Labour party really believes. I suspect that there is considerable confusion and doubt in the mind of the hon. Member for Dagenham. In a recent interview in a magazine called "Roof", which is published by Shelter—not exactly a passionate supporter of the Government—the editor questioned him on some specific issues. The editor asked the hon. Gentleman what the Labour definition of affordable rent will be. The editor writes:

"Gould is coy. 'I don't suppose we'll be putting figures on that, no. We are, I stress, committed to rents people can afford.'"

The editor then asks:

"'can we expect Labour to define an affordable rent in the manifesto itself?' Gould laughs: 'I think that's unlikely.'"

The poor old editor tries again and asks:

"'Does Labour have a housing goal?' 'Not in any very specific sense.'"

All that would be funny if it were not rather worrying. We have had a demonstration today of the way in which the hon. Member for Dagenham sounds plausible, flexible and pragmatic—whatever word he may want to use at present. A better example is the submerged part of the iceberg, which is extremely worrying. I do not know what Labour will publish in the near future, or what its official position will be at the next general election. I suspect that Labour will try to hide most of this stuff before the election. However, even its published pronouncements on the private rented sector are blighting the market. That restricts housing, especially for the single homeless. At the same time that the Labour party has the brass neck to table the motion tonight, it is preventing the development of the traditional form of housing for single people. That is outrageous.

Mr. Gould: I am sorry to interrupt the Minister's flow. Is he saying that private landlords are now convinced of the imminence of a Labour Government? Is that his view as well?

Mr. Spicer: Of course not. The consolation prize in all this is that Labour will never get into power. The Labour party is running around the country saying in public how pragmatic it is and how it wishes to match the private with the public sector. It is apologising to the Government for being wrong about the right to buy and saying that it is thinking again about the role of the housing associations. But in the bowels of its engine room, it is churning out consultation papers that represent traditional socialism of the very left kind. That is a strange proposition for the country to be faced with. On the one hand, the Labour party is covering the cracks and, on the other, a fully fledged socialist document is being prepared in its back room.

Mr. Soley: Speaking from the engine room, I should like to draw to the Minister's attention the fact that over the past six months—there has certainly been a dramatic increase in the past few months—I have had numerous interviews with consultants and private landlords. They agree with my analysis of the decline of the private sector, which they also say has hardly anything to do with the rent Acts and everything to do with the way in which we subsidise housing in Britain. More important, a group of major landlords has gone away to work on proposals that would give private tenants the right to buy. I am pleased about that, because we shall take the good landlords with us. The Tory party can keep the Rachmans.

Mr. Spicer: Methinks the hon. Gentleman protests too much. He is clearly on the defensive, and rightly so because the Labour party is in a very bad position. The Opposition are hitting hardest single people—in particular the single homeless—who have depended traditionally on the private rented sector to rent rooms. Yet, at the same time, the Labour party introduces motions such as the motion that we are debating tonight.

For our part, we accept that there are new housing pressures, which have been brought on in Britain and throughout the western world by rapidly changing social conditions—in particular, by the tragic breakdown of many family ties. But in so far as it is a housing problem, we are treating it with urgency. We are spending vast sums of public money as effectively as we can. We are further galvanising the private sector in respect of home ownership and renting. Most immediately, we are ensuring that we make better use of almost three quarters of a million empty houses. The radical and urgent manner in which we are addressing those matters makes nonsense of the Opposition's motion.

8.32 pm

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): I found the Minister's speech profoundly depressing. That is especially sad as this is the first housing debate that I have attended since he has been in post. There were several crucial issues regarding the housing crisis on which he did not see fit to

[Mr. Jeff Rooker]

touch. I shall come to some of them in a moment. I do not want to speak for too long as this is a short debate, but I want to make a couple of constituency points and a couple of policy points.

The housing crisis is not evenly spread throughout the country. Everyone realises that. In the north, the condition of the stock is the overwhelming contributor to the crisis, whereas in the south it is the sheer shortage of stock. In the midlands, we are piggy in the middle. We suffer from poor quality housing and a shortage of stock, but not to the extremes that are experienced in the north and south. That means that we are left out; we do not make the headlines. Nevertheless, the extent and nature of the housing crisis in the midlands is such that, were we talking about London, it would merit headline space. That point is not made clear in our general housing policy. It is not made clear in the media and it is ignored by those with London-centred attitudes.

I shall refer in a moment to the Housing Corporation, but I want first to refer to Birmingham, part of which I represent. In recent years, we have lost out badly in the housing allocation. We have a massive amount of system-built housing to replace. That housing needs to be cleared; it cannot be renovated. The Boswell houses and the 900 Boot houses in my constituency cannot be salvaged. They will have to be replaced with a variety of mixed tenure housing of varying density and with different financial arrangements. That was par for the course to the Labour party when I was on the Front Bench, and it remains par for the course now. We do not have the financial wherewithal to provide the public money to pull in the private capital that we need to make those changes. That is why I think that the Government have gone too far.

Let me give an example. In the housing needs index and stress area review undertaken by the Housing Corporation, Birmingham lost out more than any other city or district in England. By 1992-93, the Housing Corporation's programme will be worth £1·7 billion—double what it was two or three years ago. By then, Birmingham will be losing out to the tune of £20 million a year because of the changes in the housing needs index and the stress area factors: the city will have lost 1·3 percentage points in that index. The Minister frowns, but he can check those figures and he will find that they are accurate. We shall lose £20 million a year after taking the stress area factors into account.

We must bear in mind the fact that that loss is on top of Birmingham's ever-declining housing investment programme allocation. The Minister talks for all the world as though the housing investment allocations and the housing investment programme are public subsidy. They are not. They merely give the city permission to borrow money, on which the council will have to pay market interest rates. The housing investment allocation is not money doled out to Birmingham city council by the Department of the Environment.

Mr. Michael Spicer: It is money that the city council is permitted to borrow and on which the interest charged is fully subsidised.

Mr. Rooker: It may be fully subsidised over a 60-year period, but Birmingham is not getting the billions of pounds worth of handouts of which the Minister talks. He spoke of the capital allocation, not the interest subsidy, and one must consider the two things separately. The HIP allocation for Birmingham is not money given to Birmingham by the Government. The Government are merely giving Birmingham permission to borrow. As I said, that makes matters even worse because, over the years, our allocation has been cut and it is planned to cut it even further. We are supposed to be the country's second city, yet on the Z scores of the census index we have the largest single concentrated area of deprivation in the country. I am not talking down my city—we have to make a realistic case for the bids—but if similar circumstances applied in London, they would be headline news.

We do not have a cardboard city in Birmingham yet, but it is around the corner. Virtually every hostel in the city is almost full every night. It would take only a slight change now and we would have a cardboard city. A slight shift would also mean families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. To its credit, Birmingham city council has never yet placed a family in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. It ill behoves the Minister to castigate the council on the number of empty dwellings, which is less than the national average—less than 2 per cent. There will always be empty properties. Heaven knows, I have criticised Labour and Tory-controlled councils alike for having an excessive number of empty properties which could be available for letting. But in a country with about 20 million dwellings and with millions of people moving around, we shall always have empty dwellings. It stands to reason. Every dwelling cannot be full every night. I understand that, according to the professionals, we need about 4 per cent., and, by and large, that is the private sector figure. The local authority average is only 2·3 per cent. We need 4 per cent. to keep the system going so that people have the chance to move. As I said, Birmingham city council has never yet put a family in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, but we are close to it and to cardboard city.

Boosting the private landlord, as the Minister did in his speech, is not the answer. Being someone else's landlord is not an acceptable way to earn a living. That is a bald, stark statement, but it is not an attack on decent, caring private landlords. I probably should have said "being someone's exploitative landlord". That is the difference between the Opposition and the Tories. We genuinely want a partnership with the private sector—in tenure and money—but not an exploitative private sector. We genuinely want variety and change in finance and tenure, but we will not set up one section of society financially to exploit another.

The Minister talked about opening rooms above shops. The Tories have been talking about that for the past 11 years, but they have done nothing about it, save in one or two areas in which there was some heritage or historical aspect or some extra funny-money funding that they could find to assist. They have not seriously tackled the problem in 11 years. It is no good trotting out that policy now in the twilight of the Government, because it will not wash.

Let me deal briefly with two other points. One relates to the Housing Corporation and the mess that it has got itself into.

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): The Government have got it into it.

Mr. Rooker: The Government have got the Housing Corporation into a mess, with the result that people will be homeless for longer than they would otherwise have been. On 13 December last, the Public Accounts Committee took evidence from the chief executive of the Housing Corporation and the permanent secretary of the Department of the Environment. Question No. 584 on page 15, which was not asked by me, on the Housing Corporation's plans and the housing aspects of the Department of the Environment, states:

"Next year you are going to get even more money. Will you be able to cope physically with the expansion of monies that is involved? I am not talking about labour and materials; I am talking about physically getting the money out to the housing associations who depend on you."

The chief executive of the Housing Corporation, David Edmonds, replied:

"I think so. I have great confidence that the work we have done over the last three or four years in putting into place some really quite sophisticated systems . . . We are a very highly computerised organisation."

He said further:

"We have a record system and a recording system and an ability to turn round paper which is very much greatly enhanced . . . We have . . . new financial systems, internal controls and checks . . . the volume of our work next year will be easily absorbable by the Housing Corporation."

Mr. George Howarth: What happened?

Mr. Rooker: My hon. Friend asks, "What happened?". Why have I and other hon. Members for some months been on the receiving end of the most desperate pleas from housing associations that did everything that they were asked to do to get ready for the new system? They would have been the first to be on the receiving end of complaints from Ministers if they had not been ready for the new regime, but they were ready. They told the Housing Corporation that they were ready. One assumes that the Housing Corporation told the Government that they were ready. The Public Accounts Committee has not yet reported on that matter. I must assume that the assurances that were given to the Public Accounts Committee last November about the strength and sophistication of financial forecasting have been totally shot to pieces and exposed as false in the past few months. The Housing Corporation—perhaps with the Government's hand on it—has failed to meet its duties and responsibilities of financial management and control.

The end result is that building firms will shed labour and homeless people will not get homes. I give one example, and I make no apology for choosing it, from the city of Birmingham. Birmingham Friendship housing association wants to build four five-person houses on a site in Sparkbrook. It has forged a package deal with a local builder who owns the site. The scheme, just under £300,000, is in the draft Housing Corporation 1990-91 programme, but, like many other housing associations, Birmingham Friendship does not know whether it will get an allocation for work this year. Meanwhile, the builder, who has held his price for the scheme since last year, is anxious to get on with the work. A small scheme, nevertheless, sums up the hardships and disappointments suffered on the ground because of the cash crisis. Homes for local Asian families will be lost. Work in an area of high unemployment will be lost to a firm of multi-ethnic builders which has held its costs for a year, waiting on the promise that it was in the draft Housing Corporation programme.

That is just one example—four houses for five families—and it can be repeated in virtually every urban area in the country. It is all because of financial mismanagement on the part of the Housing Corporation because the Government either did not listen or took no account of the information that they received. I emphasise that that is happening in every urban area in the country.

One word that I did not hear fall from the Minister's lips was "rural". Not once did he refer to the problems of rural dwellers and the housing crisis. It is no good his pointing to the Secretary of State for the Environment, who must be one of the most disappointed Secretaries of State ever to see successive Ministers of State come and go in his own Department. If he is to refer to rural areas, that is fine. My remark was not meant personally. I have great respect for the Under-Secretary of State. He has been badly treated by the Prime Minister.

I now raise a couple of issues about rural problems. I make no apology for that. I am an urban dweller and an urban representative, but someone must make the case for rural dwellers—Tory Members do not do it. The problem is constantly left to Opposition Members.

My record is quite good. I had an Adjournment debate on the problems of rural communities. If the Minister's minders want to look it up, it was on 5 April of this year and is reported at column 1394 of *Hansard*. I raised the whole gamut of the problems of rural dwellers. I referred to the difficulties of housing and gave some examples, but at column 1399 the Minister talked about increasing investment in rural areas through housing associations and referred to the programme, which had been announced, of schemes for communities with fewer than 1,000 people. He referred also to providing low-cost homes. He said that, when the scheme was in place, it would provide 1,500 homes for rent in small villages and 350 homes a year for local sales. He talked about a scheme of repurchasing former shared-ownership dwellings when the occupiers move on.

What has happened to that scheme? I understand that it has not been possible to put the scheme together in a way in which, according to lawyers, it will work. I should like an update on what has happened to the scheme to provide more low-cost, low-rent and affordable homes in rural areas. The Government made great play of the scheme when it was announced. When will bricks be placed on the mortar and when will the houses come into being?

I referred also to the remarks of the chairman of the Rural Development Commission, Lord Vinson, who is certainly not a supporter of our party—he is not a member of it. He said, and I agreed, that, on average, we need only a handful of homes in every sizeable village, but they must be affordable homes.

When I was the Opposition spokesman on housing, I suggested geographically rounding off communities. Like most other people, I do not want urban sprawl, and I do not want to destroy the countryside. I do not regard the countryside as a jigsaw puzzle or the lid on a chocolate box, which classy marketeers tell us it is all about. That is not the reality of life in rural areas when youngsters are forced to move away from villages and small towns and away from their families and jobs because they cannot possibly afford the massive prices for very small dwellings because of the dislocation of prices in rural areas. That problem must be met. I do not see action on the ground.

[Mr. Rooker]

On 5 April, the Minister made it clear to me that work was in hand. I still do not see the difficulty, and if the Minister introduces a planning Bill he will get my support.

Smaller developments in smaller villages and towns can be achieved—there is much academic work to prove that. One would not face the problem of Foxley Wood and the like, although there may be occasions when new small towns should be developed.

I believe that the concept that I have outlined is sustainable politically and financially. Unless something like that is developed, the problems of rural dwellers will get even worse. Ministers must come to terms with that because they have ignored the problem of rural dwellers for too long.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I let the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) get away with it, but I now appeal for brevity. As so many hon. Members wish to speak, voluntary restraint would be helpful.

8.50 pm

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): It is unfortunate in a debate lasting just two and a half hours that some one and a half hours has been taken up by contributions by the Front Benches. My comment does not, however, reflect on the content of those speeches. Accordingly, I shall try to set an example by being brief.

I declare at the outset that, as all the House knows, I have been a board member of Shelter since 1983. That fact is occasionally used by each side of the House in support of their argument and I assume on that basis that they are fairly balanced. I should also declare, as recorded in the Register of Members' Interests, that I am director of a group of companies that rent out properties.

There is a seductive glamour about the use of capital receipts and it was especially prevalent when I was wearing my local government hat. The Government's stance has been attacked, but, in truth, the issue is simple. If one believes that housing needs broadly approximate to the arising of capital housing receipts, one has an argument. I believe that there is virtually no connection between housing needs and the arising of receipts. Therefore, some system akin to that used now by the Government for allocating permission to borrow to local authorities with lower receipts is essential. That practice would be followed by any Government—no post-war Government have introduced controls on capital borrowing.

There is understandable dismay on both sides of the Chamber at the sight of people living rough in our major cities. *The Daily Telegraph* was right when it said in June:

"In a civilised society it is unacceptable to have people sleeping on the streets because they have nowhere to go."

Similar scenes are repeated in other western countries, but that does not reduce our concern, although it may temper the more extreme political comments made. The Minister and the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) set out some of the circumstances and social background to the problem. I judge that it is the responsibility of Government, local authorities and the various agencies connected with them to deal with this problem. Other than personal choice, there should be no reason for people to live rough in the streets or under cardboard.

The Government have launched a sustained and welcome series of initiatives. Tonight my hon. Friend outlined another six, but time does not allow me to comment on them in detail. One initiative relates to people with surplus property or rooms who do not want to be involved in what they see as the palaver of renting and engaging tenants. The initiative will enable those people to engage housing associations to do it for them. Those associations will guarantee them a rate of return. Anything that encourages such people is welcome. All the initiatives are welcome, though overdue, and form part of the solution for which we seek.

I also welcome—I would, wouldn't I?—the £2 million initiative announced a few months ago by my hon. Friend the Minister. That initiative will enable the development of a nationwide framework of advice centres, essentially run by Shelter and the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux—NACAB. That initiative wisely draws on Shelter's knowledge and expertise and it is designed to encourage young people, where possible, to remain in their local area rather than to drift into the big cities, with all the attendant difficulties that that causes.

Tonight little mention has been made of the problem of the mentally handicapped. Many have now been released into the community, but in some instances they are inadequate, unable to house themselves and perhaps institutionalised. I am aware that the Department of Health will launch an initiative on that in the near future. However, the problems of the mentally ill are extremely pressing as they form a significant part of those who are currently homeless. We owe it to them to announce that initiative as soon as possible.

The hon. Member for Dagenham is one of the acceptable faces of the Labour party. His acceptance of guilt and past ideological sins was touching, but had he studied the faces behind him, let alone left the Chamber and spoken to many Labour party councillors, he would have discovered a less than equivalent atonement.

The Labour party and those who run the large council housing empires have welcomed the advent of housing associations in their much enhanced role with all the enthusiasm of people eating sheep's eyes for the first time. When the Labour party considers the rest of the private-rented sector, it does not like or understand it. The Labour party has forgotten that every extra right for a tenant is an extra responsibility or loss to a putative landlord.

I agree with the Minister that the Labour party wants to turn the clock back because it is wedded to the public sector and the belief that it knows better. I do not know why, as the housing record of far too many Labour authorities is too depressing whether judged on the number of properties empty, the size of rent arrears or their practice of opposing by every reasonable legal way people wanting to exercise their right to buy. I cannot believe that that record can act as an example to the Labour party as, whichever way one looks at it, the picture is grim.

Last week there was a fascinating editorial in *The Sunday Times* on a wide range of issues of which housing was but a part. That editorial was not uncritical of the Government and the gist of it was that more public spending was not the solution to most of our problems. It noted:

"Overall spending on public services was 15 per cent. higher in 1989-90 than it was during the last year of the last

Labour government. So much for the 'vicious cuts of the brutal Thatcher regime' . . . The idea that Britain can be cleansed of public squalor by spending more money on public services is a widely believed nonsense. What nearly every public service needs is not more money, but more competition."

Nothing would increase the standard of rented property more than to have several would-be landlords clamouring for one tenant—that has been demonstrated in other areas of necessity such as food and clothing. Instead the landlord has been frightened away by the fear of a possible future Labour Government—not lessened by tonight's contributions. All housing reforms should be judged on the acid test: will they increase the supply of rented property efficiently? The article concluded:

"At least the government realises what needs to be done. Labour prefers the soft option of simply promising to spend much more on monopoly public services, which on present evidence most often makes them worse."

For those and other reasons, I oppose the Labour motion.

8.58 pm

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): The Government may well claim that never have so many people owned their own houses, and that that is, of course, because of Government policies. But they must also claim that never have so many people been homeless, sleeping rough on the streets, in derelict buildings, in substandard lodgings, hostels or bed-and-breakfast accommodation. That is also a direct result of Government policy. There is no doubt that in the past 10 years there has been a sharp increase in the number of homeless, well above any expected trend. A report commissioned by the Joseph Rowntree memorial trust, "Homeless in Britain", shows that every day an average 1,000 households apply to local councils for help and that during the past 10 years, more than 1 million households have been registered as homeless by local authorities.

The problem is no longer a phenomenon of our largest cities. People are sleeping on our streets, in unused buildings, temporary accommodation and other unsuitable places right across this land of ours. My own area of Southport, in Sefton, north-west England, has a homeless problem, which has been growing for the past few years as the local authority finds its hands tied with restrictions on housing finance, and social services departments find it increasingly difficult, because of their restricted resources, to assist people who are homeless through no fault of their own. Such people have been turned out of hospitals and other institutions as a result of the Government's policy of closing down such homes without providing an alternative means of care or an alternative place to live.

Such short-term measures as that announced by the Minister for Housing and Planning on 22 June to provide £15 million for additional subsidies and subsidised accommodation for the single homeless, may give some small relief. However, I fear that it may create more problems than it will solve. Until we recognise the underlying causes of homelessness and instigate a programme to combat them, the long-term prospects for Britain's homeless are bleak.

Another problem that I fear such short-term measures may create is to put pressure on the police force to use the Vagrancy Act 1824 and other laws to move people off the streets. To give people who are already down and out a criminal record as well will do little to enhance their prospects of finding permanent housing. If there is any form of compulsion attached to the programme, it is likely to be defeated before it gets off the ground. Young people may rebel against it, particularly if they can be compelled to enter an institutionalised system, of which many of them have had experience and are trying to avoid.

There will also be a problem finding buildings with long-term leases at a reasonable cost. That will not be an easy task in the south-east. There will be problems in finding the staff and volunteers to run such centres. Many of the young people on our streets are vulnerable. What safeguards will there be to ensure that someone placed in a position of trust can be trusted? I fear that short-term measures will serve only to paper over the cracks in time for the general election. Once the young people who sleep on our streets are safely hidden in hostels and dormatories, the issue of Britain's homeless will be put on the back burner.

Those are the problems that arise from short-term measures, but I must not spend any more time on that subject because it will deter from the main argument, which is to identify solutions for the causes of homelessness. There is no dispute—or should not be—that the single, most important cause of homelessness is the lack of affordable housing units. The blame for that can be laid directly at the feet of the Government. Due to the Government's policy to reduce public spending, their dislike of local government and their utter contempt for anything that might be seen as public service, the provision of social services and social housing by local government has been virtually destroyed.

The right-to-buy policy is not, in itself, a mistake, and the principle behind it is to be welcomed. Encouragement should be given to the voluntary and, in some cases, private sector to increase their contribution to the provision of housing, particularly affordable housing units. What is wrong is the way in which the Government have approached and administered that policy. The Government have failed to recognise—or perhaps chosen to ignore—the fact that in any society there will always be a need for social housing and housing at affordable rents and prices.

The right-to-buy programme, when coupled with restrictions on the use of capital receipts, has resulted in a critical shortage of such housing. In 1979, the number of new council houses built was 79,009. In 1989, that figure dropped to a mere 14,925. At the same time, the numbers on waiting lists requiring accommodation had increased from 741,000 in 1983 to 1,268,000 in 1988. That is the scale of the problem. The Government's attempts to move the emphasis of the provision of social housing to the voluntary and private sectors have failed, because they do not understand the nature of the matter with which they are dealing, and because they have not enabled the individual to acquire the means to obtain access to affordable housing.

The pressure on housing associations to take up the slack, accompanied by a reduction in central Government funds, has meant that they have had to bridge the gap between public and private sector funding through the raising of rents. In effect, they have had to move up market. The purpose of housing associations was originally to provide for the more vulnerable groups—those on low incomes, and the elderly. However, Government pressure has forced them into the business of catering for the conventional household and those more able to pay, rather than those in need. Consequently,

[Mr. Ronnie Fearn]

access to permanent affordable housing for the traditional clients of housing associations has been further reduced. The sorry saga surrounding the administration and funding of the Housing Corporation is now undermining confidence in housing associations in general, and provision of all types of homes by that process is consequently under threat.

Women have possibly been the hardest hit by current housing policy. I recommend to the Government—and to all parties—the excellent Shelter publication, "Women Losing Out", which points out that housing policies are based on assumptions about the family, and about women's role within families. The policy is designed on the assumption that the nuclear family is the norm, whereas it accounts for only 28 per cent. of households. One-parent families with one young child represent 40 per cent. of the homeless. More than 50,000 one-parent households in Britain become homeless in a year, according to the Joseph Rowntree report. In an era that promotes home ownership at the expense of public housing, women's housing options have been drastically reduced. Their traditionally low incomes and employment prospects create vast inequalities in access to housing between men and women.

The Government's housing policy is now based on the ability to pay rather than on need. The housing Acts of 1988 and 1989 have increased the difficulties of those who are unable to buy. They have reduced security of tenure, introduced higher rents and reduced benefits, owing to the system of assessment of what it is reasonable to pay rather than what the tenant is paying for. Despite all their efforts, the Government have failed to attract the private sector back to rented accommodation. The measures about which we have heard tonight will not affect that either. The private sector still accounts for only 10 per cent. of rented provision, and much of that is to students and single professionals rather than to families.

I was interested to read in the *Observer* last Sunday that, owing to the high cost of living in the south and south-east, northern universities are expecting 50,000 extra students in September and landlords are already preparing their welcome with plans to increase rents by 15 to 20 per cent. and an insistence on 12-month contracts, although the academic year is only 32 weeks long. Students and some other young people increasingly find that they are in a no-win situation, with rents payable in advance. For students whose grants are payable term by term and for young people on social security which is paid in arrears, the chance of finding a permanent roof over their head is slim.

The housing crisis in Britain will get worse as high mortgage rates and ever-increasing rents push people into arrears. In 1979 there were 2,530 repossessions; in 1989, there were 13,780. That figure is bound to climb, as will the number of evictions from rented property.

I am intrigued to know how the Government intend to square the conflict in their advice. Perhaps the Minister will answer that question. As inflation bites and unemployment rises, their philosophy demands that they encourage young and old alike to get on their bike and look for a job. As the housing crisis deepens and homelessness is rampant, the Government's advice appears to be to stay put, as the pavements of London and other large cities are not paved with gold. Indeed, they are more likely to be paved with Britain's homeless. Because of the housing crisis in rural and urban areas alike, such advice is useless.

What can we do about the problem? We must start from the premise that the country believes that the Government have a duty to ensure that everyone has access to affordable housing. I urge the Government to start towards achieving that aim by removing many of the restrictions that they have placed on local authorities. The top priority must be the release of capital receipts to enable local authorities to replenish stock, by providing houses themselves, by allowing housing associations to cater for the more traditional client, or through partnership with the private sector.

Another priority is to bring existing stock up to standard. Where necessary, there should be powers to purchase homes or to carry out repairs to empty private sector homes whose owners have refused to bring them up to a habitable standard. It is a tragedy and a sin that so many properties are empty. In May 1988 there were 23,000 such homes in the public sector, of which only 4,100 were available for rent. According to the Minister for Housing and Planning in an article in the *Municipal Journal* on 15 June, there were 600,000 vacant properties in the private sector.

I should like to see the Housing Corporation retained, at least in principle, and it should be given more funds. I should welcome changes to the way in which we define "homeless" and changes to the social security system to prevent the policy working against the young and the single homeless and especially against women who, because of our present system, remain trapped in unbearable situations that are often dangerous.

We need to change the housing benefit system so that it reflects the true cost of rents. That could be combined with the introduction of housing cost relief, a policy advocated by my party in our policy document "Housing, a time for Action", and it would apply to home buyers and people who rent. Affordable housing for all is more than the provision of bricks and mortar. Among other things, it is about the economy, our tax system, our communities, planning and the environment. Our policy document contains innovative ideas for the provision of decent housing. I commend it to the Minister and to Conservative Members.

9.11 pm

Sir Charles Irving (Cheltenham): Many hon. Members have spoken about the release of capital receipts, and I think that the Minister also mentioned it. I hope that he will be able to assure us that that matter has a high priority. At a time when the nation has a housing crisis it is utterly ridiculous to sit on millions of pounds that could be put to good use. The money was raised by local authorities on the understanding that they would be able to reinvest it. That has not happened and the freezing of the funds is causing considerable distress. The money is there for a purpose for which it is not being used.

I wish to speak about the people who are at the bottom of the pile. I have the pleasure of being chairman of Stonham housing association. Most hon. Members attend their surgeries on Saturday mornings. At one time that was a fairly relaxed affair. However, every surgery that I attend becomes harder and more distressing. People come to me with the seemingly insoluble problem of having nowhere

to go. I am sure that all hon. Members have met such people in their surgeries. Women about to go into hospital to have a baby do not have the slightest idea where they will go when they come out. What greater stress could one impose upon a person?

In general, the Stonham housing association picks up the debris of the nation, those who are at the bottom of the pile. We provide accommodation for about 10,500 people a day and we provide for all those whom Christians in every street sympathise about but do not want to do anything to help.

I have been in the House for some years, and in housing debate after housing debate I have heard Ministers from both parties say we should be doing various things. For example, they have said that they will ensure that houses belonging to the services—the armed forces and the police—are brought into occupation, as we do not need so many empty houses. I am sorry to say that nothing much has happened.

I hope that the thoughts that the Minister shared with us tonight will bring about some fundamental changes. Unless they do, organisations such as Stonham, the Salvation Army and many others that take care of the sad people in the community will close.

My organisation is satisfied that our finances will just about get us through another year. But unless there is some improvement in the complicated and nonsensical bureaucracy that has crept into the housing system, we expect that many organisations will have to close because there will be no money.

In London there are 75,000 single homeless people, and there is cardboard city. One does not have to go far from here to see the homeless. When I am on my way home I find old ladies sleeping in the bushes just down the road. It is sickening, and no hon. Member could find any funny feature in it, as it is horrifying.

The problem is not entirely caused by lack of money; we have to care about what happens to these people. If the various types of empty accommodation that hon. Members from both sides of the House have mentioned were used, we would not have a housing list, We would not have the misery that exists at present. We would not have people shuddering because a hostel might be put next door to them, and they are worried that it would not be attractive for their street, or that it might affect the value of their property.

Even in my constituency, in Cheltenham, there are many empty properties. I am not making a political point, but the town is under the control of the Liberals. People come to my advice bureau and tell me that they walk round the town and see empty houses and flats owned by the local authority.

Local authorities have much to answer for. They are so dilatory about carrying out the repairs and maintenance which would enable properties to be occupied that absurd situations arise. Young people with three children are put on the top floor of a 10-storey block. The mix of people in such blocks of flats sometimes causes indescribable trouble. Anti-social behaviour between neighbours increases week by week and sadly it often ends up with someone going to prison.

A lot can be done without the investment of vast sums of money, because we have already allocated millions of pounds for housing which could be better invested than it has been in the past.

Stonham, other similar organisations and thousands of voluntary workers give their time to nurse the mentally ill, who would otherwise go to prison because the hospitals that used to accommodate them are no longer available. All those people are being looked after by volunteers and a splendid professional team which has a right to expect to be paid. Unless we and my hon. Friend the Minister can find some better way of caring for people and paying the bill, there will be nowhere for even the sick to go.

9.19 pm

Mr Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): When the history of the 1980s comes to be written, one of the Government's real and unforgivable failures will be their lack of a comprehensive and cohesive housing policy. That failure has condemned millions or our citizens to live in inadequate homes and thousands to be without accommodation altogether.

Almost immediately upon taking office, the Government began to cut the housing improvement programme which the Labour Government had developed extensively in the 1970s and which raised to modern standards the amenities of many hundreds of inter-war council houses. Pre-1919 terraced housing, with outside toilets and sub-standard kitchens and bathrooms, cried out for improvement and major internal and external repairs were needed to prevent them from falling down.

The Government's response has been to drip feed that sector with small and completely unrealistic funds, leading to the outrageous situation in the 1990s of much decrepit and unhygienic housing in all our major towns and cities. Had the level of funding in real terms under the previous Labour Government been continued, many of those houses would now have been improved and many thousands of families would be living in more pleasant and environmentally acceptable conditions.

Equally worrying is the way in which the Government have, at every opportunity, sought to weaken and frustrate the role of public housing authorities in planning and servicing local housing provision within their communities. All manner of devices have been invented in order to remove local government from that important social policy area of human need.

Legislation has directed powers and finance to housing associations through the Housing Corporation with all the attendant difficulties and demarcation problems. There is great pressure on some housing associations to take on more responsibility in housing than they are capable of dealing with.

The Labour party recognises that housing associations have a positive role to play, but they should work in partnership with local government, the special needs housing sector and the important and emerging co-operative housing sector.

Much more devious has been the Government's promotion of the private sector. Insurance and property development companies have been encouraged to move into the private housing sector and to buy up housing estates and parcels of council houses, all complete with sitting tenants, in order to deprive local authorities of their historic and accepted housing role.

The Government have been unable to resist the attractive prospect of giving their friends in the City major capital gains through long-term property values and the ability to make huge financial gains by imposing massive

[Mr Dennis Turner]

rent increases on the poor tenants involved. High powered propaganda accompanied the Government's ideological separation from fairness and common sense. Thank goodness council tenants in Britain have dispatched that crazy notion to the dustbin of history by voting overwhelmingly against housing action trusts for their estates.

Once again, there is an absence of compassion in the Government's treatment of the thousands of elderly and handicapped citizens who are condemned to live their lives in accommodation wholly unsuited to their special needs. Bungalows and specially adapted accommodation for the elderly and the handicapped are at a premium in almost all areas. In my locality, it was recorded recently that about 2,500 elderly and disabled people were competing for the 50 bungalows available for letting. On that basis, many will die without having benefited from the well-being that such accommodation can bestow.

In addition, there is the misery and degradation of homelessness for many thousands of people in the Prime Minister's caring society; the uphill struggle for millions of people trying to meet record mortgage and rent payments; and, as we are now witnessing, the collapse of the private housing sector. In this debate, we are again presented with a classic picture of Tory indifference in the midst of irrefutable evidence of a major social need in housing which continues to go unmet.

9.27 pm

Mr. Timothy Raison (Aylesbury): Unlike the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-East (Mr. Turner), I believe that the Government have had considerable housing achievements to their credit during the past decade. The outstanding achievement has been the enormous stimulus to owner-occupation through the introduction of the right to buy, but in other respects also our housing stock is clearly better. It is interesting to note that, even during the past few years, there has been a marked improvement in the quality of local authority housing, certainly in my constituency. That is largely a product of the fact that capital receipts could not be spent on new building—or only a limited amount—and as a result a great deal of money has been available for improving council stock, and there have been substantial improvements.

The focus of the debate is, rightly, not on owner-occupation, but on the problems for those who cannot afford to buy houses and therefore have to look for low-cost rented housing. That is now the real priority in housing policy, and I hope that my right hon. Friend and his colleagues will accept that. As we have heard from a number of hon. Members, the problem has been made worse by the increase in family breakdowns and the increased number of one-parent families. I do not share the view that that is a trend about which nothing can be done. However, I recognise that it is putting pressure on local authority and low-cost housing.

Aylesbury Vale, in my constituency—and I am happy to talk about this after what the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) said—spans both rural and urban housing. There has been a steady rate of council building until recently, and currently there is a genuine waiting list that can be measured in hundreds, certainly not in thousands.

I am concerned that there may be real trouble ahead. I listened to what my hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Sir C. Irving) said about what was happening in his advice bureau. I would not phrase it as dramatically as he did, but I am aware of an increasing pressure from less-well-off people who are trying to find somewhere to live. Constituencies such as mine will be in significant trouble during the next decade or two unless further action is taken because council building will virtually come to an end. It has almost no housing investment programme allocation in the current year, although it had and still has a fairly steady rate of building. It appears that, by next year, only about 16 buildings will be erected by the council within the Aylesbury Vale area. We are disappointed that we have no allocation for the kind of equity sharing programmes that, in principle, have much to commend them.

The sharp drop in council building would be fine if we could be confident that the increased demand would be taken up by housing association construction. Local authorities in my constituency have been active in pursuing that option, and Chiltern local authority has successfully converted the whole of its housing stock to a housing association. In Aylesbury, where the pressure is greater, we have encouraged housing associations, and they have shown interest—recognising that even fairly affluent places such as Buckinghamshire have housing needs.

However, when it comes to the crunch, associations find it difficult to build the houses that local authorities cannot provide. That partly has to do with the drying up of Housing Corporation funding. No doubt that is a problem brought about by its success—and I accept the remarks of my hon. Friend the Minister in that respect—but the difficulty remains that it takes time for housing associations that move into an area where there has been very little general purpose association activity to get off the mark.

If the Government are to rely on the Housing Corporation as the main instrument of providing low-cost housing, it is important to my constituency and others that resources are made available to the Housing Corporation for it to do its job. I hope that when my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary winds up he will say more about that aspect than did my hon. Friend the Minister.

The private rented sector has also featured in this debate. My right hon. and hon. Friends and I welcome the comments of my hon. Friend the Minister about new means of encouraging the private rented sector. It is difficult in areas like mine to do a great deal very rapidly because they do not have large numbers of Victorian houses available for conversion into private rented housing. That is not the nature of property in my constituency, and it is a problem elsewhere also.

Can new construction for private renting be encouraged? I do not share the horror of some Opposition Members of private money being invested in housing and making a profit. That is a perfectly desirable activity, and I am all for encouraging it. There was certainly some evidence of ambivalence among Opposition Members on that issue. The real problem is providing an adequate economic return on the investment necessary to develop low-cost private rented housing.

We need social housing and to give backing to the Housing Corporation, but I still believe that there is scope for new council housing. One of its merits is that it provides an avenue into owner-occupation in a way that housing association property does not. Many people in my constituency have moved on from renting new local authority housing to buying those properties, and have turned them into good owner-occupied houses. It would be a pity if that process were to end.

The question of council rents has not featured greatly in today's debate. Clearly they should be reasonable. It is true that they are backed, by and large, by a fairly generous housing benefit system, but it was a mistake to press for a £4·50 rent increase in areas such as mine in April. That was not really necessary, and it is particularly unfortunate that it coincided with the introduction of the community charge and higher water charges. I hope that when next year the question of the assumed rent increases expected by the Department of the Environment arises, my hon. Friend the Minister will do all that he can to contain them within very reasonable limits.

Although there is an underlying assumption that rents in the council sector should move more towards market levels, which has an element of wisdom, many people in constituencies such as mine, which are fairly prosperous, nevertheless do not have higher incomes than their counterparts in the north of England or other areas, where the cost of housing is deemed to be lower. If someone happens to work in the health service or in local government on relatively low pay, the pay is exactly the same as it is for someone who works in Lancashire, Northumberland or elsewhere. It is not reasonable to expect people on the same level of pay in other parts of the country to pay higher local authority council rents.

Housing for the less-well-off is of considerable importance. It is important politically. I am sure that my hon. Friends are aware of that. It is also important for the well-being of our people. I hope that we can bring to its conclusion the drive, energy and success that we have shown in tackling the question of owner-occupation.

9.35 pm

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): Initially I was reluctant to speak in this debate because the motion, with its references to the Housing Act 1988 and to urban and rural areas in Britain, seemed more a Great Britain than a United Kingdom motion. After I made my maiden speech, one Conservative Member said to me that he hoped that I would speak in United Kingdom debates and not limit myself to Northern Ireland matters. However, if I am to contribute to United Kingdom debates, United Kingdom debates must be held.

The motion refers mainly to the Housing Act 1988. I have heard rumours that that Act may be extended shortly to Northern Ireland. That would be worth examining. I welcome the extension of home ownership, which has been one of the chief achievements of the Government. I am also glad that they realise that the extension of home ownership will go only so far and that it is also necessary to maintain the rented sector, both public and private. The public sector should not be limited.

We need to expand and help the private rented sector. The chief measure in the 1988 Act was to bring rents up to market levels in the hope that such rents would increase supply. As I said to the Minister the other week, the experience at home is quite the opposite. We have had no rent control on new-build properties for 30 years but there has not been a significant increase in the supply. It could be argued that market rents should be introduced independently because it is slightly unfair to expect the private landlord to subsidise people and we should not deprive them of the income that their property would otherwise command. However, moving to market rents is not enough to solve the problem. We must consider other matters.

Obviously, an increase in supply is desirable. I was glad to hear that changes will be made on the planning side and that planning controls will be relaxed. That should not be a matter of rushing off into green field sites to build. One should look to urban areas where much land could be made available. Moreover, planning difficulties are not always the fault of public corporations and local authorities. It is often the fault of the planning authorities, which take far too long to arrive at decisions. I hope that the Minister will tackle that matter.

Several hon. Members mentioned empty housing. I noted with interest that the Minister hinted at financial penalties for public authorities which have empty houses on their hands. I did not hear him suggest any equivalent financial penalty when private property remains empty. Perhaps he will think about that. Such a penalty might go some way to increasing supply. However, an increase in supply may not be sufficient. Even with an increased supply, some people will not be able to enter the market. We must consider ways of assisting people into the market. The watchword must be that we must subsidise people, not property. I should like to see a much broader approach to helping people to enter the market. Together with some increase on the supply side, that might bring housing within people's range.

Within the Minister's six-point plan to tackle those problems, I noted his reference to speeding up legal procedures. I hope that that will not deprive people of their rights to proceedings in court. The existing procedures for getting orders for possession are fair and should not be changed. However, the enforcement of orders that have been granted needs to be examined as delays occur far too often.

Because of lack of time, I shall curtail my comments, but I should like to make a couple of points about the change of landlord provisions in the 1988 Act. Let me sound a warning against the extension of any of those procedures to Northern Ireland as that would open up considerable dangers. Paramilitary groups might apply to acquire public authority estates, and one could not be sure that the Northern Ireland Office would be sufficiently astute to catch them out and stop them. Other bodies such as insurance companies and building societies might seek to take over estates. The danger is that they would be softer targets than the public authorities for pressure from paramilitary groups, although the record of the Housing Executive is pretty bad. But that is another matter.

Housing associations make a valuable contribution and have done a considerable amount to increase the supply of housing. They provide an alternative to public authority housing and they should be encouraged, as competition is a good thing. The housing associations are mostly controlled by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive—the public authority to which they should be providing an alternative. With the best will in the world, the Housing Executive often hampers those authorities, although it is

[Mr. David Trimble]

not consciously hostile to them, so a different regime is required, and had time permitted perhaps I would have elaborated on that.

9.41 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): The Government are charged with incompetence in their housing policy and with a callous disregard for the welfare of the people of Britain. It is not true that the debate concerns only the rented sector, as the right hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison) said. It is very much about the lack of affordable accommodation to rent or for sale in rural and urban areas. Let the Government make no mistake about it: if they simply try to mop up some of the homelessness in London by providing a few extra night shelters, they will find that the pot continues to fill up, not least from areas such as Aylesbury.

The growing pressure on housing in rural areas is forcing people out of those areas to the seaside towns and other cities. They move into temporary accommodation, often holiday lets, and become homeless when the accommodation is required.

The desperate folly of the Government's policy was to attempt to end council housing without putting anything in its place. I understand that the Government do not like council housing. I think that they are wrong, as do the people who occupy council housing. The people who desperately want to get out of the private sector also think they are wrong. That is why Tory and Labour Members speak to far more people asking for a council house or a housing association house than wishing to move into the private sector.

The right hon. Member for Aylesbury was totally and utterly wrong to say that the housing stock is improving. It is decaying fast. The right hon. Gentleman shakes his head. If he will not take it from me, I implore him to ask the Association of District Councils. According to that Conservative-controlled organisation, between £35 billion and £50 billion is needed in housing investment. It is said that the housing stock needs to last for 1,000 years if we are to avoid further decline. Previously the figure was 200 years, and that worries the housing experts. The Government's analysis is desperately and seriously wrong.

Several times, the Minister and Conservative Members said that they want to revive the private rented sector. I do not object to that; as long as there are good landlords, I am not fussed. However, the Minister, with his pathetic list of six things, which included issuing documents, is trying to revive a dead parrot. The reason why it is dead is nothing to do with the rent Acts but everything to do with housing finance. That is why, to their credit, the previous Chancellor of the Exchequer, the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson), and the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, who was previously the Secretary of State for the Environment and is not normally regarded as a logical man, wanted to end mortgage income tax relief. They wanted to end the subsidy to the buying sector because they knew that either the subsidy to the rented sector had to be increased to make market rents affordable or the subsidy to those who were buying had to be stopped.

Labour Members argue that until the Government reform housing finance they cannot get away from the fact that the housing purchase sector and the rented sector must be subsidised. No matter how much the Conservative party wants to get rid of mortgage income tax relief to revive the rented sector, it will not succeed until it makes it almost impossible for increasing numbers of people to buy, even if interest rates come down significantly. That is why house purchase is beyond the reach of between 50 and 60 per cent. of families in southern England. Until they address and understand that problem, it will only get worse.

Much of the thinking of the Tory party can be gleaned from the press releases issued by the Minister. He said:

"The Government are determined that there should be no excuse for sleeping-out on the streets."

The image is of thousands of people tucked up nice and warm in their beds at night thinking, "Isn't it a nuisance; the Government will not give me an excuse to sleep on the streets." People do not want to sleep on the streets. The Government may try to turn these people into scapegoats and to portray them as wanting to sleep on the streets, but why is it that in all western countries, except in those that follow housing policies similar to ours, such as the United States, the problem is nowhere near as severe, and in most cases does not exist?

As I have told the Minister, the big difference between today and 1979 is that when I was a probation officer in the worst areas of London around King's Cross, if a homeless person said to me "I want accommodation", I could obtain it for him, whereas today I could not. People must queue for cardboard boxes. That shows the success of the Tory party's housing policy. *[Interruption.]* It is true and I can prove it to Conservative Members. There is a queue also for bed-and-breakfast accommodation, and some people have been in such accommodation for two or three years.

The Tory party promised that local authorities would be able to use their capital receipts to invest in housing, but that was not allowed. The hon. Member for Cheltenham (Sir C. Irving) was absolutely right: local authorities could use that money well. It is a tragedy that they are not being allowed to do so.

What do the Government intend to do about the crisis in the Housing Corporation? They said:

"It is proposed that in future an increasing proportion of new development by housing associations should be funded by a mixture of grant and private finance. Not only will this make the available public resources stretch further but the injection of market disciplines will itself lead to greater efficiency and make associations more independent and more responsible for the quality and effectiveness of their investment decisions and the competence of their management."

I can only echo the Conservative chair of the housing committee in Plymouth: if local authorities had behaved as the Housing Corporation has behaved, they would be drummed out.

The problem is the Government's problem, and we know that the figures in the Department of the Environment's White Paper on public expenditure plans are wrong and misleading. I want to know from the Minister not wild guesses or his invention of 40,000 houses but what the approvals will be for 1990-91 to 1992-93.

We need to know whether the Minister is prepared to see the Housing Corporation being examined again by the Public Accounts Committee. Anyone who knows anything about the matter knows that the Public Accounts Committee was deeply worried about the Housing Corporation and knows that its report, which will be out soon, will be of no comfort to the corporation. The

tragedy is that the Government, not the Housing Corporation, are truly responsible because the Government created the scheme.

The Government say, once again, that they will punish local authorities for keeping properties empty. I am opposed to properties, whether public or private, being kept empty. However, we know that, on average, 2·1 per cent of local authority stock, 3·1 per cent. of housing association stock and 4·5 per cent. of private sector stock is empty. No less than 18 per cent. of Government property is empty. Much of it is in London and includes police officers' houses, prison officers' houses and Ministry of Defence houses, which have been empty for up to 10 years. Will the Government penalise themselves for keeping literally thousands of houses empty? They will not. The Minister may look at his feet and then gaze up at the ceiling; he is responsible for those empty properties. If he penalises local authorities which, on the whole, are good, all he will do is to aggravate the problem.

The Minister should say what the Labour party says. Where we have examples of bad landlordism, whether by councils, by housing associations or by the Government, we should use one of the other sectors to get those houses into use. We shall say to the private sector what I have been saying to it, successfully, for a long time. There are successful partnerships, but if the Minister believes that he will encourage the letting of flats above shops simply by making it easier to get people out again, he is wrong. The person who has a shop needs the confidence of knowing that if he has a bad tenant who, for example, ruins his stock pouring water through the ceiling, he can get him out, not in six months, but the next day. There is only one way in which to do that without throwing people on to the street and that is to use lease-back. If the Government would release some of the controls on lease-back, one could achieve that.

The Opposition object to the way in which the Government have squeezed the private rented sector out of existence. The hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) is right to say that in Northern Ireland 25 per cent. of the rented stock was private in 1957; now it is only 5 per cent. Yet no one has threatened the reintroduction of rent controls in Northern Ireland. The Government's plans do not add up to a sensible policy, as anyone who knows anything about housing knows. If one wants to bring areas into use, one should use sensible lease-back schemes and begin to reform housing finance. One could then deliver the policies that this country needs.

We cannot continue with a disgrace that is unique to the western world, with the exception of the United States. We have teenage children—I emphasise the word "children"—begging in our streets. It is wrong and we know that it is wrong. It is unnecessary and comes about as a result of an incompetent Government who do not know one end of the housing market from the other.

9.52 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): By now, the Opposition must be regretting that they decided to debate the issue of housing today. The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) treated us to a low-key contribution even by his standards. It was free from ideology, but it was also free from ideas. It was seductively bland and, as one of my hon. Friends quipped, no cliche was left untouched.

By contrast, my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning responded with a devastating critique of—*[Interruption.]* He did. He made a devastating critique of Labour's hidden manifesto. The Opposition know that they have been found out, which is why they resort to derisive laughter. My hon. Friend showed how the Labour party's basic hostility to the private rented sector had not changed one iota. Only those hon. Members who were in the Chamber witnessed the derision and contempt that my hon. Friend's ideas to promote the private sector received from the Opposition.

Shortly after my hon. Friend sat down, the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) revealed in his own words the prejudice that we know that the Labour party still has. The hon. Gentleman said that being somebody else's landlord was not an acceptable way of earning a living. If it is acceptable to make a profit out of producing and supplying food and clothing, why is not it acceptable to make a profit out of supplying housing? If it is acceptable to earn a living providing rented housing in Germany or France, why is not it acceptable in this country?

Mr. George Howarth: Before the Minister goes too far with that argument, may I ask him whether there is one aspect of the Housing Act 1988 that he would claim has been successful?

Mr. Chope: Certainly, there has been a lot of success under the Housing Act 1988. Take tenants' choice, for example. Tenants' choice has shaken to the core the complacency of Labour housing authorities. As a result, even the worst Labour housing authorities now realise that, because there is a choice, they must buck up their standards, otherwise tenants will opt out.

The Conservative party believes in freeing up the market. We believe in supply side measures. My hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) called for more competition and showed decisively how more competition is needed, rather than more control and restriction, for which the Opposition argue.

We believe that supply side measures will bring more empty properties back into use. That is true not just in the private sector, but in the public sector, where the introduction of the ring-fenced housing revenue account is already having an impact. Tenants of inefficient councils throughout the country now realise that they will have to pay more in rent or suffer lower standards of service if their council landlords cannot turn round their properties more quickly and make better use of their housing stock.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Sir C. Irving) made an impassioned plea for more of the proceeds of sales to be released for use by the councils. I have to tell my hon. Friend that the local authorities' outstanding debt is about £40 billion. That is a massive debt burden. We think that it is reasonable that, if a council sells an asset, it should use part of the proceeds of the sale to pay back some of its debt. My hon. Friend's own council, Cheltenham, had outstanding debts worth £54 million at 31 March 1989. That is a substantial sum and it is reasonable that, if the council sells some of its assets, it should use some of the proceeds of the sale to repay part of its debt.

[Mr. Chope]

It is the Labour party's policy to borrow and borrow and to saddle future generations with massive burdens. That policy has been referred to again this evening by Opposition Members. It is the policy of Conservative Members to encourage the sale of surplus assets and allow part of those proceeds to be reinvested.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison) said that, even in areas such as Aylesbury Vale, families had problems in trying to find housing. I know that that is true. But it is fair to say that in the first quarter of this year only three families in Aylesbury Vale were in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. In Cheltenham, there were no families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation and no one in a hostel. The relative housing needs of those areas have to be compared with the much greater housing needs of the inner cities. Having said that, I should point out that the Housing Corporation's special rural programme is not affected by any legal problem—as the hon. Member for Perry Barr suggested—and, as we know, that programme will provide 1,500 new units per annum for rent and 350 for sale, to be concentrated in villages with a population of less than 1,000. That programme is being brought into effect as we speak. There are still some detailed legal arrangements to be sorted out, but there is no fundamental problem.

The debate has shown that the Opposition are still clinging to the failed socialist culture of the 1960s and 1970s. They are in favour of curbing the market, stifling enterprise and undermining initiative. This month's copy of "Roof" has a swingeing attack on Labour's housing policies. Albeit reluctantly and with disappointment, "Roof" accepts that the Government and Opposition Members——

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone) *rose in his place and claimed to move*, That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 217, Noes 280.

Division No. 282] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.

Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Nicholas Baker and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House congratulates the Government on the success of its housing policies, which have extended the benefits of owner-occupation to two-thirds of all households, achieved better value for money from over £6 billion a year of public expenditure, increasingly focused this assistance on the most in need of it, and greatly widened freedom of choice for tenants in the public and private rented sectors.

Student Loans

10.14 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I gave notice of this point of order to Mr. Deputy Speaker, who I thought would be in the Chair. As you will be aware, Mr. Speaker, the Education (Student Loans) Regulations 1990, which we are due to discuss now, were originally laid before the House on 13 June, but were subsequently withdrawn and had to be relaid and redrafted on 25 June, following advice by counsel to the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments. The Committee has produced a helpful note for the benefit of all hon. Members, which is available in the Vote Office. At the end it says:

"Oral evidence from the Department of Education and Science is printed in the Minutes of Evidence of 26th June 1990."

That oral evidence is important for the purpose of ascertaining why the regulations were laid in their original form, and why they were subsequently changed. After two inquiries, the Vote Office told me that the evidence was not available to hon. Members in printed form. Is it acceptable for hon. Members to debate those matters without the evidence of the Committee before us?

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I remind the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw)—and you, Sir—that when in this Session—through no personal fault—the House has not had relevant papers, whether on the Floor of the House or upstairs in Committee, you or your colleagues have held that that offends the best procedures of the House, and on occasions have allowed the debate to be delayed until the papers are in front of us. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, whether Ministers and the House authorities can be asked whether this matter can be put back until later in the week.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Robert Jackson): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. We are to have a debate about these matters; I am here to explain about the regulations, and I do not believe that it is necessary for the House to have the minutes of evidence given by my officials. It is perfectly feasible for the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) to press any point that he wishes with me, and I shall answer it.

Mr. Straw: With respect to the Under-Secretary of State, that is not good enough. The Joint Committee made its decisions in the light of oral evidence from officials at the Department of Education and Science. Moreover, in its notes to the House it said that oral evidence from the Department of Education and Science is printed—not "is going to be printed"—in the minutes of evidence of 26 June. Nevertheless, it is not available to the House. The Joint Committee evidently thought that it would be available before the regulations were considered by the House. I agree with the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes): it is unacceptable for the House to be expected to consider the matter in this way, and, with respect, there is no reason why the matter should not be deferred until the minutes are available.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It would be sensible for us to proceed. Let us hear what the Minister has to say about the matter. Before I can hear a dilatory motion of this kind, we should hear what the Minister has got to say.

Mr. Straw: With respect, Mr. Speaker, my point is one for you, as protector of the rights of hon. Members in respect of the Executive. The Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments said that those minutes were printed—not "going to be printed". However, they have not been printed. I do not know, and, with great respect, neither does the Secretary of State, whether the evidence given by his officials to the Joint Committee on an occasion when he was not present is relevant to the proceedings of the House. Only the minutes can tell us, but we do not have them before us. Why can you, Mr. Speaker, not suggest to the Government that the debate be deferred until we have the minutes before us?

Mr. Speaker: I call the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), who is Chairman of the Select Committee on Statutory Instruments.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I was not aware that the minutes were not available. The aim of the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments was that the minutes should be available to the House. The Committee took evidence from representatives from the Department of Education and Science specifically because one instrument was laid and withdrawn that was badly wrong on a number of counts. We wanted the House to have the information from the evidence that we arranged to have printed and published for the use and convenience of the House. It is not the Committee's fault of course, but I apologise to the House because the Committee intended to provide the information in the knowledge that the debate was to take place this evening.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Before debating these important regulations it is vital to have some insight into the thoughts of the officials. The regulations deal with officialdom and bureaucracy. If we do not have the officials' views in a manner that is acceptable to the House, surely the usual channels should be allowed to discuss the matter so that we can meet when the information is available. I hope that that suggestion meets with the approval of all hon. Members.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. When these regulations came before the other place last week they were not in a form that enabled them to be debated. Proceedings were adjourned until the relevant papers in properly printed form came before the other place. I realise that the other place is not in your domain and that, like hon. Members, you are independent of the other place. However, I hope that what I have said will encourage you to the view that it would be proper for all the relevant papers to be before us. In other cases in the recent past you and your colleagues have said that we should have such documents.

Mr. Jackson: I understand why hon. Members are making a fuss. The officials who went to the Select Committee on Statutory Instruments were speaking on my responsibility. I am here to take part in the debate and answer questions on these matters. The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) is a member of the Committee and knows that the argument being developed is fictitious.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Minister has suggested that I raised an entirely false point. I was informing the House that the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments carried out the instructions contained in the Standing Order of the House. That Standing Order charged us to give an opportunity to the Department of Education and Science before reporting anything to the House. At short notice, the Committee went out of its way to allow officials to give evidence if they chose to do so. We did that as a service to the House and not in any way to raise fractious points. The Minister is wrong. The Committee, which contained hon. Members from all parts of the House, was doing the job that the House entrusted to it. I have no idea why the evidence is not available. It was not the intention of the Committee that it should not be available. The evidence given by officials to the Committee was recorded in the usual way and was expected to be printed as a service. That is in line with the Standing Order, which is an instruction to the Committee to provide that service to the House in order to illuminate the debate.

Mr. Speaker: The problem is that I am not certain who is responsible for the document, which states:

"The oral evidence from the Department of Education and Science is printed in the minutes of evidence of the 26th of June."

If the Government are responsible for providing this information, then that evidence should be available, but I am not certain whose responsibility it is.

Mr. Straw: My understanding is that the House is responsible for printing the minutes. I assume that that is the case because the Select Committee on Statutory Instruments is a Committee of the House. There is always great anxiety about issues relating to delegated legislation. That is because of the great power that is in the hands of the Executive to legislate under powers given in principal Acts. For that reason the Committee, of which my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) is Chairman, was charged with clear duties to ensure that regulations brought before the House were consistent with the principal Act. In this case, counsel advised the Committee that in three important respects the regulations were not consistent with the principal Act. The regulations were then changed.

The Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South made clear, assumed that the minutes of evidence, including evidence given by officials, would be brought before the House. The Under-Secretary may explain away the changes, but that is not good enough. We need to know the evidence of the officials who, on the whole, possess greater detail than the junior Minister, about why the regulations were defective in three important respects—one of which affects Scottish law—and why they were subsequently changed.

As it is the responsibility of the House to have the minutes before the Chamber, I respectfully suggest that it is your responsibility, Mr. Speaker, to say that the debate cannot proceed until we have them.

Mr. Speaker: If the House does not have the full information, it puts it in a difficulty. Has the Minister anything to say on the matter?

Mr. Jackson: This is a matter for the House authorities. When the House has the opportunity to see the evidence, I think that it will wonder whether it was worth making an issue of it. If the House feels that it would like to see this information, I should be perfectly willing to postpone the matter until it has seen it. That will give the House authorities an opportunity to circulate the information, as is their responsibility.

Mr. Speaker: I think that what the Minister has suggested is the right course to take. I shall suspend the House again today for five minutes because it is unfair if the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett), who has the Adjournment debate, is not present for it. The House will resume at half-past 10 o'clock for the Adjournment debate.

10.25 pm

Sitting suspended.

On resuming——

Over-the-horizon Radar

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

10.33 pm

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): I am somewhat surprised to be addressing the House an hour and a half earlier than I thought that I would be. I have had to run to the Chamber from the other side of the Norman Shaw building in order to do so. However, I am delighted to have the opportunity to address the House on a matter of such importance to my constituents.

I thank my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement for all the work that he has done to assist me in the past few months, ensuring that my constituents have all the information that they need to make the right decision in the coming planning process.

It is always difficult for a Member of Parliament, on a major planning application affecting his constituency, to say that he will not make any decision on the issue until he has seen all the evidence. There is always a danger that one could be accused of calling for something in someone else's backyard but not in one's own.

It is important that I set out the criteria on which I shall judge the application when we have seen all the evidence. An issue that concerns national defence should be one on which people make a decision based, first and foremost, on the best interests of the nation. This application will stand or fall on whether it is of such national importance that it overrides local interests. All of us, wherever we may be, have a duty to our country to ensure that, if a matter is of overriding interest to the nation, it is not opposed for simply selfish local reasons.

I begin with the question of national defence and set a number of parameters within which I shall judge the planning application. First, is it the only site suitable for the radar installation? The Ministry of Defence says that 166 sites were examined before it decided on St. David's. From a parliamentary answer yesterday, I gather that none of those 166 sites were not in MOD ownership. That suggests that the first criterion of the MOD is whether it owns the site, and that it did not consider other sites, not in its ownership, that might have been suitable.

Secondly, we must ask whether, if the installation goes ahead, there is any other means by which similar radar cover could be provided. Could it be done by continuous use of aircraft carrying radar to survey the area that would be covered by the installation at St. David's? I shall be interested to hear my hon. Friend's reply to that.

Thirdly, in a period of lessening east-west tension, we must question whether there is a need for such a radar installation. I shall be interested to hear whether, in the light of improving relations with the Soviet Union, there is now a need for this defence installation. That will be of great importance to my constituents in coming months when they assess the importance of the application. Those are the questions to which my constituents will want answers.

The second issue of great importance to my constituents is whether the radar will cause health problems for those living in the area. I cannot pretend to be an expert on the scientific arguments put forward by both sides of the debate. We have 50 years' experience of the use of radar throughout the world, so it is strange that there are now arguments that radar is dangerous to health

—that the electromagnetic waves can cause cancer and other illnesses. I do not know whether that is true, but if the independent environmental assessment that has been set up by the MOD to consider the health issue should report any danger to my constituents, there must not be any further debate, any further discussion of the planning issues, any further consideration of the planning application: the MOD must at once withdraw the application. The overriding concern of all hon. Members must be for the health of our constituents——

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bennett: I shall not give way.

Mr. Rogers: On this point?

Mr. Bennett: No. This is a half-hour Adjournment debate for a Back-Bench Member of Parliament representing his constituency. It is not a matter on which a Labour Front-Bench spokesman should intervene. The Opposition have all the time in the world; I have only half an hour of valuable Back-Bench time to raise this important matter.

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Alan Clark): I will not give way either.

Mr. Bennett: If the health of my constituents is in danger, the MOD must withdraw the application. I set that as the overriding priority in judging the planning application. So we have the defence grounds and the question of health.

I draw the attention of my hon. Friend the Minister to an article published in *Nature* only last month, indicating a continuing debate on the issue and that it will be important both to consider the consultants' report and to examine closely any new evidence on the effect of electromagnetic waves on the human body.

The third issue of great importance, and one against which I shall also be judging the application, is the effect on the local environment. It is important to consider the proposed siting of the radar installation, in one of the most beautiful national parks in the country.

Mr. Allan Rogers: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I attempted to intervene earlier because I understood that this is an Adjournment debate. As I see it, there is a cosy relationship between the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) and the Minister——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order.

Mr. Rogers: No—I want to finish making my point.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Rogers: I have not finished.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have the hon. Member's point of order.

Mr. Rogers: I have not yet put it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have the hon. Member's point of order.

Mr. Rogers: I have not finished.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I must ask the hon. Member to resume his seat. I have his point of order.

Mr. Rogers: How can you have my point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I have not made it?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Rogers: I am sorry, but there is a cosy relationship between the hon. Member for Pembroke, the Minister, and yourself, Mr. Deputy Speaker——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Rogers: I am not prepared to enter into that cosy relationship. I want to contribute to the debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Rogers: You have not heard my point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have the hon. Member's point of order, and I ask him to resume his seat.

Mr. Rogers: No, you have not.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have the hon. Member's point of order. It is the duty of the Chair to protect the Back-Bench Member whose Adjournment debate it is. It is also the duty of the Minister to be present to answer the debate. I am sure that the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) will realise, on reflection, that no other hon. Member can intervene in an Adjournment debate unless that has the agreement of the hon. Member whose Adjournment debate it is and of the Minister. It is evident to me that the hon. Member for Rhondda does not have that agreement. Therefore, I cannot call him.

Mr. Bennett: It is quite appalling that I should be interrupted during a very valuable——

Mr. Rogers: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When I tried to intervene in the speech of the hon. Member for Pembroke earlier, I accepted it when he refused to give way. That was not a problem. However, at the same time the Minister said to me from a sedentary position, "You might as well go home, because we are not going to allow the Labour Front Bench to interfere in this." If that is the view of a member of the Government, what is the point of the debate? I put it to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this is an empty charade. A Conservative Member who is under great pressure in his constituency wants to bring his argument to the House, and he now has an answer from the Minister. The Minister has stated his position in the debate. I object to that, and I want the protection of the Chair.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I made it clear to the hon. Member that it is the duty of the Chair to protect what is a highly-prized right for a Back-Bencher in any part of the House to raise a matter on the Adjournment of the House and to hear the Minister's reply. It is also the duty of the Chair to ensure that no other hon. Member intervenes unless there is agreement. On this occasion, it is clear that there is no such agreement. I remind the House that valuable time is being taken up in the Adjournment debate.

Mr. Bennett: I regret that, on a matter that is of grave importance to my constituents, the Labour Front-Bench spokesman sought, without asking me, to intervene in a

[Mr. Bennett]

debate that matters to my constituents and to take valuable time out of a half-hour debate which Back-Bench Members find so hard to obtain.

My constituents are rightly worried that the large numbers of people who visit the national park each year as tourists—about 300,000 people come to Pembrokeshire each year—may be driven away by the unsightly installation of 135 ft high radio masts on one of the most beautiful spots on the Pembrokeshire coast only one and a half to two miles from the historic city of St. David's.

Mr. Rogers: The hon. Gentleman is in favour of it.

Mr. Bennett: The hon. Gentleman should either listen or get out. He should not attempt to interrupt the rights of a Back-Bench Member on an issue important to my constituents.

Several questions remain to be asked about the effect on the environment if the installation is erected. The noise of the wind whistling through the pylons, the lights on the pylons that would be necessary for aircraft navigation, and the security lighting which will be put around the installation will disrupt the beauty of the environment in this particularly important part of the Pembrokeshire national park. The effect on tourism would be horrific.

I have had almost as many letters from non-constituents as from my constituents complaining about the application and the effect that it will have on the environment. People say that it will drive them away from holidaying, as they have done year after year, in that spot.

The environment will be an important issue. I welcome the fact that the Ministry of Defence has not only asked one set of consultants to examine the health issue but set up a second consultants' inquiry to consider the impact on the environment. I shall examine carefully the report of the consultants on the environmental impact on that part of my constituency. I have told my constituents that it will be difficult for the Ministry of Defence to convince me and the national park planning committee that the impact on the environment of such an installation will be acceptable.

Mr. Rogers: The hon. Gentleman does not care.

Mr. Bennett: One of the important issues that must be taken into account is the view that people have about St. David's. St. David is the patron saint of Wales. The cathedral, which goes back to the 7th century AD, is seen as a monument of national heritage, a sacred place to which the patron saint has drawn pilgrimages for well over 1,000 years. People feel strongly about such an installation being put in place on that part of the pilgrims' route, close to the cathedral.

Mr. Rogers: The hon. Gentleman is in favour of it.

Mr. Bennett: The hon. Gentleman keeps shouting and interrupting. I have made it clear to my constituents that I shall not come to a decision on the application until all the evidence is in. However, I believe that my constituents have every right to put their views, whether I agree with them or not. I am neutral until I have seen all the evidence. They have the right to have their views recorded in the House. My hon. Friend the Minister of State must be quite clear—he already is, but the message must be reinforced —about what their views are. These views must be put on the record. I am appalled that an official spokesman of the Labour party should attempt to disrupt a Back-Bench Member's right to put forward his constituency views. It is an absolute disgrace.

I now come to the planning issues. First, my hon. Friend the Minister made it clear in a public meeting at St. David's on 10 May that he would not use Crown immunity to override the decisions arrived at by the national park committee or the Secretary of State for Wales, if the committee went to appeal. If the national park comes out against the application, will the Ministry of Defence consider appealing to the Secretary of State for Wales? If it does, will the Secretary of State for Wales make his decision on the planning appeal on the grounds purely of environmental and planning issues, or will he be required to take into account national defence issues and any other applications made by the Ministry of Defence?

My constituents want the answer to that question. Perhaps because it is a matter affecting the Secretary of State for Wales, my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement cannot give that answer. I therefore ask that he should write to me with it if he cannot give it tonight.

My constituents feel strongly about the issue and are concerned that it is not enough just to say that there will be Crown immunity; they are also concerned that the Secretary of State for Wales may have to override the normal planning procedures and to give an answer based on defence considerations and not normal planning grounds.

It is important further to consider whether there are alternatives on national defence grounds that could be examined in greater depth. I have on a number of occasions——

Mr. Rogers: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): This is disgraceful.

Mr. Rogers: The hon. Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) says that this is disgraceful. It is hypocritical of him to say that, given that he recently sabotaged an Adjournment debate.

The hon. Member for Pembroke—I think that he comes from Hampstead—said that a planning procedure had to be gone through. He is deliberately misleading the House——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. What is the point of order for the Chair?

Mr. Rogers: The point of order is that the hon. Gentleman is deliberately misleading the House. This is not, despite what the hon. Gentleman is saying, subject to the normal planning procedures.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I must strongly deprecate what the hon. Gentleman is saying. I expect him, from the Opposition Front Bench, to set an example and to assist the Chair. He is not doing so at the moment, and I greatly regret it.

Mr. Bennett: The hon. Gentleman is speaking nonsense. This matter will be considered by the Pembrokeshire coast national park committee in September. The Ministry of Defence has set in train assessment procedures. The national park committee will make its decision on the basis of the planning applications before it. If the Ministry of Defence loses the planning application, it can appeal to the Secretary of State. It also

has the right to claim Crown immunity, but we have the guarantee given by my hon. Friend the Minister before 700 people in St. David's city hall on 10 May that he will not use Crown immunity.

I cannot understand the nonsense being spoken by the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers). It is a pity that Labour Members have wandered in here, knowing nothing about the issue and obviously after a good meal, to interrupt a Back Bencher's speech. Their ignorant remarks show that they are trying to disrupt a Back Bencher's speech on an important constituency issue. I want to draw my remarks to a close because I know that my hon. Friend the Minister is waiting to reply and my constituents and I want to hear his comments.

I shall finish by raising the issue of what is called the peace dividend. I have told my constituents that, first and foremost, it is important to consider the issue on national defence grounds, but it is right for my constituents to ask whether, in an era of glasnost and when tensions are lessening, we need this radar cover, whether it must be provided like this and whether there are other places where it can be provided. We are entitled to an answer to that.

If the application fails, the Ministry should consider whether it needs to retain the site. It owns about 560,000 acres of land on 3,000 sites. This site has remained empty since the second world war. It is used now and again as an emergency landing strip for RAF Brawdy. I have the gravest reservations and concerns about the application, but I shall not make a final decision until the evidence is before us from the environment assessment study. We should then ask that the Ministry of Defence gives up the site so that it can be returned to farming and be used for the benefit of the local community. It will then not remain sterile, as it has been for the past 45 years.

I regret that this important subject for my constituents has been interrupted by boorish and ill-mannered interventions from the Opposition. I look forward to hearing my hon. Friend's reply to this important debate.

10.54 pm

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Alan Clark): I listened with great attention to the lucid explanation of the case by my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett). I also listened with attention to the periodic interruptions from Opposition Members. We naturally welcome their presence in an Adjournment debate. They would give added flavour and quality to the debate if they conducted themselves properly. They seemed to be criticising my hon. Friend on the rather dodgy ground that he lived in Hampstead. However, that locality is a hot bed of socialist-inclined, chattering classes and I should have thought that the less said about that, the better. That is also the case with the domiciles of the leader and deputy leader of the Labour party. I am not sure of their addresses, but we know that the places where they eat, whether they are eating five-course meals or take-away curries, are not located in their constituencies.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To show the level of information of the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers), I must tell the House that, although I was born in Hampstead, I have not lived there for 36 years. His information on that is as out of date as his information on everything else.

Mr. Clark: Labour Members tend to be Hampstead-obsessed at present.

Mr. Rogers: The hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) does not live in his constituency.

Mr. Bennett: Yes, I do.

Mr. Rogers: Rubbish.

Mr. Bennett: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Member for Rhondda to call me a liar? What he said is untrue. I live in Llanddewi Velfrey in my constituency. The hon. Gentleman has said a direct lie and I ask him to withdraw it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are getting too many points of order. If the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) used an unparliamentary word, I am sure that he would wish to withdraw it.

Mr. Rogers: I said "Rubbish". I withdraw that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Clark: That is very gracious of the hon. Gentleman.

I want to place on record in this place the undertakings that I have already given—to which my hon. Friend drew attention and which I readily confirm—during my visit to St. David's on 10 May. The first concerns the public health implications of the proposed installation. Contrary to several alarmist reports that have circulated in the press and elsewhere, we believe that there will be no hazard to members of the public outside the boundaries of the site from the electromagnetic radiation that it would emit. We are, however, well aware of the widespread public concern on the issue and we have ensured that the health aspects will receive especially close attention in the environmental impact assessment.

The Robens institute at Surrey university, a well-known and impartial authority on the subject, has been retained specifically to carry out the necessary studies. If, contrary to our expectations, the assessment revealed that there might be a hazard to public health from the proposed installation at St. David's, we should not proceed.

My second undertaking concerns the planning process. As I have made clear to my hon. Friend, the Ministry is committed to following the normal planning procedures on this issue. There is no precedent for my Ministry to plead Crown immunity if planning authorities object to our proposals once we have embarked on the planning process and I have no intention that we should set such a precedent in this case. I am glad to put both those assurances on record in this place, although, as my hon. Friend has said, I made them at a public meeting in his constituency.

I have had much correspondence on this subject, not only with my hon. Friend, but with others. I have today considered 140 questions in the House from him and from other hon. Members. However, I want to set out the background to the Ministry's proposals. They start with the continuing requirement, which is endorsed widely by all parties, to maintain the air and sea defences of this country. Of all our defence commitments, the direct defence of these islands is the last capability that we should seek to run down. In maintaining that capability, we need in particular to keep up, and if possible improve, our ability to provide early warning of any military activity in the large expanse of the Norwegian sea to the north of the United Kingdom. At present, our main means of

[Mr. Clark]

providing such cover is by airborne early warning, supplemented by ship-borne and shore-based microwave radar, although those are of comparatively short range.

Even when our present AEW aircraft are replaced by the new fleet of Boeing Sentry aircraft, it will be time consuming and expensive to use them to give full coverage to the air defence regions of the north. In some circumstances, that could actually be regarded as provocative. Such circumstances do not attach to a purely static radar system on one's own territory.

For some time, the principle of over-the-horizon radar has offered in theory a solution to the problem of maintaining wide-area, long-range cover of the region. The idea of over-the-horizon radar is simple: radio waves of the right frequency can be made to refract from the ionosphere, which is the layer of atmosphere 200 miles up, to points well beyond the visible horizon. Those that bounce back off a target are refracted back to a receiver, which can detect position, course and speed.

For some time, we have been engaged in joint studies with the United States, aimed at determining whether the system could look northward from the United Kingdom. The Americans have already installed working systems in Virginia and Alaska, but looking southward.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): We are all familiar with the stories abut the Woodpecker system from Russia; we have heard about it for many years. But with even a modest knowledge of geography, one is puzzled about why the system should be situated in Pembrokeshire rather than on the east coast. What sites were considered and what alternative sites did the Ministry have in mind?

Mr. Clark: If the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends had not consumed so much time in somewhat ill-mannered protests, I might have been able to deal with those details in my speech. But I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the whole question of the location of the site has been very carefully considered; it is a function of range and of the area that has to be covered. One does not start getting an image until one has a gap of approximately 400 to 500 miles between the transmitter and the area that one is intending to cover. That is why the system must be situated on a particular latitude. The problem is that the further north one goes, the less reliable the ionosphere becomes, and auroral noise effects could be significant.

Studies alone could not show whether the system would work in British latitudes. Only a full-scale trial can demonstrate that one way or another. We have therefore reached an agreement in principle, following on from our joint studies, that the United States will provide a fully working system for trial in this country.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clark: No. I am afraid that I cannot give way. We have very little time and I have already given way to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn).

We shall find and prepare sites for the transmitter and receiver facilities and the running costs of the trial and all the information coming out of it will be shared. We also agree in principle that, if the trial is successful, we will then consider whether to retain the system as an operational facility. I emphasise the words "in principle". The agreement was subject to appropriate national approvals being granted in our case, and that includes not only the necessary finance but the necessary planning permissions. The proviso was written into the memorandum of understanding between our two Governments signed on 20 April, a copy of which I have placed in the Library.

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at three minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 4 July 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

MEDWAY TUNNEL BILL *[Lords]*

Order for Third Reading read.

To be read the Third time tomorrow.

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

British Steel

1. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next intends to meet the chairman of British Steel to discuss the future of the Scottish steel industry; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): I would expect to meet the chairman of British Steel whenever appropriate. I have asked the Scottish Development Agency to carry out an analysis of the prospects for the steel industry in Scotland.

Dr. Reid: If the Secretary of State does not think that this is an appropriate time, he never will. When he meets the chairman of British Steel, will he inform him that the letter that he sent to the right hon. and learned Gentleman is not only an insult, but the biggest cover-up since Watergate? Did the right hon. learned Gentleman notice that it contained not only no guarantee for Ravenscraig beyond 1994, but no guarantee for the Clydesdale and Imperial works beyond the end of this week?

Will the Secretary of State give an undertaking that Scottish Office resources and the resources of the Department of Trade and Industry will be fully at the disposal of the SDA, and that its study will cover all three plants and be based not only on present market demand, but on the potential market demand for Scottish steel plant if the necessary investment that should have been made was made now?

Mr. Rifkind: The correspondence that I have had with Sir Robert Scholey was about Ravenscraig, so it is not surprising that there was no reference to Clydesdale or to other plants. I can confirm that the study that I have asked the SDA to carry out is not limited to any one company or plant; it is on the future prospects for the steel industry in Scotland as a whole.

Sir Hector Monro: May I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for his staunch efforts on behalf of British Steel? Does he accept that the letter from the chairman of British Steel is quite unacceptable and that we expect much better from the chairman and directors of British Steel in terms of looking after Scotland, the community and the work force? I hope that he will pursue the chairman for as long as necessary to obtain satisfactory answers.

Mr. Rifkind: I note my hon. Friend's remarks. We have told Sir Robert Scholey that we hope that he will reconsider his unwillingness to date to meet the representatives of the work force at Ravenscraig. It appears that it would be of mutual benefit not only for them to hear his point of view, but for Sir Robert to hear what they have to say about the plant in which they work.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: Does the Secretary of State accept Sir Gordon Borrie's comment that he had hoped that the exchanges between the Government and the chairman of British Steel would have yielded information on whether a reference of that decision to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission was justified? As Sir Robert Scholey, not surprisingly, has not given that information, will the Secretary of State make it clear to British Steel that if it is not prepared to operate the plant in Scotland, the Government will invoke the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's powers to ensure that genuine competition operates, that Britain's trade interests are brought into effect and that, if necessary, the assets of British Steel in Scotland will be offered to somebody who is prepared to invest in the monopoly?

Mr. Rifkind: I am not certain that the hon. Gentleman has thought out the implications of what he said. Taken literally, it would imply that the Liberal Democrat party wishes to denationlise the assets of British Steel. The hon. Gentleman must appreciate that, as the Government do not own those assets—it is not Labour party policy to reacquire them—short of reacquisition there is no way in which a company can be obliged to dispose of its facilities.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: Competition law.

Mr. Rifkind: On competition law, the hon. Gentleman must accept that it is for the Director General of Fair Trading to make a recommendation to Monopolies and Mergers Commission. That is the correct procedure of which, I think, the hon. Gentleman is well aware.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on his powerful fight for Scottish steel. Has he clarified whether, in the event of the Ravenscraig closure, British Steel would automatically offer the plant for sale at a negotiated price, or whether the chairman of British Steel would reserve the right not to sell the plant if he considered that a sale would be contrary to the commercial interests of British Steel?

Mr. Rifkind: The position of British Steel is as described in its prospectus, in which British Steel said that, in the event of there being no future requirements for its steel-making assets in Scotland, it would be prepared to make them available to an alternative private sector purchaser. Sir Robert said in his letter to me that British Steel intends to continue to honour that commitment.

Mr. Dewar: Does the Secretary of State agree that British Steel's assumptions of the likely market demand for steel are far too pessimistic, given the expected increased demand in Europe and the need to roll back the formidable import penetration in our domestic market? There is great confusion about exactly what the Secretary

of State is doing to test the assumptions and the rather doubtful theories that are included in Sir Robert Scholey's letters. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman tell us specifically what steps he is taking? Does he remember that one of the things that might have been thought simple and that he urged on Sir Robert Scholey—the need for Sir Robert to meet the work force and explain the situation—is specifically repudiated in a letter on the basis that it undermines local management? Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman prepared to take such a brush-off?

Mr. Rifkind: I have already made it clear to Sir Robert that I feel that it is unfortunate that he is not prepared to meet his work force, and I have urged him to reconsider. In considering the prospects for the steel industry in Scotland, the SDA will wish to take account of any information on likely market trends that is available to it. We would expect that information to be taken into account when the SDA's analysis is prepared and presented.

Hospitals

2. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the hospitals currently under consideration for closure by Scottish health boards.

Mr. Rifkind: There are no closure submissions before Ministers at the moment, but I am aware that several boards are proposing rationalisation of their services.

Mr. Griffiths: Does not that answer show how out of touch the Secretary of State is with Scottish health boards? He does not know that several hospitals are earmarked for panic closure in the Lothian region, part of which he represents. The health board has earmarked for closure Longmore hospital in my constituency. Will he ensure that the board gives him sufficient evidence—which I understand is not available—to show that the breast cancer unit and geriatric facilities can be transferred to another unit, thereby preserving the quality of service? The experts tell me, as they told the Minister of State when he visited the hospital, that that is impossible.

Mr. Rifkind: If the hon. Gentleman had done the House the courtesy of listening to my reply, he would have heard me say that there are no closure submissions before Ministers at the moment. I am as aware as the hon. Gentleman of the proposals before Lothian health board. It will be for the health board, once it has considered the responses to its proposals, to decide whether to make closure recommendations to the Scottish Office.

I am well aware of the extremely valuable work of the breast cancer unit at Longmore hospital. Much of the discussion is about whether that valuable work could continue if the breast cancer unit transferred to an alternative location. Obviously, we would expect the health board to consider that issue carefully before making any recommendations.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Can my right hon. and learned Friend say anything about Mearnskirk hospital in my constituency where Greater Glasgow health board is proposing, perfectly sensibly, the withdrawal of acute beds? My right hon. and learned Friend will soon receive a submission from Eastwood district council. Will he assure us that it will be fully considered, along with the other proposals being made by Greater Glasgow health board, to ensure that this important site is retained, at least in part, within the health service and is developed in accordance with the wishes and needs of the people of Eastwood?

Mr. Rifkind: I am aware of such proposals. I am happy to give my hon. Friend the assurance that they will be carefully considered to ascertain whether the objectives of my hon. Friend and Eastwood district council can be accommodated by the health service.

Mr. Hood: The Secretary of State will be aware of the size of Clydesdale constituency—almost 800 sq m with a population of 100,000. I wrote to him last week informing him of Lanarkshire health board's decision to build a new hospital at Wishaw and to upgrade its hospital at Hairmyres. It is threatening to remove acute medical services in the Clydesdale constituency. Will the Secretary of State assure the House and my constituents that he will not agree to a diminution in acute medical provision in Clydesdale?

Mr. Rifkind: I note carefully what the hon. Gentleman said. The health board has not put any proposals to the Scottish Home and Health Department, but, if and when any recommendations are put, I assure the hon. Gentleman that we shall take into account his points and those made by others who have commented on the proposals.

Mr. Galbraith: Does the Secretary of State agree that the reason for many of the proposed closures is the chronic underfunding of the health service in Scotland? In the past six years, has not the Scottish Office underfunded pay awards to the health boards, excluding Glasgow, by £150 million? In Lothian alone, underfunding of pay awards amounts to £20 million—almost the exact amount that Lothian will have to make in cuts. Does not that show that Lothian's problems are due not to mismanagement but to underfunding and that, therefore, the Secretary of State will be responsible for any cuts or closures in Lothian.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is incorrect. In the current year, the Government have made available an extra £158 million, or 8·3 per cent., over the previous provision to meet priorities, including out-of-line pay and price increases. The allowances made for pay have been exactly the same for Lothian as for other health boards in Scotland. The fact that Lothian is facing a cash crisis does not arise from provision for pay, which is equal for all health boards in Scotland.

Hospice, Linlithgow

3. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has received in relation to the future of elderly and day-care patients at the 800-year-old hospice at Linlithgow.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Forsyth): No proposals have been received concerning St. Michael's hospital, Linlithgow.

Mr. Dalyell: In view of the dismay of the 13,500 people who signed the petition, would not it be wise at least for the Scottish Office to discover the legal and historic advice about church land being disposed of when it was given, in this case in 1138, for the maintenance of the ministry, the fabric of the church and the care of the poor? In order to

avoid a cause celebre in the Court of Session, should not Scottish Office lawyers consult scholars on the legal position before the idea of disposal proceeds further? Should not the idea be nipped in the bud?

Mr. Forsyth: I understand that Lothian health board's examination of the matter is at an early stage, but I am happy to assure the hon. Gentleman that his points will be drawn to the attention of the board. I shall ask it carefully to examine the legal position on the feu disposition in respect of that hospital. I am grateful to him for drawing it to our attention.

Health Service, Tayside

4. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next intends to visit Tayside to discuss the health service.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to do so at the present time.

Mr. Ross: If the Minister decides to visit Tayside, instead of using his ministerial car will he perhaps get on his mountain bike, with which he featured in the newspapers on Sunday? While he is taking his time over the Ochil hills to Tayside, will he consider the £1·8 million underfunding of pay awards in Tayside which blows the myth that privatisation will be good for the health service? Have not any savings from privatisation been more than offset by the underfunding of pay awards?

Mr. Forsyth: It is a fact that what the hon. Gentleman calls privatisation—which is competitive tendering—has made £80 million available for patient care in the health service. It is also a fact that the Labour party has committed itself to abolishing competitive tendering, in the unlikely event of its taking office. We have had no explanation of where the extra £80 million would come from. The health service has never been better funded. Funding has increased by more than one third in real terms, and the hon. Gentleman will be aware of the service development that has taken place in Tayside.

Mr. Bill Walker: When my hon. Friend meets Tayside health board will he draw its attention to the fact that it is probably the finest health board offering the best value services anywhere in the country? Nevertheless, there are causes for concern. For instance, Stracathro hospital is under threat. Moreover, it is to be hoped that the self-governing hospital proposals in Forfar which are very welcome will now be seen to be producing results.

Mr. Forsyth: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the exciting proposals for self-governing status which have come from the doctors in Forfar, and to what has been achieved in Tayside. In common with other health boards, those in Scotland are now treating far more patients and making significant inroads into reducing waiting lists and waiting times.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: Does the Minister understand the widespread anger about, and opposition to, Tayside health board's rundown, closure and withdrawal of hospital services throughout Angus? How can the Minister justify the closure of specialist services at Arbroath infirmary, and the possible closure or rundown of maternity services in Arbroath, Brechin, Forfar and Montrose and of orthopaedic, general and emergency services at Stracathro, as well as the closure of perfectly viable laundry services at Sunnyside hospital? Is that what the Tories mean when they say that the NHS is safe in their hands?

Mr. Forsyth: If the hon. Gentleman arranges to come and see me to discuss these matters—which he has not done—I shall explain the background to them. The hon. Gentleman asked me to justify the changes. The reason is perfectly simple: the medical advice that we are receiving in respect of maternity services suggests that they should be provided where the full range of services provided by a district general hospital are available. A balance has to be struck between meeting the needs of rural areas and meeting the requirements of patient safety. The hon. Gentleman will have to take a more sophisticated approach to these matters if he wishes to continue to represent the interests of his constituents.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Will my hon. Friend pay particular attention to the future of Stracathro hospital, which serves part of my constituency and where many of my constituents are members of staff? Will he acknowledge that many of us would find it intolerable if the services of that hospital were so whittled away that there was no general hospital between Aberdeen and Dundee?

Mr. Forsyth: The reforms that we propose for the health service will mean that hospitals will be able to attract funds according to the patients whom they treat and the services that they provide. To hospitals such as Stracathro—which I know well because it is in the area where I was brought up—the White Paper proposals and particularly the option of self-governing status offer new opportunities.

Housing

5. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the level of central Government grants in support of housing expenditure in Ross and Cromarty district in the last three years for which figures are available.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): In the three years to 31 March 1990, Ross and Cromarty district council received housing support grant in excess of £11·2 million, and croft housing grants of more than £294,000 were approved.

Mr. Kennedy: Is the Minister aware that last year the district council carried out a major housing survey of its needs and projected expenditure and that it is estimated that a rolling programme of £60 million will be needed next year for new build, to improve council stock and to bring private sector housing up from below tolerable standard to reasonable standard? Given the number of representations that both the district council and I are receiving from many communities in Ross and Cromarty —and from many housing schemes in individual communities—will not the Minister have to look again at his spending allocations for the district authority? There is no way that it will meet over the next five years the obvious needs that have been identified by the council.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I welcomed the opportunity to meet the hon. Gentleman's district council

last summer and I am aware of the problems that he mentioned. The amount of housing below tolerable standard has been reduced by more than half over the past 10 years, but I am aware of the extent of such housing in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. A rural housing study is being carried out in depth, almost from Muckle Flugga to Mull of Kintyre, and we hope to come forward with a concerted strategy in Scotland by September.

Part of the answer may lie in the extent to which the private sector will come in to support local authorities and Scottish Homes in partnership projects.

Mr. Speaker: Dr. Godman.

Dr. Godman: Question 14, Sir. Sorry—I mean No. 6.

Inverclyde Enterprise Zone

6. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the operation of the Inverclyde enterprise zone.

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Ian Lang): The Inverclyde enterprise zone was established in 1989 and has a 10-year life span. It is, therefore, much too soon to assess its impact on the local economy.

However, in addition to the 870 jobs already created or planned, I am pleased to be able to inform the House that the American electronics company Sorensen Ltd. yesterday announced the takeover and expansion of Domain Power Ltd. which is expected to create a further 400 new jobs in Inverclyde.

Dr. Godman: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker. I think that I was expressing hope when I referred to question 14.

The enterprise zone suffers from large areas of dereliction. Where those areas surround listed buildings, there is a major problem of persuading investors to come into the zone. I refer to the engine works in Arthur street in Greenock and the Gourock ropeworks in Port Glasgow. I wish that the Minister would show a smidgen of the concern about and commitment to the community that were shown by his grandfather, who built the engine works in Arthur street. With regard to the Gourock ropeworks, is the Minister aware that the people of Port Glasgow deserve a quick solution to the problems of dereliction surrounding that fine listed building? Let us have some action on that building and the area of dereliction surrounding it.

Mr. Lang: It is more likely to have been my great-grandfather. The buildings to which the hon. Gentleman referred are being given close attention, but it is primarily a matter for their owners. The Inverclyde enterprise zone has some geographical difficulties in that it is split among 11 sites covering 274 acres. However, the SDA has already spent or committed £14·3 million towards clearance of dereliction and factory construction. That is a reflection of the way in which it is approaching the matter. The hon. Gentleman might like to know that unemployment in his constituency has fallen by more than in any other constituency in Scotland, bar one, over the past three years. That is a reflection of the success of the Government's policies in the Inverclyde area.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Does my hon. Friend accept that no other enterprise zone has greater prospects, contains finer buildings or a finer work force, is on the Clyde or has such magnificent prospects? My hon. Friend should encourage Scottish Enterprise to promote that enterprise zone with vigour because no place could be more vigorously successful than that part of Scotland.

Mr. Lang: My hon. and learned Friend is absolutely right. The enterprise zones in different parts of Scotland are one aspect of the Government's policies to promote the development of enterprise and the regeneration of the economy. The overall success of those policies is revealed by the fact that the fall in unemployment over the past three years has been the biggest single fall for the past 40 years. The dramatic improvement in employment is a reflection of the success of our policies.

Mr. Graham: Is the Minister aware that the recent decision to allow the Braehead development, which is a monstrous plan, to go ahead will do irreparable damage to the Inverclyde enterprise zone and to nearly every industrial development in Renfrewshire? Will the Minister make a statement about that? I have never seen such a stupid planning decision, particularly when we consider that Inverclyde district council, Renfrew district council and Strathclyde council are totally opposed to the abominable Braehead plan.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman will know that that decision was given the closest and most careful consideration. However, there are a number of encouraging initiatives in the hon. Gentleman's constituency, including those at Ferguslie park and Renfrew and the developments at Linwood. Unemployment has fallen in the hon. Gentleman's constituency by more than 2,200 in the past three and a half years.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Mention has been made of question No. 14, which leads me to the conclusion that hon. Members would like to get on to that question. There is interest also in question No. 11, so we should now move on rather more rapidly.

Floods, Tay Valley

7. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many applications he has received for grants following the floods in the Tay valley; and how many have been for funds to restore the environmental damage caused by the floods.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Thirty-two applications have been received from farmers in Tayside for the repair of elevated floodbanks at the enhanced rates of grant announced on 28 February 1990. A further five applications have been received for arterial drainage and ditching operations at ordinary rates.

With regard to environmental damage, three farmers within the Breadalbane environmentally sensitive area have notified damage to grant-aided trees and fences.

Mr. Walker: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Is he aware that the worst break in the Tay was at Braecock farm and that a temporary repair was carried out there? Downstream, farmers and the village of Capath will be at risk unless the colossal damage that was done at Braecock is properly, fully and adequately repaired. What proposals

does my hon. Friend have and what hope can he give people downstream of Braecock that the work will be carried out properly?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am glad to reassure my hon. Friend that the three downstream owners who are to carry out repairs to flood banks will also qualify for enhanced grants. The Scottish Office is ready to pay 60 per cent. of grant, and approval of the repair proposals will be given immediately when the owners are ready to accept the contractor's tender.

Mr. McAllion: Is the Minister aware that Labour-controlled Tayside regional council convened a meeting last month with representatives of local authorities and farming, environmental and other bodies? That meeting called on the Scottish Office to pay £25,000 for a feasibility study to solve the flood damage problem. Will the Minister take this opportunity to say that he will respond positively to that call and pay the £25,000?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman is correct that a meeting took place on 21 June. A steering group was formed to appoint an independent consultant and oversee the hydrology study. We have offered to fund it up to a quarter, to a maximum of £10,000, which we consider generous, taking all the circumstances into account.

Local Government Finance

8. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the implications of the Government's review of the poll tax for local authorities in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: The House will be informed when the review has been completed.

Mr. Douglas: When the Secretary of State meets local authorities in Edinburgh on Friday, will he inform them at least that there will be no capping of local authorities in Scotland? How will he react to their fears, published in the press today, that the poll tax is likely to increase by 25 per cent. in Scotland in the oncoming year? *[Interruption.]* If Conservative Members wish to intervene, I am happy for them to do so. How will the Secretary of State react to the farcical protests by the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) and the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), who say that they want to use the Act of Union, which the Government have abrogated by imposing unfair taxes on Scotland?

Mr. Rifkind: I have already said that in the current financial year it is not necessary to take selective action. Indeed, evidence suggests that Scottish local authorities have had lower levels of expenditure than local authorities south of the border, no doubt because accountability is beginning to apply.

On the second part of the hon. Gentleman's question and the various predictions by local authorities about possible levels of community charge next year, I have noted that one of the points that they have raised is that a number of people are seeking to evade their legal responsibilities and refusing to pay their taxes. The hon. Gentleman might help his constituents by paying his lawful taxes so that law-abiding members of the public do not suffer.

Mr. Jack: My right hon. and learned Friend will be aware of the generosity of support for Scottish local authorities by taxpayers thoughout the United Kingdom. What steps is he taking to ensure that the revenue support grant that those authorities receive is spent as efficiently as possible?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is corrrect that it is in the public interest to ensure that local authorities are properly accountable to their electorates for the way in which they use available resources. One of the great advantages of the community charge as compared with the old rating system is that it ensures far greater accountability, because all adults who benefit from local services now contribute towards their cost.

Mr. Maxton: Is the Secretary of State aware that the only sensible outcome, which is desired by the vast majority of Scottish people, is the total abolition of the poll tax? As he may find that slightly difficult, will he in the meanwhile demand from the review committee the abolition of the 20 per cent. minimum payment rule, backdated to 1 April 1989, an improvement in the rebate system, again backdated to 1 April 1989, and a vast improvement in revenue support grant next year to ensure that the odious burden of warrant sales is not imposed on thousands of our fellow Scots and that Scottish local authorities will not be forced to increase the poll tax by a massive amount and to cut services and jobs next year?

Mr. Rifkind: I note what the hon. Gentleman says. The House and the public will be even more interested to know whether the Labour party is continuing to insist on imposing a roof tax in Scotland, which has been rejected not only by the Leader of the Opposition for England and Wales, but by the vast majority of people in Scotland. We understand the Labour party's embarrassement and sensitivity on that issue, but Opposition Members must realise that it will not go away.

Scottish Assembly

9. **Mr. Gow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received about the setting up of an assembly in Edinburgh with legislative powers.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In the past six months, five letters in support of an assembly have been received.

Mr. Gow: If my noble Friend believes, as I do, that an assembly in Edinburgh would weaken and injure the Union, why are Government supporting an assembly in Belfast?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There is no contradiction in the Government's approach. It reflects the different circumstances in Scotland and in Northern Ireland. A Scottish assembly would be a taxation nightmare in Scotland and as the Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) has estimated, it will lead to an extra 25 p in the pound income tax for the Scots.

Mr. Home Robertson: Does the Minister accept that if we had an Administration subject to democratic accountability in Scotland, matters such as the threatened closure of 640 hospital beds in Lothian region would receive at least as much attention as the solicitors'

monopoly is currently receiving? Does he further accept that such exposure to democratic accountability would be an invigorating experience, not just for Ministers, but for Scottish Office civil servants?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I think that the hon. Gentleman can represent his constituents perfectly well in the House of Commons—[HON. MEMBERS: "And you."] Indeed, I am one of the hon. Gentleman's constituents. The hon. Gentleman can represent his constituents in the House on health matters.

On the hon. Gentleman's point about devolution, I believe that

> "We will get guaranteed disharmony, disunity, conflict and competition throughout the whole of Britain. The dominant issue of politics in Britain will be the jealousies of region against region, nation against nation, argument against argument. That will be very bad news for Britain".

Those are not my words—they are the words of the Leader of the Opposition a few years ago, and they are as valid today as they were when he uttered them.

Mr. Andy Stewart: Does my hon. Friend agree that all Scottish taxpayers should be made aware that a Labour-inspired Scottish assembly would increase taxation beyond belief, as was confirmed by the Leader of the Opposition who said that only one in 15 taxpayers would face an increase—that is, the Scots?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. If Scotland were funded at the average United Kingdom per capita level, Scotland would have been £2·7 billion worse off in 1989-90. To fund the balance in Scotland and to maintain expenditure in Scotland at its current level would require an additional 25p in the pound.

Sir Russell Johnston: Does the Minister agree that it would be helpful to have a bit less heat and a bit more light? Does he further agree that the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill is an excellent example of the need for a Scottish Assembly because treatment of it has been superficial and inadequate? When the Scottish Constitutional Convention concludes, will the Minister undertake to meet it to try to work out a reasonable and sensible answer to all this?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The answer is no. The Scottish Constitutional Convention is unrepresentative of Scotland—*[Interruption.]* The Scottish National party is not taking part. The hon. Gentleman must await my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State's statement on the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill.

Scottish Office Expenditure

10. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received recently about Scottish Office expenditure.

Mr. Rifkind: I receive regular representations on all aspects of Scottish Office business, including expenditure.

Mr. Bennett: What representations has my right hon. and learned Friend received from the Opposition about their plans to spend up to £50 billion extra across the United Kingdom, to have a Scottish assembly with tax-raising powers, which would cost Scottish taxpayers something like 25p in the pound, and a roof tax? Has he received any explanation from the Labour party in Scotland about how it proposes to pay for that?

Mr. Rifkind: One of the most worrying aspects of the Opposition's proposals is that not only do they propose substantial increases——

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is about the Minister's answer——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have not heard it yet.

Mr. Bruce: The Minister is not entitled to answer for the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us hear his answer. We have not heard it yet.

Mr. Rifkind: One of the most worrying aspects about any proposals for new taxation is that they would impose an even greater burden of taxation on Scotland than on the rest of the United Kingdom. That would clearly be the consequence of the Labour party's proposals.

Sir David Steel: Will the Secretary of State consider adding one new item of Scottish Office expenditure in the light of yesterday's announcement by the Department of Transport of a motorway link up the A1 as far as Newcastle? Does he recognise that the press statement saying that it would help Scotland added insult to injury? Nothing is more damaging to Scotland than creating the same impression on the east coast of England as exists on the west coast—that the motorway network stops at the border. Will the Secretary of State urgently review his road programme?

Mr. Rifkind: The right hon. Gentleman will be aware that not only are we proposing significant improvements to the A1 in Scotland, but we are making more dramatic and radical progress in transforming the A74 into a motorway on the west coast of Scotland than any previous Government ever contemplated. We have begun construction work on the total reconstruction of the A74 to full motorway status, making quicker progress than has ever been known in the roads programme of any Transport Department in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Wilson: In spite of that answer, does the Minister accept that the absence of Scottish Office expenditure and of any visible strategy on fast, modern communications between Scotland and the south has become a major liability for the Scottish economy? In addition to the lack of decision on the A1, how on earth can he defend the total absence of a Scottish Office strategy in the past three years to ensure fast, direct links between Scotland and the channel tunnel? Will not that be seen with hindsight as one of the great omissions by the Scottish Office in the past three years, with tremendous long-term implications for the Scottish economy?

Mr. Rifkind: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman knows what he is talking about. For the first time, we have plans to link the motorway network of central Scotland with the motorway network in the south. In addition, we have the electrification of the east coast railway line between central Scotland and London. We have also had a more remarkable improvement in civil aviation between

central Scotland and London. We have also had a more remarkable improvement in civil aviation between central Scotland and south than at any time in our history.

British Steel

11. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to assess the arguments advanced by British Steel for the closure of the Ravenscraig strip mill, as outlined in the recent letter to him from the chairman of British Steel.

Mr. Lang: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given a few moments ago by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State to the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid).

Mr. McAvoy: Does the Minister agree that it is immoral for a man who has just received a 79 per cent. pay rise to show such a lack of concern at the social impact of his decisions? Sir Robert Scholey has made it clear that to protect his private monopoly, British Steel will not sell the strip mill to a competitor. Will the Minister urge his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State to insist that that statement be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and use the threat of resignation to make sure that that happens?

Mr. Lang: Sir Robert Scholey has a responsibility to his company and to the steel industry, not only in Scotland. In regard to the other points in the hon. Gentleman's question, Sir Robert pointed out in his letter to my right hon. and learned Friend that there are no fewer than 15 major competitors to British Steel within Europe alone. Competition is a matter for the Director General of Fair Trading.

Mr. Sillars: May I refer the Minister to what the Secretary of State said about the analysis that he has instructed the Scottish Development Agency to carry out? Is he aware that the right hon. and learned Gentleman gave the impression that clear and precise directions were given to the Scottish Development Agency? But I have a letter from Mr. Scott, the chief executive, who says that "the precise terms of reference of the remit for the study have yet to be settled."
Exactly what will the Scottish Office involvement be in setting the final terms of reference? Will the Minister give an assurance that the terms of reference will include the feasibility of an independent Scottish steel industry and that the preparation of a business plan to attract investment for that objective will not be ruled out?

Mr. Lang: The terms of reference for the SDA were deliberately made extremely broad. They included the analysis of prospects for the steel industry, the identification of opportunities for it and the ability to assist the Government in the discharge of our responsibilities in relation to any possible contraction of the sector. The kind of detail to which the hon. Gentleman refers is a matter for the SDA to resolve when it decides how to embark on its study.

Mrs. Fyfe: Has the Secretary of State made a study of the impact on the local economy if Ravenscraig were to close, and if not, why not?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Lady will know that there are a number of initiatives in the Lanarkshire area, and have been for a number of years—in particular, the Monklands initiative, which is a major initiative. In addition, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State invited consideration of the possible impact of the hot strip mill closure on the area. Any other initiative that may be necessary will arise as a result of the SDA report or other developments, and will be reacted to at the appropriate time.

Mr Marlow: May I put it to my hon. Friend and to his right hon. and learned Friend that they are giving their English colleagues a great deal of concern? We can understand the interest in what happens in Scotland, but we are talking about part of the British steel industry. My hon. Friends are concerned with Scotland, but, as British Ministers in a British Government, will they take account not only of Scottish interests—which, from an English point of view, they seem to be fighting for far too strongly —but of British interests as well?

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and I, and our other colleagues, are Ministers in a territorial Department. It would be surprising if we did not direct our attention primarily to the interests of that territory.

Cervical Cancer

12. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the latest figures for cervical cancer *(a)* patients and *(b)* deaths in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The latest figures show 443 patients suffering from cervical cancer and, regrettably, 191 deaths.

Mr. Wray: Does the Minister agree that that, and the Government's lack of interest, is appalling? Recently, the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) made an appeal regarding the 2,000 needless cervical cancer deaths nationally. The Government have been repeatedly asked by family practitioner committees and cytologists to spend an extra £20 million. Had they done so, we might have saved the 2,000 people who have died from this invasive carcinoma. Why do the Government have such a shocking and appalling record, and when will they spend the £20 million that we need to achieve 90 per cent. protection?

Mr. Forsyth: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the figures for loss of life through cervical cancer are disturbing. I also agree that many of these deaths are preventable. In 90 per cent. of the cases where cervical cancer has been diagnosed, there has been no screening. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would recognise that the Government have put in place a call and recall system for cervical screening, the aim of which is to ensure that all women between the ages of 20 and 60 are screened before 1993, on the basis of regular screening at least once every five years. In some health boards, screening will take place every three years. A screening programme is in hand and it is extremely important that women in Scotland respond to invitations to take part. In addition, the new GP contract gives incentives to doctors to provide screening services for all their patients. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would welcome that.

Higher Education

13. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about trends in the numbers in higher education since 1979.

Mr. Lang: I am glad to be able to tell my hon. Friend that the number of full-time students attending higher education in Scotland rose by almost 25 per cent. between 1979 and 1989, to nearly 85,000. I hope that this excellent trend will continue.

Mr. Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that those statistics underline the Government's commitment to the future of higher education in Scotland, and does he join me in welcoming the decision by Stirling university to double its intake in the near future?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is an authority on Scottish universities, having attended St. Andrews and graduated there, and having been a lecturer at Aberdeen and Glasgow universities. I am delighted to be able to reassure him that the Government are committed to continuing further expansion, even above the dramatic levels of improvement that we have achieved in the past few years.

Mr. Ron Brown: Despite the Minister's statement, fewer than 10 per cent. of working-class youngsters get to university in Scotland, while failures from the English public school system receive first preference at certain universities, especially Edinburgh. What does the Minister intend to do about that?

Mr. Lang: Access to university must depend on academic qualifications. I am delighted to say that more than one in five school leavers in Scotland now enter higher education, which is much higher than the United Kingdom average. The Government are committed to increasing the population in higher education, and hope that it will be as high as 30 per cent. of the relevant population in six years' time.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Did my hon. Friend notice the recent remarks of Lord Chilver, the chairman of the Universities Funding Council, commending the broadly based Scottish education system? Does my hon. Friend acknowledge that that system, based on a four-year honours course, puts additional financial burdens not only on the universities but on the students? Will he ensure that resources are made available in both sectors, to maintain our excellent record in terms of the additional number of students that we have gained in the Scottish universities?

Mr. Lang: Lord Chilver certainly had some kind and complimentary things to say about the quality of Scottish higher education. The fact that in Scotland a substantially higher proportion of the relevant population enters higher education shows that the four-year degree course is no disincentive. Overall expenditure this year is up by 11 per cent. on last year. That is the highest-ever level of student awards, and reflects the Government's commitment.

Mr. Worthington: When it is cheaper to produce a graduate in this country than in almost any other western European country, the United States or Japan, why are the Government intent on cost cutting and standard cutting? Why is the Minister satisfied with one in five of our youngsters' receiving higher education, when in Japan, Sweden, America, Canada, France and Denmark the proportion is already one in two?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman might like to reflect on the fact that we have the most generous support for students in the western world. Eighty per cent. of full-time students receive support in this country, compared with 12 per cent. in Japan. The expansion that we are achieving was not achieved by the Labour party. I am delighted that we are moving down this road, and I am sure that the Scottish economy will benefit from it.

Law Reform

14. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about the proposed changes set out in part II of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I have received a number of representations. I am pleased to be able to report to the House that, as a result of informal discussions with the Law Society of Scotland in the past few weeks we have today reached agreement with regard to the proposals in part II of the Bill.

The Law Society of Scotland has informed us that it is able to accept that the solicitors' monopoly with regard to conveyancing should cease. The Government for their part accept that the provisions in the Bill allowing persons other than solicitors to provide conveyancing services should be limited to independent qualified conveyancers. The provisions will not apply to the financial institutions.

The Government and the Law Society of Scotland have also agreed that the provisions in the Bill with regard to multi-disciplinary practices should be made the same for solicitors as for advocates. There are also some detailed points in part II which I have recently discussed with the Law Society of Scotland and am considering.

On that basis, the Law Society of Scotland has informed us that it is able to welcome part II of the Bill and is anxious to see it appear on the statute book. I am also able to inform the House that the Scottish Consumer Council has indicated that it, too, welcomes the agreement that has been reached.

I would like to thank the Law Society of Scotland for the constructive and helpful discussions that we have had, which have enabled us to reach this amicable agreement.

Mr. Doran: That is clearly a major statement—and a major retreat—by the Secretary of State. I am sure that he made it freely, and without any undue pressure. Substantial concessions have been made, however, and it is important to add that that is a tribute to the pressure applied by the Labour Members on the Committee. There are two outstanding questions that the Secretary of State has not addressed. Clearly, there is major concern about the other important measures in the Bill being rushed through in Committee, and about there being insufficient time to deal with them. Perhaps the Secretary of State can advise the House what proposals he has for the other parts of the Bill.

Finally, can the right hon. and learned Gentleman give an assurance that the agreement that he has announced

today is accepted by all his own Back Benchers, as we have had the privilege of watching Tory Members and Ministers fighting like ferrets in a sack about the proposals?

Mr. Rifkind: With regard to the hon. Gentleman's first question, I can say without fear of contradiction that the views of Opposition Members on the Committee considering the Bill have been of less significance than usual in terms of the development of policy. As for the attitude of my hon. Friends, they must speak for themselves, as they often do, and I have no doubt that they will continue to do so. As for the other parts of the Bill, I am sure that the House as a whole hopes that there will be an opportunity to consider properly in due course the licensing and other provisions that hon. Members believe are important.

Sir Hector Monro: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend most warmly for his announcement and for the agreement that he has reached with the Law Society of Scotland. I thank him also for listening to his own Back Benchers' representations that in future rural solicitors should be able to compete fairly and play their full part in the community.

Mr. Rifkind: I thank my hon. Friend. From my point of view, one of the most important questions that we addressed was the need to end the solicitors' monopoly over conveyancing. I am grateful to the Law Society of Scotland for agreeing to that proposition.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: In preparing for the humiliating climbdown that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has just announced, did he have time to reflect on what he said in 1976—that a separate Scottish legal system needed a separate Scottish Parliament? Have not the tawdry and undignified scenes in the Corridor outside the Committee Room demonstrated the Government's inadequacy and inability to get their business through the House?

Mr. Rifkind: I can understand that the hon. and learned Gentleman, who is a distinguished lawyer, is disappointed about the Government's ability to reach agreement with the Law Society of Scotland on matters of this kind. I appreciate that he may have other interests in that respect. However, we have demonstrated that with good will it is possible to reach agreement. That is something which I am delighted to report to the House.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I warmly and wholeheartedly congratulate my right hon. and learned Gentleman on his achievement. He has done a great service to the people of Scotland, the institutions of Scotland and the integrity of the House. Does he agree with me that, given good will and some reasonable compromises on the later parts of the Bill, there is every reason to believe that the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill can be enacted in this Session of Parliament, having been considered at reasonable hours?

Mr. Rifkind: I very much agree with my hon. Friend. It will assist the Committee to know that with regard to that part of the Bill which has given rise to the greatest public interest both the Law Society of Scotland and the Scottish Consumer Council, which have occasionally adopted different views on certain matters, have enthusiastically endorsed the proposals?

Mr. Harry Ewing: The Bill began its life in the other House in February 1990. It has taken the Secretary of State from February to the beginning of July to discuss and enter into an agreement with the Law Society on part II. How on earth does he expect the Committee to discuss, in the three weeks that remain before the recess, something on which it has taken him six months to reach agreement with the Law Society of Scotland? Does the Secretary of State also accept that although he has been a member of the Committee since it began its work, the words that he has expressed at the Dispatch Box are the first words that he has uttered on the Bill as he left everything to his junior colleague, the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton)? Does he appreciate that there is simply not enough time to get the Bill through its Committee stage?

Mr. Rifkind: I am happy to pay a fulsome tribute to the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), who has done a superb job in Committee. It is only in the recent past that the Law Society of Scotland has felt able to state its willingness to agree to the proposals that have been put before the House today. I pay tribute to the Law Society for its constructive contribution.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Although I recognise that the Secretary of State and his colleagues must feel very humiliated by this eleventh-hour decision, can the right hon. and learned Gentleman tell the House what discussions he has had with the Department of Trade and Industry about competition policy, given that that is included in the Bill? The problems did not become apparent in February, but when the Green Paper was published last year clear antagonism was expressed. Why has it taken so long to recognise that the Bill is totally unrepresentative of the wishes of the legal profession, particularly in Scotland?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Lady must appreciate that it is not just the interests of any one profession that the Government must take into account. We discussed competition policy with the relevant Departments and I am delighted that the opportunities for greater choice are preserved on the basis of what I reported to the House today.

Mr. Speaker: Sir Nicholas Fairbairn.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn *rose*——

Mr. Canavan: He has been called twice. It is ridiculous.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for the agreement that he has reached with the Law Society of Scotland. I remind him of Churchill's words

"In War, resolution; in defeat"—
[Interruption.]

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. and learned Gentleman should ask a question, and please not give us reminiscences.

Mr. Eadie: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us have the question.

Mr. Eadie: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We are reaching the end of Question Time——

Mr. Eadie: I want to raise a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: I will take the point of order, but it may affect the time available to the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman.

Mr. Eadie: Mr. Speaker, you must have observed—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Does this matter appertain to order during questions? If so, please make the point of order brief.

Mr. Eadie *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: Will the hon. Gentleman sit down for a moment, please?

Mr. Eadie: I wish to raise a point of order which is germane to the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill.

Mr. Speaker: If it requires my immediate attention, I will take the point of order now, but we are in the middle of Question Time and I want to call the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman.

Mr. Eadie: It is important that you take my point of order now, Mr. Speaker. You have observed what happened in the course of Question Time. A specific question was used by the Secretary of State to make what was, in essence, a statement and not an answer to the question. The whole issue is certainly important and germane to Scotland. You know what happened yesterday in the House, when there was an endeavour by the Government and by Ministers to abuse the procedures of the House and to abuse Parliament. I ask you to do your duty Mr. Speaker, as it is your responsibility to protect Back Benchers——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Eadie *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Gentleman please now sit down? I trust that I speak for the whole House when I say that I hope that there will not be a repetition of the disgraceful scenes that we had yesterday—*[Interruption.]* I am protecting Back Benchers.

Mr. Eadie: No, you are not.

Mr. Speaker: The question was on the Order Paper and the Minister has a right to give his answer to that question. I wish to call Sir Nicholas Fairbairn, and then the Oppositon Front-Bench spokesman, to conclude the discussion on the question. I will not hear the hon. Gentleman any more.

Mr. Eadie: Further to that point of order——

Mr. Speaker: I must order the hon. Gentleman to resume his seat.

Mr. Eadie: No. On a further point of order, Mr. Speaker. [HON. MEMBERS: "Name him."] It is——

Mr. Speaker: I should be very reluctant to take severe action in the case of such a senior Member. I order the hon. Gentleman to resume his seat.

Mr. Eadie: I am not going to resume my seat.

Mr. Speaker: In that case, under the powers granted me, I reluctantly say that if the hon. Gentleman does not obey the Chair, I must ask him to leave the Chamber. I am reluctant to do so.

Mr. Eadie: I will leave the Chamber, but something will have to be done about the chairmanship of the House.

Mr. Speaker: I have to order the hon. Member to leave the Chamber.

Mr. Canavan: We should all walk out. This is a disgrace.

Mr. Speaker: I hope that we shall not have a repetition of the scenes that we had yesterday. I receive a great deal of post and representations from members of the general public. The reputation of the House is in the hands of its Members. It is up to us inside this Chamber to set a good example to those outside.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I will continue the question that I was asking. It was in response to a question from the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran) who asked whether the Secretary of State would make a statement. Given good will and consideration of the requirements of the people of Scotland and its legal services, will my right hon. and learned Friend accept my congratulations on what he has done today and remember the words, "so far, so good"?

Mr. Rifkind: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend.

Mr. Speaker: This is not a precedent because we are now past the end of Question Time, but, in view of the point of order, which should not have been raised then, I call the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman.

Mr. Dewar: My criticism of the fact that there is no statement is directed at the Secretary of State for Scotland. I entirely understand that you. Mr. Speaker, had to call question No. 14. It is unfortunate that an important announcement has been compressed into this unsatisfactory parliamentary space. However, I welcome what the Secretary of State has said as far as it goes. It is a remarkable retreat, although I fear that it is not a matter of intellectual conversion but has been forced on the Secretary of State by his total isolation and the evident lack of confidence in his competence among Conservative Back Benchers.

Will the Secretary of State confirm that the effect of what he has said is that the banks, building societies and larger institutions will not now take on conveyancing work? Will he note our strong view that, however valuable the lobbying of the Law Society of Scotland may have been, the matter should not be decided by a deal on that basis but is an issue for the Standing Committee and, ultimately, the House? I did not like the way in which the Secretary of State suggested that the matter was settled. Is he not, in effect, accepting the amendments to part II of the Bill which have been standing in my name and those of my hon. Friends for some time?

Finally, I have an important question. Do I understand from what the Secretary of State has said that he does not intend to proceed to a guillotine and expects to avoid that? That must imply that large sections of parts III and IV of the Bill will have to be dropped if progress is to be made.

I am certainly prepared, as my hon. Friends will be, to be constructive, but we must make it clear from the beginning that the only way to save the Bill from the chaos created by the Secretary of State's mismanagement is to enter into talks and to drop the parts that are not agreed in the rest of the measure.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman, in questioning my right to make the remarks that I did today, should reflect that the question of his hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran) was to ask me to make a statement. The hon. Gentleman is not entitled to complain that that is exactly what I have done. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) is quite correct that the Standing Committee and, ultimately, the House will determine whether the proposals in the Bill are acceptable, but they will wish to take into account the views of outside organisations which have taken an interest in the issue. The hon. Gentleman is also correct in saying that a number of the amendments that he has put down relate to matters to which I referred earlier. That will be relevant at a later stage. Of course I understand the hon. Gentleman's interest in discussing these matters with other members of the Committee. The use of the guillotine is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House. However, in the light of progress and of the agreements to which I referred earlier, I think that the matter has been overtaken by events.

Mr. Speaker: Statement—Mr. Secretary Clarke.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: I will take points of order later.

Mr. Douglas: That is no way to deal with Scottish legislation——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Douglas: These matters should be dealt with through the usual channels and not decided by the Law Society of Scotland.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will take points of order later, in their usual place. I call Mr. Secretary Clarke.

NHS Trusts

3.40 pm

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): Yesterday I gave a full response to 32 questions about the establishment of national health service trusts. I said then that 199 national health service units had expressed interest in NHS trust status. These included single hospitals, groups of hospitals and non-hospital facilities. I understand that about 60 to 70 of those units which have expressed interest in trust status are likely to submit applications in the first wave for April 1991. I also explained that there would be three months of full public consultation on each application which will be undertaken by the relevant regional health authority. I stressed that, ultimately, my decision would be based on my assessment of whether, in the light of all relevant factors, NHS trust status for a particular unit will benefit national health service patients in that locality.

I do not propose to go over the ground that I covered yesterday in answer to hon. Members' questions. However, there are a few further points that I should like to make. First, I wish to state again, absolutely and categorically, that NHS trusts will, as their name makes clear, remain fully part of the national health service. Their staff will be national health service staff, their property will be national health service property, the bulk of their funds will come from contracts with health authorities, and the overwhelming majority of their patients will be NHS patients.

NHS trusts will be established by the Secretary of State. Their chairmen and a number of the non-executive members will be appointed by the Secretary of State. They will be accountable to the Secretary of State for the performance of their functions, and they can be dissolved by the Secretary of State.

I am glad to say that there is a great deal of interest in trust status within the national health service. Already in the few days since the Act received Royal Assent, we have received 12 applications. A further 25 or so units have informed my Department that they will be submitting early applications, and a substantially larger number expect to apply by 20 July. Twelve is the up-to-date figure at 3.15 when I left my office, but applications are coming in all the time. The first 12 applications are from Bradford acute services, Leeds general infirmary and associated hospitals, St. James's university hospital, Leeds, Central Middlesex hospital, North Middlesex hospital, Southend district services, Crewe acute services, the regional adult cardio-thoracic unit, Liverpool, Royal Liverpool children's hospital, East Gloucestershire district services, Mid-Surrey health authority general unit and the royal national orthopaedic hospital.

That first list includes major teaching hospitals, such as Leeds general infirmary and St. James's university hospital Leeds. St. James's is the largest teaching hospital in Europe. The Royal Liverpool children's hospital has an international reputation. Its application states that the promoters believe that

"local control and management is the most appropriate organisational model for the largest acute paediatric hospital and community child health services in Western Europe".

Clearly, all those applications and the others that arrive will need to be tested through the consultation process that we have set in place, and I shall want to look carefully at the proposals and the comments made on them before deciding whether to approve applications.

Finally, I re-emphasise the very real benefits that we see flowing from trust status. Trusts will be able to use the range of powers and freedoms which I have previously outlined for the benefit of patients, to improve above all the quality of service which they provide to our patients in our national health service.

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): The House will recall that yesterday the Secretary of State assured the House of the enthusiasm for his plans. If there is so much enthusiasm for his plans, why is he so afraid of letting local people decide for themselves whether their hospitals go self-governing? Why does he have to take that decision for them? Is not the real reason why the Secretary of State will not allow local people to ballot that he knows that he would lose?

May I press the Secretary of State on the interesting shift in the text overnight? Yesterday, the right hon. and learned Gentleman told the House that trust hospitals

"will be free to determine the terms and conditions of service of the staff they employ, to acquire, own and dispose of assets".—[*Official Report*, 3 July 1990; Vol. 175, c. 862-63.]

But today the Secretary of State told the House that their staff and property will belong to the national health service. Was he not right the first time? Why does not the right hon. and learned Gentleman admit that trusts will be able to hire and fire what staff they please, or to impose what conditions they please, and to buy and sell property for financial gain? Why does not he admit also that trusts will belong to the NHS only in the sense that at a late stage of the Bill's progress, he stuck "NHS" in front of their names?

Will the Secretary of State come clean on what he means by a process of consultation? Will he confirm that in an article in *The Times* on Monday, when he was asked whether he would let a trust go ahead "despite overwhelming opposition", the right hon. and learned Gentleman replied, "Yes"? If that is his intention, why not tell us that now and admit that the consultation is a fraud —the fake product of Ministers who love to lecture and hate to listen?

If the Secretary of State wants fair consultation, will he reveal who he will appoint as the chairs and directors of the trusts? [HON. MEMBERS: "Tories."] Before the public are consulted about the future of their hospitals, will they be told which industrialists or friends of the Tory party he is to put in charge of them? If the right hon. and learned Gentleman wants fair consultation, will he respond to the many doctors who have reported that they were put under pressure either by bribery or blackmail to agree to go self-governing as the price of development funding?

As the Minister who commended to the House the Rover deal, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give an assurance that this time there will be no hidden sweeteners to go self-governing?

Is not the real reason why the Secretary of State cannot allow fair consultation that he cannot convince the public? Does not he understand that he can spent £3 million on the most expensive election address in history, but that he will not persuade the public that fragmenting the NHS will make it more efficient, or that turning their hospitals into business enterprises will make them more caring?

I warn the Secretary of State—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] —that if, after consultation, he goes ahead against the will

of local people, ignores their views, and makes their hospitals self-governing against their wishes, they will vote for a Government who will listen to them, and who will take their hospitals back into their local NHS.

Mr. Clarke: We are here considering the future of probably the most important public service in the country, and how best to raise the quality of care that it gives to its patients. The hon. Gentleman's roustabout, knockabout nonsense does not rise to the importance of the subject matter, which he reduced to almost ridiculous proportions.

The hon. Gentleman persists in arguing that the whole exercise should be reduced to ballots, to pursue what he described last week as his desire to have a by-election in every place where the staff of a hospital apply for NHS transfer status. No process of public consultation that I can recall on any important issue has been subjected to local referenda, of whatever electorate—certainly not by his Government or any other. Childish political ranting of the sort that we have just heard is no way to determine the future method of management of great hospitals such as St. James's hospital, Leeds, the Royal Liverpool children's hospital, or the others that I listed.

NHS trusts will employ national health service staff. They will be their own staff. Just as Nottingham district health authority, which is in the national health service, employs national health service staff, so if any hospitals become NHS trusts, they will employ their own staff as NHS staff. It is absurd for the hon. Gentleman to keep repeating that somehow their staff, property or premises will cease to be national health service staff, property or premises.

If the hon. Gentleman continues to deploy that sort of argument as his contribution to public consultation on such important matters, I can only believe that he is deliberately trying to alarm and deceive the staff who work in the hospital to get them to come to an opinion that is contrary to the facts. I do not want that sort of contribution from the hon. Gentleman or anyone else, although criticism of the proposals will be welcome if it is constructive.

We are seeking a serious process of local public consultation, during which those most affected can properly consider the proposals being put forward by the staff and managers of the hospitals, make comments on them and give their view about their probable effect on services. That will serve the purpose that public consultation is meant to serve, in all such ministerial decisions, by helping me to make a better informed decision that takes into account every serious proposition on the issue. The Labour party, which has no policies on health care, will use the whole process for rent-a-mob demonstrations, usually in the high streets of our towns, but occasionally on the Floor of the House.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I appreciate the importance of the statement, but we have an important debate today on the arts. It is a rare opportunity to debate the arts. *[Laughter.]* I assure hon. Members that it is no laughing matter. So great has been the pressure to take part in the debate that I may have to impose a limit of 10 minutes on speeches. Therefore, I ask for single questions to the Secretary of State. If hon. Members inadvertently ask more than one question, I should be grateful if the Secretary of State would answer only the first.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): I know that my right hon. and learned Friend is aware of the position that I sought to describe yesterday, but other colleagues will not be aware of how large the Trent-region is. It provides cardiac surgery to the north in Sheffield and cardiac surgery to the south in Leicester. Local medical and surgical opinion in Nottingham rightly sought to have that provision in Nottingham in the Queen's medical centre. Under local management, would that local decision be possible and not subject to an external veto?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for waiting 24 hours for the answer to his question. More serious cardiac services are usually a regional specialty. Under the new arrangement the regions can continue to provide them as a regional specialty, and that includes deciding on the best location for them. However, where a hospital has opted for NHS trust status, one reason for doing so would have been because it wished to put forward its plans for the development of services in that hospital. Whether an NHS trust would be likely to proceed with the desire to develop cardiac services, as my hon. Friend has described, would depend on its ability to interest GPs and districts in providing the contracts for that service, if it was opened.

To that extent, taken with all the reforms the change will open the way to better, more local decisions, which are more influenced by the doctors, nurses and managers in great hospitals like the Queen's medical centre, which serves both our constituencies.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): How can the Government justify their belief that when a private organisation such as a trade union takes action that could affect the public it should have a ballot, but that a public organisation which wishes to make a change in policy should not consult even when the public will be affected? Does not the right hon. and learned Gentleman realise that his statement today against extending people's right to have a say on this matter was the argument that his party has used every time that the House has considered an extension of the franchise?

Mr. Clarke: With the greatest respect, that is a quite extraordinary analogy. A trade union that takes industrial action is asking its members—a definable group; a quite clear constituency—to break their contracts of employment with their employers. It was wrong ever to have had a position in which a member of a trade union could be subjected to the discipline of the trade union, sometimes in a closed shop, without being allowed any say before the action started on whether he or she wished to break his or her contractual relationship with the employer.

I see not the slightest resemblance between that process and the process of public consultation which Governments of all complexions regularly allow to take place on all kinds of complex, special interest subjects. It so happens that the management of the NHS is one of the more complex matters with which Ministers and the House must deal. There is no defined electorate that could cast a vote in a ballot because no one knows in which hospital he or she is likely to be a patient. There is no group that owns the hospital or knows that its members are bound to be patients of that hospital. The ballots for which the

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Opposition ask are part of the demonstration campaigning which they propose to lay on this summer. They know perfectly well that they would play no part in the decision-making of any political party which really believed that it would be in government.

Mr. Cecil Franks (Barrow and Furness): In many respects, do not the new national health service hospital trusts correlate to the old hospital management committees and hospital boards? Is it not strange that the Opposition were content for the best part of 30 years to support the old structure but, for some peculiar reason, are not prepared to support the new one?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend. During the first 25 years of the health service, we had local management. To some extent, we are reversing the 1972 changes. This is particularly ironic for me, because I was in the House at that time. I was the Government Whip on the Committee that considered the Bill that created district health authorities. The then Labour party fought to the death to defend the old local arrangements against the bureaucracy which it said we were creating. Now that we are reducing that bureaucracy, the Labour party is defending it.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Everything come to he who waits, Mr. Speaker. How far will we be able to trust self-governing trusts? Will they be run on the same basis as trust ports? The Secretary of State for Transport is encouraging the use of private Bills to privatise trust ports. Will not similar patterns begin to emerge for self-governing hospital trusts, in that those who are trusted to run one may decide to run away from that trust because of pressure from the right hon. and learned Gentleman?

Mr. Clarke: There is really no resemblance between NHS trusts and port trusts. I happen to think that privatising some of the trust ports is one of the best ways that one can find of improving their performance and the service that they give to industry. I have always been in favour of industrial privatisation. I am against the privatisation of the health service. I have always been against the privatisation of the health service and I will continue to be against it. The NHS trusts will be within the national health service, owning property that is NHS property, employing staff who are NHS staff and treating NHS patients who will not pay for the treatment. They bear no resemblance to the commercial world in which the port trusts work.

Mr. Michael Morris (Northampton, South): My right hon. and learned Friend will know that, to date, I have not managed to support his broad reforms, but I recognise that there is great merit in the concept of NHS trusts. Therefore, I read with particular concern the leaflet on NHS trusts, which stated:

"Those with an interest—staff, GPs, health authorities, community health councils and, above all, the local public —will be asked their views . . . and will have an opportunity to express an opinion".

Precisely how will that be done?

Mr. Clarke: It will be done by the process of consultation over three months which I am asking regional health authorities to conduct. I shall ask them to publish the results of that consultation and come back to me with their comments so that I can make a better-informed decision.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for reading that passage in my booklet. Like him, I would emphasise the "general public". The difficulty with public consultation is that it becomes dominated by overnight committees, various interest groups and trade unions—[HON. MEMBERS: "Ah."] Oh, yes. The Labour party is pouring the community charge into all kinds of front organisations which will respond to the consultations. The general public's interests are most affected by how well local hospitals are run for their benefit. I hope that in the middle of this political process, which the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) is trying to stir up, the ordinary member of the public will give his or her views on what he or she would like from local hospitals.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): Will the Minister tell the truth and say that opting out of hospital services is a small step to privatisation? Patients will have to pay for treatment or to stay in hospital, in the same way as the Government introduced charges for eye tests and dental services.

Mr. Clarke: I always tell the truth, and I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman believes the proposition that lies behind his question.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the great national teaching hospitals—I am concerned with the royal national orthopaedic, the last on his list—are particularly suited to NHS trust status, provided that there is balanced local consultation and that the eventual structure is right and rational? Will he reassure opinion that that will be done properly, with careful thought, and that site and buildings ownership will be properly settled so that those hospitals will be assured of a viable long-term future—particularly, of course, the RNOH?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The last application that I received before leaving the office was a letter which states simply:

"The Staff of this hospital wish you to consider the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital for National Health Service Trust status."

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): The staff?

Mr. Clarke: I am sure that the staff's opinion will be rejected by the hon. Gentleman if it does not coincide with his own.

The new bodies must be established carefully. Before any application is approved, we will ensure that the people appointed to the board are competent, that their plans have been well drawn up and considered and that they are likely to be successful in delivering them. The point of consultation is to ensure that there is no chance of an ill-thought-out application getting through and that the approved applications enhance the service to patients.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): As the right-wing extremists in the Tory party fear the ballot box, will the Secretary of State spell out in some detail how consultation will take place? For example, if all the nurses at Broad Green and Alder Hey hospitals in Liverpool say, "No, we do not want this ideological dream of the Tory party", will he still go ahead and pursue these aims? Will

he still say yes to hospital trusts? Does he agree that the only people who are pursuing these proposals with vigour are the petty bureaucrats whom he appoints, who are looking not to the interests of the patients but for knighthoods and peerages?

Mr. Clarke: I will obey your injunction, Mr. Speaker, and answer only the first question. I do not answer for the right-wing extremists in the Conservative party. The hon. Gentleman should address that question elsewhere.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the criterion by which he will reach judgments on applications is the quality of service that will be provided to patients? In the context of Leeds and the two applications from the great teaching hospitals, will he consider whether mergers of trust hospitals would be desirable and whether, as a consequence, rationalisation of district health authorities would be necessary?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend's premise that what matters is whether the change in status is likely to improve the quality of care to patients. In Leeds, it will be necessary to have a serious local discussion about the prospects of mergers of district health authorities, in which some are interested. Mergers of hospitals will not necessarily arise, but people wish to consider how the plans for both those great hospitals interrelate. The aim must be to set up a structure for managing and delivering the health service in Leeds that is likely to improve, to yet higher levels, the high standard of care in that city.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): How can anyone have confidence in the Secretary of State promising local public consultation that will be worthy of that term when his track record in managing the health service shows that he imposed a contract on doctors, against the clear evidence of consultations with them, and shows the total lack of consultation with ambulance workers throughout months of a damaging dispute which cost millions of pounds? The evidence of those consultations, as he confirmed from the Dispatch Box this afternoon, will come from political appointees, who will be appointed by him to an extent unparalleled in the history of the health service.

Mr. Clarke: I negotiated an agreement with the representatives of the GPs involving the stipulation for the first time of the services that GPs should provide to the public under the contract. I accept that that was later repudiated by the GPs, who said that they wanted the money without the description of services.

I did, indeed, resist the ambulance men's claim for a double-figure pay settlement and a high formula, because the health service could not afford it. The hon. Gentleman's test of democracy appears to be that people should be allowed to write their own contract of employment and specify the figure for their own pay. He says that it was undemocratic that I did not accept the GPs' and ambulance men's assertion of what they wanted. In both cases, I defended the public interest and, in the forthcoming consultation, I shall be bearing in mind the public interest—and not just special interests—in reaching my decision.

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): As the public have never been balloted on hospital closures, on the location of specific regional facilities or on internal reorganisation of facilities in hospitals, why should they be balloted now?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend. No Government of any political complexion have carried out a ballot on any decision in the health service since it was first created. The question of NHS trust status is one of the most complicated issues that has been put before the public during the lifetime of the NHS and it is particularly unsuitable for resolution by ballot.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): The two teaching hospitals in Leeds provide a world-renowned service. They move at the frontiers of knowledge and during my 30 years in Leeds I have been surprised that provincial hospitals can be so good. What will happen now that the motive is a contract? How on earth will the hospitals be able to maintain university standards in conjunction with the university of Leeds given that the Government's proposals fly in the face of that aim?

Mr. Clarke: After April next year, all the hospitals in the national health service, whether self-governing or directly managed, will enter into contracts for the services that they deliver. They will not be commercial contracts——

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Oh, dear.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Oh, dear.

Mr. Clarke: I advise the hon. Lady to read the White Paper, even at this late stage. There will be an agreement with the health authorities or the GPs, who will stipulate what services they want and what quality they require in exchange for an allotment of national health service resources to the hospital that will deliver those services. The separation of purchaser and provider has been welcomed by most people who have commented on the running of the health service. Even the Opposition are reported as saying that they accept the other way of describing the arrangements, which is that the money will follow the patient. I do not understand how the Opposition can have accepted the principle of what they have been describing for the past 12 months as the internal market but then continue their strident opposition to the reforms that enshrine that concept.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the Opposition did not want the statement today—[HON. MEMBERS: "We asked for it."] —because they do not want the public to hear that there is genuine enthusiasm among all sectors of the service? [HON. MEMBERS: "Where?"] Those hon. Members who ask "Where?" should look at the ballot of consultants at the London hospital which came out in favour of self-governing status. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that Labour Members are interested only in trench warfare on behalf of their party political allies, the National Union of Public Employees and the Confederation of Health Service Employees?

Mr. Clarke: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. We continue to face strident demands for public consultation, which we have always said we want, from a party that will not even listen to the answers that we give to its alleged

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questions on the subject. My hon. Friend is also right to point out that numerous ballots of consultants have come out heavily in favour of NHS trust status. I do not rely too heavily on ballots because I am consistent in my argument that straightforward ballots of any group, however important, cannot in themselves determine one way or the other the future management of a hospital. There are plenty of hospitals where staff and consultants have voted in favour of an application.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I am sure that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will agree that there are those who want self-governing trusts, but some of them are concerned that officials will restrict their operations. The Secretary of State said that the trusts would be getting their contracts from health authorities. But will health authorities attempt to thwart such trusts and other hospitals that refuse to enter into contracts with them for particular services?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. There are those in the service who are keenly in favour of local management of hospitals and NHS trust status. They constantly ask me to reassure them that they really will be given the local freedom to manage and develop hospitals as they wish. I keep giving them that assurance. They will be free from district health authority, regional health authority and Whitehall control of their day-to-day affairs. The contracts that we are describing will be entered into by every hospital and those contracts will be placed by the health authorities and by the patients on their assessment of the quality and value for money of the care that they are likely to receive under those contracts. Any other interference with self-governing hospitals' status and decision-taking will be ended by our reforms and they will be protected by the NHS trust documents that set them up.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that many medical experts believe that this transfusion is just what the hospital service needs? Will he confirm that what he is now endeavouring to do, together with other health service measures, is to put the genuine public interest first over and above the partial and vested interests of some doctors, some bureaucrats and the Labour party?

Mr. Clarke: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. The longer the process of introducing the reforms continues, the more opinion is changing—which it is doing quite rapidly—within the service in the direction that my hon. Friend describes and for the reasons that he gave.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): Is the Secretary of State aware that even tonight my local hospital, King's College, is considering a massive programme of cuts, ward closures, cancellations and bed closures? If the hospital was a trust, would not people like myself, my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) and those who live in Dulwich and Bermondsey have the last vestige of democratic accountability removed from them because those cuts could be made without regard to local people?

Mr. Clarke: No hospital will acquire trust status unless it can demonstrate that it is well managed, can achieve financial stability and has proposals for delivering the services that it wants within the resources that it is likely to get.

London health authorities, like all health authorities, face problems, but, like other authorities, they must deliver their services within the available resources. If London hospitals are allowed to disregard that, they will do so at the expense of other health authorities in the home counties from which the money would be drawn to cover the deficits. It is perfectly possible, as many London hospitals demonstrate, to deliver a good quality of service in acceptable quantities and stay within the generous allocations of funds that are nowadays made to the national health service.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): With an aging population and the ever-increasing costs of the national health service do not we need a dynamic, progressive and efficient health service? If hospitals feel that by governing themselves they can deliver better patient care, why should they not be allowed to do that? Incidentally, it is not compulsory, it is optional.

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend. Anyone who is seriously interested in the quality of health care wants it to be delivered by an efficient and well-run organisation. It is absurd to say that because something is a public service, it is wrong to look at efficiency, better decision-taking and the better use of resources and their delivery. The more important the service, the more important it is to get the right structure of management for it.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): If the Secretary of State were to go into hospital for a serious operation, would he trust the doctors and nurses to have his life in their hands? If so, why does he not trust them to give their opinions about the national health service?

Mr. Clarke: The answer to the first question is, of course, yes. On medical matters, I pay considerable regard to their opinions. However, I would not necessarily find totally compelling the opinion of a surgeon on what car to buy or on a subject that was outside his immediate professional expertise. The doctors and nurses work inside the service and management matters a great deal to them; it will have regard to their views. If health care policy had always been dominated by the expressed opinions of doctors in ballots, we would not have had the national health service in the first place because they voted by 9:1 against the contract that Nye Bevan originally offered to them in 1948.

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): Since the creation of NHS trusts will tend to increase the power of comsumers at the expense of that of producers, does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that only someone who was totally obsessed with protecting the power of trade union bosses and did not care a jot about how much he alarmed poor old patients would describe the matter in the terms used by the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook)?

Mr. Clarke: I wholly agree with my hon. Friend. If there is one key to the changes that we are trying to make in public service to improve people's quality of life, it is that we want our public services to be dominated by the interests of consumers—in this case, patients—not by the interests of producers. The Labour party is an

old-fashioned syndicalist party, completely dominated by trade union interests, and deeply resistant to change of any kind in the public sector.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): May I advise the Secretary of State that St. James's hospital covers a large area of my constituency, and the constituents of Rothwell, who are served by the Leeds Eastern health authority, have made representations to the effect that they vigorously oppose the trust system for St. James's hospital? How will the consultation procedure apply to my constituents? Are not we witnessing an extension and a bigger stake of private hospital services in the national health service?

Mr. Clarke: I would seriously ask the inhabitants of Rothwellto look at the applications being made by the people who work at St. James's hospital, to look at what they propose for the development of services, and to consider their arguments.

Mr. O'Brien: How are they to do it?

Mr. Clarke: The application documents are public documents. We shall have a public consultation process. I trust that those who are promoting self-government for St. James's hospital will make sure that their case is available and is put across to the people of Rothwell. With respect, I do not think that the hon. Gentleman is doing any service to his constituents by turning round the proposals of local doctors as though local doctors are seriously suggesting turning the hospital into a private one. That is total nonsense and does not help the process of serious public consultation.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that patients of the royal national orthopaedic hospital, for example, come from such a wide area of the country that the only conceivable ballot of those interested would have to be a general election? [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Does my right hon. and learned Friend believe that our winning the next general election will put an end to the spurious demands for inappropriate consultation?

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend has made a valid point. It would be pointless to carry out a ballot of the residents of the immediate locality about the future of the royal national orthopaedic hospital, the Royal Liverpool children's hospital or quite a large number of hospitals that I have mentioned. The first point that was put forward by the proponents of the Royal Liverpool children's hospital is that

"it is inappropriate that a hospital providing services to the vast majority of DHAs in the North West of England and Wales is managed by only one DHA."

They go on to set out other reasons, too. That applies to quite a number of the applications that we already have. Again, it shows that the idea of reducing the matter to a simple local ballot is an attempt to reduce the issue to ward politics, which is what Opposition Members are doing, whereas we are interested in the future of the service. At the general election, people will want to judge which party is putting most effort into trying to keep up and improve the quality of our national health service.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): How can the House take the Secretary of State's argument seriously when hon. Members have had lectures from him over the years about the need to make local councils more accountable and the need to make trade union officers more accountable through votes and political influence? It is now suggested that a major change in the national health service cannot be put to the consumers of whom he spoke so movingly because the Secretary of State does not know how to define them. How can he conduct serious consultations if he does not know who should vote, and how does he know whom to consult?

Mr. Clarke: The point has just been answered extremely well by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe). There is no definable electorate. No doubt that is only one of the reasons why no Government have suggested that local changes of this sort should be put to the views of the local electorate. If the Labour party has no views of its own on how to run the health service and says that the matter should be reduced to a yes/no referendum of the local population, it shows that it is in a desperate situation.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Southend-on-Sea has again given a lead to the country, with the support of its Members of Parliament, in being among the first 12 to apply. Does the Secretary of State accept that apart from the advantage of local management, the other advantage that we see, and which others should see, is that this is a way of escaping from the bureaucratic nightmare of being, for years and years, an underfunded district in an overfunded region? Will my right hon. and learned Friend explain that the proposals can help some areas, such as Southend?

Mr. Clarke: For years, Southend has suffered from being a low-funded district in a well-funded region and has been badly affected by the RAWP system. I congratulate Southend district health authority on the quality of the care that it succeeds in providing with much lower resources than would be available to an equivalent population in most other parts of England. Other parts of the reforms will help Southend, such as the new system of allocating finance, to be introduced in April. That will put into the district health authority's hands the cost of providing care for its residents and will enable it to have more control over its use. Southend has shown that it wishes to get out of the present situation and to put to better advantage the good qualities of management and care that it has shown when facing its difficulties over recent years.

Mr. Terry Fields (Liverpool, Broadgreen): On the point about consultation, is the Secretary of State aware that today in Liverpool, while the area health authority is grappling with the problems of the pan-Liverpool plan for the NHS, four of his place henchmen have drawn up a secret agenda to start charging for breast cancer treatments for women under 50 years of age, and for treatments for people who are suffering from other complaints? Is he aware that they are selling off parts of Liverpool hospitals? Is he aware that those things are already on the agenda? Is he further aware that the regional drugs unit in the city is underfunded, thus bringing on an epidemic of AIDS because of prostitutes and drug addicts? Who is telling the truth in all this? Is the Secretary of State telling the truth? Are the people of Liverpool lying? There is an agenda.

Mr. Clarke: Area health authorities were abolished nine years ago. It will remain illegal to charge for national health service treatments.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Everybody is resistant to change—whether they are miners, trade unionists, workers in a town hall or lawyers. I do not like it when my wife tells me that I have to change. But national health service workers have to change just like everybody else. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it seems particularly ironic that, having complained for years about interference from district health authorities, regional health authorities, the Department of Health and the Treasury, and having at last been given the opportunity to be masters of their own destiny, the trade unions are now whipping up the nurses, doctors and the like to oppose these changes, which should be very welcome to us all?

Mr. Clarke: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. We all understand that the prospect of change is deeply disturbing to everybody who works in a large organisation. That is bound to be the case and it is wholly understandable. It is the task of the leaders, the managers and the leading consultants in the hospital to manage that change in such a way as to address the legitimate fears of their staff, to reassure them, to help them to understand the new arrangements, and to seek to persuade them of the benefits of what they want to do. The only contribution from the labour and trade union movements to that is to go round spreading ridiculous fears among the staff and the public, to try to get them to make some instant decisions and to vote in the comic ballots that they keep saying that they want to organise.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Will the Secretary of State explain the consultation exercise a little further? For instance, will it be similar to the one currently taking place in Halifax about the proposed closure of three wards because of a £1·2 million deficit? Although that consultation period ends at the end of August, the management have already closed the wards. When I complained and said that the consultation period was not yet over and that they were breaking the procedures, the management said that they wanted to give staff their annual leave. Is that how it will be? Will it simply be a fraud that is perpetrated on those taking part?

Mr. Clarke: The procedures that we follow are exactly the same as those followed by the previous Labour Government. Where a major change in service is proposed, there is a process of public consultation. If the community health council continues to disagree with the district health authority, the proposal is submitted to a Minister who makes a decision one way or the other. There has always been provision for emergency closures, but they eventually have to go through that process. The previous Government followed that practice, and we do. I have never heard any suggestion that it should be made subject to a ballot.

The fact that parts of the health service are still gripped by crisis management, causing frustrations with sudden closures of wards, shows the weakness of the present method of running it. Moving on to a proper basis of running it with local management being given more autonomy will eliminate much of the need for stop-go control.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the Northwich Victoria infirmary is one of the first three hospitals to apply for self-governing status and that that hospital is in my constituency? Like Southend, it is in an underfunded district in a region which is close to its RAWP target. Consequently, local flexibility should lead to more comprehensive and cost-effective provision of health care for everyone in my constituency and is greatly to be welcomed. The Opposition opposed local management of schools and are against the local management of hospitals. When they were in government, they trampled with hob-nailed boots over the electorate in the imposition of comprehensive schools. Why does my right hon. and learned Friend think that they are always against local management?

Mr. Clarke: I have on the Table of the House the applications from my hon. Friend's constituents and others in Cheshire. I commend to the people of Cheshire the proposals from their local managers and doctors and ask them for their response. My hon. Friend is commending those proposals as likely to enhance the standard of care. The Labour party, as he rightly says, is against local control and prefers centralised command and bureaucracy because that is the preference of the trade unions that dominate all Labour party thinking on health service matters.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): If the Secretary of State wants to improve the health service, he should resign. That would be the best tonic that I know for the health service. The Secretary of State has confirmed this afternoon that he is completely discarding the consultation process and basing his judgment or approval on the plans submitted by the applicants. If that is the case, why bother with consultation? If there are criteria to be met, why is the health service not meeting them today?

Mr. Clarke: I said the precise opposite of that. I have announced that there will be a process of public consultation which I trust will enable me to take a better-informed decision. Before making any decision, I shall take into account all the representations put before me. If, as is very likely, there is an application from Doncaster, I shall wait to see what the people of Doncaster say before I reach a decision. The people of Doncaster are likely to make more sensible representations if they disregard the nonsense that the hon. Gentleman keeps putting out to the town about how the proposals are paving the way for privatisation and that they might have to pay for their care.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that in the south-east the national pay and conditions that apply in the health service and the difficulties of disposing of surplus land stand in the way of improving the health service in my constituency? Does he agree that, far from the claims made by the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), giving trust managers a greater say in pay and conditions and who they hire and fire is a good thing and that making it easier for them to dispose of surplus land is a plus? That is the way to achieve better services for our constituents.

Mr. Clarke: I wholly agree with my hon. Friend about the desirability of local flexible pay in a giant and complicated service such as this. I do not think that the

hon. Member for Livingston has ever run anything. Only on that basis could he possibly continue to argue that an inflexible national system of pay, terms and conditions for more than 1 million staff in every part of the country is a sensible way of running such a giant and important service.

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): Will the Secretary of State assure the House that he will not give the go-ahead to any opting-out proposals if the community health council—the local patients' voice in the national health service—is firmly opposed to that proposal? Will he assure the House that he does not propose to reduce the current powers of community health councils or to abolish them?

Mr. Clarke: For 19 years, no one has given the community health councils an absolute power of veto over local decisions. I shall pay careful attention to the views of community health councils, and to everyone else, but I shall not put the management of the health service totally into the hands of the local community health councils. I certainly have no intention of changing the powers of the community health councils and, contrary to the wishes of some of my right hon. and hon. Friends, I have no intention of abolishing them. We left them out of the process of reform; they are one part of the health service that remains completely unchanged in composition, powers and duties.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): My right hon. and learned Friend will have heard the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), when opposing self-governing trusts, say that the only thing that the health service needs is more funding. Does he share my surprise, therefore, that the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) did not include any more money for the health service among the two definite commitments that she made on the subject? What credence can be given to the statement by the hon. Member for Livingston when the previous Labour Government cut the hospital building programme by 30 per cent. and cut nurses' wages, in real terms, in four out of their five years in office?

Mr. Clarke: I did not hear that remark——

Mr. Robin Cook: I did not say it.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman is anxious to point out that he did not make it. He is not promising any more funding for the national health service. He has been prevented from promising any more money for the service in any sensible terms. The only money that he is going to spend is £90 million on restoring NHS sight tests, mainly for the benefit of the optical chains which have been lobbying for that. As far as I am aware, that is the only spending promise to which the Labour party remains committed.

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): The Secretary of State has continually referred to "a serious process of consultation", which he says will be undertaken. Who will pay for it? Will health authorities have to pay out of their current budget, or will they get additional money? What criteria will he use to assess whether the consultations are being conducted properly?

Mr. Clarke: The cost of consultation—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Lady cannot hear what I am saying. The cost of consultation will come out of the costs of implementing the reforms, for which we have already accounted to the House. The criteria that I shall apply will be whether the proposals are likely to result in an improvement in the delivery of health care to national health service patients served by the unit in question.

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): Does my right hon. and learned Friend think that the attack levelled on his announcement today by the Opposition casts doubt on the integrity of the clinicians and managers who will run the NHS trusts—as if, by the very creation of trusts, those people will not be motivated to deliver extra patient care?

Mr. Clarke: Yes, I think that many of the remarks made today are a direct attack on local managers and doctors who have spent a great deal of effort in putting forward these proposals. Many of the people who have put in such effort will be extremely annoyed to hear them reduced to that level by the Opposition, who claim that somehow they are all proposing to raffle off their hospitals or to charge patients. That is an insult to the local doctors who work in these great institutions and who have put plans forward.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Because of the pressure of business I propose to move on to the ten minute Bill at 4.40. I hope that I shall be able to call all the hon. Members who wish to speak, provided that they are brief.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Will the Secretary of State reassure me that, in the event of trust status being granted to any hospital, and there being an excess of income over expenditure at the end of any financial year, that excess will be mandatorily reinvested in the hospital, and not put in the pockets of the trustees or their friends?

Mr. Clarke: Yes, Sir. One of the powers of the new trusts will be to accumulate surpluses, but they will have to be used for the benefit of the trust. There is no question of trustees being paid any extra sums out of the surpluses, as the hon. Gentleman fears.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): The Secretary of State will be aware that one hospital that has expressed an interest in opting out—although it is not on his list—is Bart's hospital in east London which serves my constituents in Hackney. It is the oldest hospital in London, founded specifically to care for the poor. Does the Secretary of State agree that it is precisely the poor who will suffer if Bart's opts out and balancing its books becomes its bottom line, because it would have to focus on high turnover and high income-generating specialties at the expense of the old and the chronically sick?

Mr. Clarke: St. Bart's is one of our most famous hospitals. Nowadays it caters for all patients, regardless of their means, and it delivers a high standard of care. The hon. Lady's description of what NHS trust status means is frankly nonsense. I thought that we had moved some months ago from the argument that anyone in an NHS trust will have to concentrate on high-tech, high-profit lines. Most people who have studied the White Paper realise that that argument has nothing whatever to do with, and is a meaningless description of, the proposals that we have made: for trusts to stay within the national

[Mr. Clarke]

health service, to provide free treatment and to develop their services as the local managers, doctors and nurses would wish for the best.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Will the Secretary of State answer the one question that he has ducked all afternoon? Will he give a firm assurance that, if the consultation period results in clear decisions against the setting up of trusts on the part of those who have been consulted, he will adhere to those expressions of opposition; or does he intend to don his Thatcherite jackboots and stamp all over local opinion in his usual arrogant and high-handed fashion?

Mr. Clarke: That is a bit rich, coming from an ex-chairman of the GLC. My approach to public consultation is indistinguishable from that of every Minister in any Government for as long as I have been in the House. The Minister retains the responsibility for the decision. Public consultation is to allow everyone to have their say, with the intention that the Minister shall eventually take a better-informed decision with the benefit of all the advice that he can get from people who have an interest. We have never handed over decisions to a mere counting of heads. I do not recall that the GLC did so either, except during the periodic intervals when—unfortunately—it succeeded in being re-elected.

Mr. Jack Thompson (Wansbeck): I did not detect in the Secretary of State's statement any comment about the Government's policy on new hospitals. The Secretary of State is aware that a new hospital is being built in my constituency for which we have waited for more than 10 years. As yet we have no staff appointments—at any level—at that hospital. I fear that it may be the Government's policy to introduce a formula saying that such appointments will be conditional on the staff supporting opting-out, either formally or informally.

Mr. Clarke: I well remember laying the foundation stone of the great new hospital in the middle of the hon. Gentleman's constituency. He arrived with a traditional demonstration carrying anti-poll-tax banners but discussing among themselves what the demonstration was about. In a field surrounding the hospital site, they concocted the extraordinary argument that it was a demonstration against the possibility that when the hospital was opened it might become a self-governing NHS trust. If that is his way of trying to take the gilt off the gingerbread of a huge investment in the local health service, I give the hon. Gentleman a prize for originality. The hospital will open in the ordinary way as an NHS hospital. It will be for the local staff—doctors, nurses and managers—to decide whether they wish to apply for NHS trust status.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Will the Secretary of State try to clear up the welter of confusion that he has caused among hon. Members? When he says that a hospital is applying to become a self-governing trust, and one of his colleagues behind him says that a hospital feels that it should apply, what are they talking about? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman define "hospital"? Is it an animate object, or who in the hospital will do this? What kind of hypocrisy has gone on? Will the Secretary of State make that clear, as we genuinely do not know the answer?

Mr. Clarke: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman: he is quite right. I disapprove of the habit of Opposition Members who, when they say that the nurses have said something, mean that COHSE has said it; similarly, when they say that the doctors have said something, they mean that the BMA has said it. I agree that I should not readily say that the hospital says something, but the names of the promoters are readily identifiable. The letters to me are signed. The would-be chairman is clearly identifiable, as will be the people putting forward local proposals. It will be for the local public to present their views for and against the propositions that the local managers, doctors, nurses and others wish to advance.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): If the Secretary of State accepts that it is impossible to run a hospital without doctors, consultants, surgeons, nurses, cleaners, porters, secretarial staff and ancillary workers of all descriptions, will he explain why very small groups of politically motivated senior management are allowed to make applications to set up hospital trusts and, in effect, sell the livelihoods and jobs of those under them—and also damage their working conditions in the long term?

Mr. Clarke: People who make such applications are motivated by a desire to be able to run their hospital units in the best possible way. I am sure that many people who promote those applications are not supporters of the Government or the Conservative party. It will be for the staff of the hospitals to put forward their views—as can everyone else—on the proposals. One thing must be made clear to the staff: they will remain national health service staff, with continuity of employment and their existing contracts. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will help me to make that clear to them.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Is the Secretary of State aware that two initial applications were made from Coventry for the Coventry and Warwickshire and the Walsgrave hospitals? According to the list that the Secretary of State gave this afternoon, both hospitals are not being proceeded with. The applications were made by appointed unit managers who did not consult a single doctor, nurse, ancillary worker or patient. Thousands of people in Coventry signed petitions against the initial applications and handed them to my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Hughes) and me. If formal applications are made, who will the Secretary of State consult—the staff, the patients or the unit managers who appear to want to be big fish in small ponds?

Mr. Clarke: I shall consult all the groups that the hon. Gentleman mentioned. That is the whole point of the exercise. We have now received real applications from people who have described their plans. We propose to hold consultations on those applications with the general public and all the interest groups to which the hon. Gentleman referred. He has been running a daft campaign in Coventry, organising petitions against applications before they have been received and before he knows what they say. If the hon. Member for Livingston will allow us to move on to a more sensible basis for discussion, there will be a much more intelligent local consultation process about how best to improve the national health service.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Secretary of State aware that he should be ashamed of himself for saying earlier that the crisis in the national health service is down

to the nurses, the staff and all the other people who work in it? The real reason for the crisis in the NHS is the Secretary of State. People outside this place will be intrigued to know how the consultation is to take place. The nurses and staff will not have a vote. The general public and the consultants will not have a vote. How will the consultation take place? Does the Secretary of State intend to stare in the mirror? The general public will not like what it sees there.

Mr. Clarke: I am reassured to hear that my appearance in the mirror will not solve anything; it worries me at times. As for the hon. Gentleman's other point, I did not say what he says I said, or anything like it. He must have had difficulty with hearing what I said because of the hooligan behaviour from time to time of some of those sitting around him.

Mr. Robin Cook: May I repeat one question? If consultation establishes that a majority of the staff at a hospital and the majority of the public that the hospital serves are opposed to the hospital becoming self-governing, does he intend to listen only to those consultations that give him the answer that he wants?

Mr. Clarke: I have described the process of public consultation. My description of it is indistinguishable from that which has been given by every Minister in any Government, of whatever political complexion. I trust that public consultation will help me to establish whether an application is well founded and in the interests of the health service and patients. The decision must be that of the Secretary of State for Health of the day. He is answerable to Parliament. If we ever had the misfortune of the hon. Gentleman occupying my position as Secretary of State for Health, I am sure that he would not get up and say, "I am going to stop running the service and will hand the whole thing over to local ballots." The hon. Gentleman reveals his inexperience and lack of ideas when he advocates such a procedure.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 20 JULY

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. Roger Sims
Mr. Kevin McNamara
Ms Dawn Primarolo

Points of Order

4.43 pm

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I shall take the points of order, but I must point out to hon. Members that a very important debate is to follow. Therefore, I hope that those hon. Members who wish to raise points of order will have some consideration for their colleagues. I shall take first the point of order of the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett).

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will be aware that I have already given you notice of this point of order. I have also given the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) notice of it, although he is not in his place now.

You will be aware, Sir, of the importance that all Back-Bench Members place on Adjournment debates. It provides us with the opportunity to raise very important constituency issues in the House and to receive a ministerial reply. You will also be aware that, if any other hon. Member wishes to take part in the debate, he must obtain the prior permission of both the Minister and the hon. Member whose Adjournment debate it is. I draw to your attention—they appear in today's *Hansard*—the events that took place last night during the Adjournment debate that I had sought and obtained on the over-the-horizon radar planning application by the Ministry of Defence for a site at St. David's in Pembrokeshire. The hon. Member for Rhondda, who may have been tired because it was a late night debate, went to the Dispatch Box as the official Opposition spokesman on defence and interrupted my speech. He was told that I was not prepared to give way on a constituency matter, but during the next 25 minutes he proceeded to disrupt the debate continually on points of order and had to be told by Mr. Deputy Speaker to sit down. A shouting match took place then. He further aggravated the matter by using an unparliamentary expression against me, which he then withdrew.

I understand that the hon. Gentleman has apologised to Mr. Deputy Speaker, but he has not apologised to me for causing such disruption. May I therefore ask you, Mr. Speaker, in the light of yesterday's events, when the Minister was unable to finish his speech and answer the points that I wished to raise on behalf of my constituents, to defend the rights of Back Benchers so that Adjournment debates can take place without interruption from Front-Bench spokesmen?

Mr. Speaker: I have read *Hansard* and I have discussed the matter with Mr. Deputy Speaker. What he said is plain, and I repeat that it is an hon. Member's right, if he secures an Adjournment debate, to have full time, unless he is prepared to offer part of it to another hon. Member. Occasionally, hon. Members give way to their colleagues during an Adjournment debate, but what happened last night was not in the best traditions of the House.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that it can be further to the point of order. The hon. Member was not concerned in that debate. I shall take another point of order from the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. John Reid).

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It arises out of Scottish Question Time. I regret the chaos and confusion into which those questions degenerated and the impossible position in which you have been placed. Unless the procedure is changed, the problem will arise again.

I have sympathy for my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie), specifically in relation to Question No. 14. The Secretary of State for Scotland came to the Dispatch Box and announced what amounted to the abandonment of half of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill which is at present in Committee. Two points arise out of that. First, by announcing that abandonment—a major decision—during Question Time, the Secretary of State did not permit the breadth of responses and questions that, had it been a statement, it would have merited.

The second point reflects equally on the House. Many people in Scotland cannot but regard today's announcement as a deal done outside the House——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take the hon. Gentleman's first point of order, but the second one appears to be an extension of Question Time, which would be out of order. Apropos Question 14, the Secretary of State was asked if he would make a statement about part II of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill. It is implicit in the hon. Gentleman's point of order that, as with what happened yesterday, I have authority to say that the Secretary of State ought not to answer the question but should make a statement. I have no such authority. The Secretary of State, or any other Minister, must answer the question on the Order Paper. I judged it to be of such general importance to hon. Members with Scottish constituencies that I allowed a bit of a run on it. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) was distressed, but that is the reason why we did not reach his question.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I assure you that nothing that I shall say implies criticism of the Chair. On the contrary; part of my anger, and that of my colleagues, is precisely due to the fact that, for the second day running, you have been placed in the same position because of the Government's conduct of business. We do not wish that to be imposed upon you.

It must have been clear to the Secretary of State for Scotland that the issues raised by his statement today went far beyond the normal scope and scale of Question Time. He chose to make a major statement by means of the mechanism of Question Time, in response to Question 14 on the Order Paper. That was clearly bound to distort Question Time, both before and after the statement. In normal circumstances, Question No. 14 might not have been reached.

In all the circumstances, was any contact made with you, Sir, by the usual channels about the manner in which the statement was to be made by the Secretary of State? If not, will you make it clear, Mr. Speaker, that what happened today was an abuse of the House which must not be repeated?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am dealing with one point of order at a time.

Certainly it was not an abuse of the House to answer a question on the Order Paper. The hon. Gentleman mentioned the usual channels, and, as the shadow Leader of the House said yesterday, this House proceeds by consent. On matters of this kind, it is for the usual channels to get together to decide on the best way to resolve difficulties of this kind. It is not a matter for the Chair. It puts the Chair in a difficult, if not intolerable, position if the occupant is constantly accused of failing to uphold the interests of Back Benchers because of something for which he has no direct responsibility. It is for the usual channels to resolve these matters.

Mr. Michael Brown: Further to the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett), Mr. Speaker. Although I was not in the House last night, you can be assured that I shall be here for the Adjournment debate of my hon. Friend the Member for East Lindsey (Sir P. Tapsell) tomorrow on the Boundary Commission's inquiry into Lincolnshire and Humberside.

I want to raise a general point of order about Adjournment debates. In the event of an Adjournment debate being disrupted by hon. Members without the permission of the hon. Member who has that Adjournment debate, with the effect that that hon. Member loses one third of the time allocated, would it be possible to ensure that that hon. Member's Adjournment debate was extended by 10 minutes?

Mr. Speaker: That is not within our Standing Orders, and the hon. Gentleman knows it. I am glad that he will be here tomorrow night for the Adjournment debate, and if he wishes to take part, I hope that he will seek the permission of his hon. Friend the Member for East Lindsey (Sir P. Tapsell).

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau, Gwent): Further to the point of order about the events of yesterday and today, Mr. Speaker. Today we have seen a repetition of some of the difficulties that occurred yesterday, which caused great difficulties for the House and for you, Mr. Speaker. The reply given today by the Secretary of State for Health surely underlines how absurd it was for the Government to think that to interpolate that type of statement into Question Time was a proper way in which to deal with the House. The proceedings on the statement went on for an hour and a half and show how necessary it was for that statement to be given today. The strong expressions of opinion made yesterday by Opposition Members were directed not against you, Mr. Speaker, but against the Government for choosing to seek to make such an important statement at the end of Question Time.

What happened yesterday illustrated the seriousness of the matter, especially given that the Government pretended that there was an agreement through the usual channels when there was no such agreement. Given yesterday's events, surely it was all the more absurd, outrageous or offensive—whatever word one might choose—for the Government to come along today and repeat the offence. They made a statement in the House, even though they knew what had happened yesterday.

Even though a question was on the Order Paper, the Government have a responsibility to treat the House

properly. They should have learnt from what happened yesterday and decided to make the statement about Scotland in the same way as the statement given on the health service. Surely, Mr. Speaker, you should use your influence to try to encourage the Government to treat the House fairly in such matters, particularly as we have had two examples in two days of what injury can be done if the Government do not abide by that practice.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am indeed seeking to use what influence I have in such matters——

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): You have a lot of influence.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Magisterial experience.

Mr. Speaker: I am certainly seeking to use what influence I have in such matters. Today's problem could have been avoided if an arrangement had been made through the usual channels to take the question at the end of Question Time, given that it concerned a major matter. Even though I may make such suggestions informally, I am not responsible for carrying them out.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. At the end of the debate on schools yesterday, a number of us witnessed the loutish behaviour of the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) towards a lady Member of the House.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is the hon. Member sure that this is helpful to the House? If so, he should withdraw the word "loutish", which seems to be designed to encourage disruption rather than to calm the House.

Mr. Arnold: I withdraw that word, but I should be grateful for your guidance on what you intend to do about the physical intimidation of a lady Member of the House, my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Education and Science.

Mr. Speaker: Again, I was not in the Chair at the time, but Madam Deputy Speaker dealt with it very well.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. [HON. MEMBERS: "Apologise."] Yesterday, during the Division I crossed the Chamber and berated the Minister about young children in Coventry being taught in toilets. It has been put to me that that was intimidatory and that that was harassment. It is now being said that that harassment was physical. I wish to make it clear that it was not intended in that way. It has been put to me that I should apologise, and I accept that. I do not apologise for my speech. I think that the entire education team should resign in disgrace about our bairns in Coventry.

Mr. Speaker: If, as I judge, the hon. Gentleman has apologised to the House, I accept that. I think that Madam Deputy Speaker, who was in the Chair, would also appreciate a note from him.

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I seldom trouble you with points of order and hon. Members with the seniority of my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) are seldom ordered out of the Chamber. Those facts demonstrate that the credibility of Scottish government was called seriously into question at Question Time. That must be a matter for you, not only because of the disruption caused before and after Question 14—as my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) said—but because this is a serious matter which should command your attention. A Committee is sitting upstairs dealing with important legislation, and the Secretary of State for Scotland——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is an extension of Question Time. I am not concerned with a Committee sitting upstairs; I am concerned with what happens on the Floor of the House.

Dr. Reid: Further to my point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. In relation to what happened yesterday and today, such demos do the House immeasurable harm in the eyes of the public. We are now seen on television, and such disruptions are damaging to our reputation. I also regret that the question tabled by the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) was not reached, and I hope that he will come to see me about it so that I can resolve the matter with him. I cannot say any more than that.

Dr. Reid: Further——

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. During Scottish questions, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) called my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State a liar. One does not expect——

Mr. Speaker: Order. If he did, I did not hear it. If I had heard it, I would have caused him to withdraw it. If the hon. Gentleman heard it he should have risen immediately on a point of order and I could have dealt with it then. I cannot deal with it now. I did not hear that remark and it is not helpful to pursue it now.

Dr. Reid *rose*——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You have obviously been reading *Hansard* quite a lot lately when you have not been in the Chair. I want to draw your attention to another matter that you obviously missed when, the other night, the Government were kept up until about half-past 2. You, Mr. Speaker, will know that there is a Standing Order about Members spying strangers. It is normally used by Back Benchers in an attempt to keep open government, to frustrate a Government with a massive majority and to stop them trampling over democracy—that is roughly it. What happened the other night—if you have not read it——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think I can save the time of the House—I have read it. As the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) said yesterday, I know a good deal of what goes on in this Chamber, even when I am not present. What is the hon. Gentleman's point of order for me?

Mr. Skinner: The point of order is this: as I explained earlier, the Standing Order is usually used by Back Benchers against the Government. Yesterday, the Government did not have 100 to closure the debate so they got a Back Bencher of their own, the hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton), to come in and, rather surprisingly, shout "I spy strangers" so that they could

[Mr. Skinner]

have a vote and waste parliamentary time in order to find out whether they had got 100 Members. If that is going to happen, it is time you put a stop to it.

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a waste of parliamentary time.

BILL PRESENTED

CROFTER FORESTRY (SCOTLAND)

Sir Hector Monro, supported by Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith, Sir Nicholas Fairbairn, Mr. Allan Stewart, Mr. Bill Walker, Mr. Calum Macdonald, Mrs. Ray Michie and Mr. Charles Kennedy, presented a Bill to extend the powers of grazings committees in relation to the use of crofting land in Scotland for forestry purposes; and to make grazings committees eligible for certain grants in respect of such use: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 6 July and to be printed. [Bill 179.]

Dr. Reid: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I have dealt with the hon. Gentleman's point of order. I do not want a continuation of Question Time. What is the point of order that I can answer?

Dr. Reid: I am grateful for the opportunity to complete the point of order that I started earlier on. It is not an attempt to continue Question Time.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman started to talk about what was going on in Committee, about which I have no knowledge.

Dr. Reid: It is about an abuse of the House, about which you, Mr. Speaker, are concerned, and the position in which you are being placed. I am not concerned merely because we do not get the opportunity to ask questions when an announcement such as today's is made, but because the perception of people outside Parliament is that a major Bill was abandoned during Question Time today on the express announcement of a deal done between lawyers outside the House and lawyers inside the House——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a clear continuation of Question Time. We have dealt with that matter. Ten-minute rule motion—Mr. Doug Hoyle.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member, I think, has only just come in—*[Interruption.]* All right—I imagine that one of his hon. Friends has told him what was said about him.

Mr. Maxton: I was sitting beside my hon. Friend the Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes), who will confirm that I was here when the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) made his remark. When the Secretary of State replied to a question, I was severely provoked and used the word of which the hon. Member for Hendon, South accused me. I unreservedly withdraw that word—I emphasise that I withdraw the word.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. Member.

Trade Union Act 1984 (Amendment) (No. 2)

5.5 pm

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend the Trade Union Act 1984 by extending by any time taken up by court proceedings the four week period in which a ballot must be implemented by a trade union.

[Interruption.]—I am receiving encouragement from one of the louts on the Government Front Bench, but despite that I shall continue.

We can see what happens when the law interferes in trade union affairs. Not even this anti-trade union Government intended what came about in the case of which I shall speak. In order to illustrate it, I must return to last year's docks dispute. The Trade Union Act 1984 provides for legal immunity for those strikes called within 28 days of an affirmative ballot by union members. The anomaly that was created was due to the docks dispute and was, by the Government's own admission, unintended and unforeseen.

The chronological order of events is that, on 2 May last year, the Transport and General Workers Union announced its intention to ballot its members on whether they wished to strike in response to plans to abolish the national dock labour scheme. On 8 May, the port employers issued a writ alleging that the strike action would be unlawful as it did not involve an immediate trade dispute. On 19 May, the Transport and General Workers Union held a ballot resulting in an overwhelming majority in favour of strike action. At that time, the union believed that, using the 28 days, it had until 16 June in which to start a strike lawfully. On 29 May, the court decided in favour of the union, but gave the port employers leave to appeal against that decision.

On 17 June, following an appeal by the employers, the Appeal Court reversed the original decision and granted the port employers an injunction preventing industrial action. The Transport and General Workers Union then decided to take the case to the House of Lords. On 21 June, the other place reversed the Appeal Court's ruling and lifted the injunction preventing industrial action. Unfortunately, by that time the union had exceeded the 28 days allowed for the ballot and was forced to hold another ballot at great expense.

Even on the Government's own admission, it was not intended under the Trade Union Act 1984 that, following an affirmative ballot of its members, a union would not have the freedom during the 28-day period to start a strike lawfully. During the docks dispute, the Transport and General Workers Union had no time to call a strike, because during the 28 days it faced court action and so could not have a ballot.

The spirit of the Act was clearly undermined by that process. It is necessary to amend the Act to preserve the spirit in which it was first passed into law and prevent a recurrence of that unintended anomaly. Unfortunately, the Government have set their face against any such amendment. They have said that it would be unnecessary, as the circumstances of the docks dispute were exceptional and unlikely to be repeated. They said that to amend the Act would be an over-reaction. That was not the opinion of many people in the other place, particularly the noble and learned Lord Donaldson, the Master of the Rolls. No

one would imagine Lord Donaldson to be a defender of trade union rights—he is the last person one would expect to be so.

Lord Donaldson described the Government's attitude when they said that to amend the Act would be an over-reaction as

"a triumph of hope over all experience."

He continued that his experience as a practising lawyer and judge was

"where there is sufficient money at stake"—

that is interesting in itself—

"one or other of the parties will not hesitate to take legal proceedings purely with a view to achieving delay."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 6 December 1989; Vol. 513, c. 947.]

How right Lord Donaldson was to say that. He also said that the losers in such a case would be those people whose court proceedings would have to be rescheduled to accommodate the new proceedings as soon as possible. He added that the 28-day rule places a heavy burden on the legal process because of its inflexibility.

The noble and learned Lord made an important point when he said that, having seen the example of the port disputes last year, other employers will be tempted to use the law as a delaying mechanism. Rules should be made as soon as possible to pre-empt that possibility.

The Master of the Rolls was concerned about the law and how it affects the courts, but he was equally concerned to say that trade unions could be adversely affected because there was no doubt that other unscrupulous employers would follow the example set by the port employers.

The 1984 Act has created another major imbalance in industrial relations. The scales are again weighted against trade unions which are placed at a severe disadvantage. First, unions and then members have to foot the considerable bill for re-running the ballot. Trade unions do not have unlimited funds and, as well as the cost of the ballot, postal, administrative and other charges have to be taken into account.

Secondly, unions which have industrial action delayed by court proceedings could find that their campaign was losing momentum. That could cause frustration and pressure from members for industrial action. If there has been an overwhelming majority in favour of industrial action at the earliest opportunity, members will become frustrated at having to await the outcome of further negotiations. Obviously, that could lead to unofficial action, and I hardly think that that was what the Government had in mind for the Employment Act 1984.

In spite of Government opposition to the amendment, when it was debated in the other place it was overwhelmingly supported by members of all parties. The only people who are dragging their feet over this extremely sensible amendment are the Government. Why are they doing that? Perhaps they think that, if they make a union have another ballot, its members will be put off and the union will lose support.

However, that did not happen in the docks dispute. In the first ballot called in 1989, 74·3 per cent. of union members were in favour of industrial action and 25·7 per cent. were against it. The turnout was 90 per cent. If we could achieve such a turnout in a general election, we would think that democracy had returned to Britain. In spite of the delay, the second ballot, which was held on 7 July, showed that 74·2 per cent. of union members were in favour of industrial action and 25·8 per cent. were not, and the turnout had gone up. Such a sensible Bill should be accepted without delay.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Doug Hoyle, Mr. Don Dixon, Mr. Ian McCartney, Mr. Robert Parry, Mr. George J. Buckley, Mr. Mike Carr, Mr. Stan Crowther, Mr. David Winnick, Mr. Ernie Ross, Mr. Robert N. Wareing, Mr. Roland Boyes and Mr. Jim Callaghan.

Trade Union Act 1984 (Amendment) (No. 2)

Mr. Doug Hoyle accordingly presented a Bill to amend the Trade Union Act 1984 by extending by any time taken up by court proceedings the four week period in which a ballot must be implemented by a trade union: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 20 July and to be printed. [Bill 181].

Arts and Heritage

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

[Relevant document: European Community Document No. 10331/89 on protection of national treasures possessing artistic, historic or archaeological value: needs arising from the abolition of frontiers in 1992.]

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Because of the large number of hon. Members who wish to speak, Mr. Speaker intends to impose a 10-minute limit on speeches between 7 and 9 o'clock.

5.13 pm

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce): I welcome this opportunity to open the debate on the arts and heritage. I hope that the debate will proceed in a slightly more civilised fashion than some debates in the House in recent times. After all, we are debating civilised subjects.

The House has debated the arts every year since I became Minister for the Arts in 1985. This is the fourth year running that we have debated the subject in Government time. That shows the importance that the Government attach to the arts and heritage, seeing them as fundamental to ensuring a higher quality of life for all our people.

I have been Minister for the Arts for five years. This is a useful opportunity to review our achievements. My hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside will cover heritage matters in his winding-up speech. We have spent unprecedented amounts of taxpayers' money on the arts—an increase of some 48 per cent. in real terms, including central abolition money, since 1979. In real terms the Arts Council's grant is worth three times what it was 20 years ago. The Government are committed to a 24 per cent. increase in the arts budget over the next three years. A major symbol of our commitment is the building of the new British library at St. Pancras. Last month I announced plans for its completion. This magnificent building is the largest publicly-funded cultural construction to be built in this country this century and, indeed, since the building of the great museums and galleries of the 19th century. It will be one of the world's greatest treasure houses of the humanities and sciences.

For the first time, we are providing, at a cost of £450 million, a specific, purpose-built home for the library. That building will meet the library's key requirements, and provide a better service to the public. It will bring together under one roof the majority of the library's reference collections, which now occupy 19 buildings around London. For the first time they will be in a controlled, pollution-free environment, which is essential for their preservation. Included in the design is a stunning new setting for George III's King's library. The first phase of the building will be fully in use by the middle of 1993, and the whole building should be ready for occupation by the British library in 1996.

The Government are showing this same commitment throughout the country. Some £24 million of public money is being spent on a major extension to the National museum of Wales. In 1992 a similarly major new extension to the National museums of Scotland in Edinburgh will begin. The Government will pay £30 million towards that project, covering the construction costs.

The Government also have a broader duty to create a climate in which all arts can flourish and develop freely with a combination of public and private sector support. Britain has one of the most vibrant and diverse arts scenes in the world today—a fact that is fully recognised by the millions of tourists who visit our shores.

London remains pre-eminent in theatre with a vast number of plays and shows being performed each evening —probably as many as in any city in the world. Much of what is available succeeds without any public subsidy. Audiences in the west end last year reached a record 11 million and box office income exceeded £150 million, giving a major boost to the economy.

The public and private sectors can also complement each other. Both the Royal Shakespeare company and the Royal National theatre have transferred productions of the highest quality to the west end. The role of the private sector is not, of course, confined to the west end. One of the most exciting companies to emerge in recent years has been Kenneth Branagh's Renaissance theatre company, which has toured world-wide without any Government support. Close to my own constituency is the Chichester festival theatre, which has been consistently successful and has transferred a large number of its productions to the west end, again without the need for public subsidy. A little further up the road is Glyndebourne, which remains one of the world's great opera festivals and an international centre of artistic excellence

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): As to sponsorship, is my right hon. Friend aware that the Harrogate festival has, for the second year running, won an award in the business sponsorship scheme? With the support of Leeds Permanent building society and a number of others, the festival is now able to mount a programme costing in excess of £250,000, whereas not so many years ago it spent only £100,000. In 1988, the festival received a sponsorship of about £44,000, which was good, but by 1989 it had risen to £58,000. This year, the figure is £81,000. Is that not a good example of what the Government have done in encouraging sponsorship?

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing attention to Harrogate's achievement. In the past five years, the number of festivals in this country has doubled. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for recording also the value of the business sponsorship incentive scheme, which encourages first-time sponsors. It is good to note that it has succeeded in helping the Harrogate festival to expand.

London leads the way as one of the great cultural capitals of the world. In June, we saw the opening of the new galleries of the Courtauld Institute in the beautiful neo-classical setting of Somerset house—achieved almost entirely with private sector funds. We have had, too, the rehang of the Tate and the new Clore gallery. We welcome the great generosity of Herr Berggruen in loaning 72 works from his outstanding private collection to the National gallery for five years from this autumn, and we look forward to the extension of the gallery with the new Sainsbury wing next spring.

In addition, the Royal Academy has major plans for an extension of its space. In the words of the chairman of the trustees of the National gallery, Lord Rothschild, "London is becoming the paintings capital of the world."

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): May I ask the Minister about the natural history museum? Seventy two per cent.

of the extra 16·5 per cent. that the Prime Minister says has been given to that museum was for repairs to the Waterhouse building, and 28 per cent. was accounted for by faulty calculations on estimates, leaving 0 per cent. for scientific equipment, the extension of the collections, and field work and scientific expeditions. Will the Minister reflect on his scientific responsibilities?

Mr. Luce: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's interest in that subject. The other day, he had an extremely important and effective Adjournment debate, which I greatly valued, and I gave an undertaking that I would hold a meeting with the museum's chairman, Sir Walter Bodmer, and its director, Dr. Neil Chalmers. The meeting is planned to be held shortly, when we will discuss the museum's problems. As the hon. Gentleman knows, Sir John Fairclough, chief scientific adviser to the Government, is also taking an interest. I take it from the hon. Gentleman's remarks that he is concerned about the natural history museum's contribution to this country's wider science base. I fully take that on board and I will discuss it with the chairman and director of the museum.

Artistic flowering is not confined to London. We now see an economic renaissance in many of our great towns and cities, and the arts have played a leading role in that. They not only bring back life and vitality to the inner city but act as a tangible illustration of civic pride. I acknowledge the active role of many local authorities in support of the arts.

Those features have been prominently displayed this year in Glasgow. No other European city of culture has seized its opportunities with greater energy, imagination and pride. I knew when I selected Glasgow from all the other British cities seeking that accolade that it would rise to the challenge. It has done so magnificently. The range and number of arts events on offer to the 6 million expected visitors is quite staggering. A century ago, Glasgow was a byword for civic pride and private patronage. Many of its magnificent public buildings and galleries were constructed then. Now we see another urban renaissance, which owes a great deal to Glasgow's recognition of the crucial importance that the arts can play in improving the quality of life, enhancing the identity of a great city, and contributing to its economic strength.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I agree entirely with the Minister that the city of Glasgow and its council deserve all the congratulations that the House can offer for the work that they have done in becoming the cultural capital of Europe. When the Minister pays such fulsome tributes, does he contemplate the spending pattern of a local authority such as Glasgow, given all the pressures that are placed on it in respect of housing, social services and education? Does the Minister tell the Secretary of State for the Environment that when he goes round capping English local authorities he should bear in mind the great contribution that they make to arts funding? Does the Minister have such discussions with his Cabinet colleagues?

Mr. Luce: Of course I praise Glasgow for the role that it has played in European cultural city year, but I praise also the role of the private sector, which went into partnership with that authority in a very effective exercise to regenerate the city. It is a pity that the hon. Gentleman did not touch on that aspect. The pattern for other local authorities around the country is very varied. It is entirely for them to decide how much they are prepared to devote to the arts in their areas, and I am sure that it is right to leave them that freedom.

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): For many years, York has contributed through its local council, unfortunately, only £2,000 towards the purchase of new paintings, which would go nowhere at all without the national art collections fund and other funds. My right hon. Friend rightly stated that difficulties exist, but will he stress to the institutions concerned the importance of making available the national treasures held in their reserve collections? At present, they are treasures of the night watchman—beloved only of night attendants and specialist curators. Three quarters of our great arts heritage is never seen but is hidden from view. It could provide centrepieces for banks, schools and building societies, so that culture could be spread more widely and not remain the province of a few.

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who has taken a persistent interest in the arts. Art flourishes in many forms in the city that he represents. I take his point that many of our national treasures are kept in vaults, but we should not underestimate the number of art objects now on public display and the extra space available for that purpose. There are also travelling exhibitions which allow the public around the country to see more of our art treasures.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Luce: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will allow me to proceed as I know that many other hon. Members wish to speak.

Birmingham is another city which has established an international reputation for the quality of its arts programme. Under the leadership of Simon Rattle, the city of Birmingham symphony orchestra has emerged as one of the world's great orchestras, and it will soon be taking up residence in a purpose-built concert hall as part of the city's new convention centre. Preparations are also complete for the transfer of the Sadler's Wells Royal ballet to the Birmingham Hippodrome, and last month it was announced that the D'Oyly Carte opera company would take up residence at Birmingham's Alexandra theatre.

I could give many other examples. Liverpool, Leeds, Manchester, Bradford, and many other cities have shown how the arts can be used to spearhead an economic revival as well as to improve the quality of life for their inhabitants. They also demonstrate how partnerships between central and local government, and between the public and private sectors, can be developed for the benefit of all.

That diversity of support is ensuring, too, that the best of our arts are available to more and more people. We see that happening around the country—from the doubling of festivals in five years to the activities of touring companies such as Opera North, Welsh National Opera and the Northern ballet, with ever-increasing audiences, to the great growth in the number of museums and the regional expansion of our national institutions.

All of that progress owes much to the increasing self-reliance and prudent and imaginative management now being exercised by arts organisations. Government policies have helped. Three-year funding enables

[Mr. Luce]

organisations to plan much more concisely. My various incentive funding schemes are producing excellent results. The awards that the Arts Council has already made under its scheme are expected to generate an additional £27 million for the arts over the next three years—£3 for every £1 of taxpayers' investment. That is a remarkable achievement and a tribute not only to the arts organisations themselves but to those who have worked with them to improve their management and marketing skills. I was pleased to learn that last year 71 per cent. of the awards were won by companies outside London, most of which were not funded directly by the Arts Council.

The business sponsorship incentive scheme, which we introduced in 1984, has been a major stimulus to the encouragement of sponsorship of the arts. On public expenditure of more than £10 million, it has brought more than £32 million of new money to the arts. As important, it has introduced almost 1,500 new sponsors to the arts. The Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts is running the scheme for us and has played a valuable part in alerting potential sponsors to the benefits of associating themselves with artistic success. The co-operation between business and the arts has brought nothing but good.

The arts in this country have benefited not only from greater business involvement, but from private giving. In his Budget, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the introduction of gift aid. That new form of tax relief, which comes into force on 1 October, will, I believe, have a major impact on support for the arts and heritage in this country. It will apply to both personal and corporate gifts over a huge range from £600 to £5 million. Taken with the existing arrangements for tax relief on payroll giving, up to an annual limit of £600, and for convenanting charitable donations, it provides a tax incentive for gifts to the arts, both great and small. Everything needs to be done to encourage the culture of giving in this country.

The underlying strengths of the economy, and the encouragement that the Government have given to entrepreneurs and investors, have benefited the arts as much as in any other area. The Government remain committed to maintaining the value of their support for the arts, but they also believe that the private sector has a vital role to play. Creativity is not the preserve of the subsidised arts. The co-existence of healthy public and private sectors in the arts means more opportunity for the artist and more choice for the consumer. That diversity of support gives the arts in Britain a vitality equal to any in the world.

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): I welcome what my right hon. Friend has said. The Government have established a near impeccable record. I thank him for his kind words about Glyndebourne, which is in my constituency. There is a special category of support for the arts which appears to be a Government responsibility—the fabric of buildings in Government ownership. I know that the Minister has had talks with Mr. Peter Palumbo, so perhaps he will say a few words about that.

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who takes a keen interest in the arts, and has done for a long time. Perhaps he will allow me to develop my speech as I propose shortly to deal with the fabric question.

I have sought to portray many of the positive developments in the arts world today. There will always be practical problems to deal with in a pragmatic way. I do not pretend that everything in the garden is lovely. Currently, those problems include, for example, the pressures of inflation—to which the Government are giving great priority, the problems of balancing the allocation of resources between the national companies and other arts organisations, the need to retain and enhance the best scholarship while making it more accessible, the problem of theatre deficits, and the freezing of purchase grants for the national museums and galleries.

There are problems, but many of them are the problems of expansion and success. However, there appears to be a group of people in this country who have, or seem to have, a vested interest in failure. They always want to emphasise how the arts are failing. All is crisis and Armageddon. I never know where the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) stands. He seems to have blown hot and cold in the past months and years. On occasion, he has been generous enough to congratulate me on my arts budgets, and it would be churlish not to mention that. However, whenever we debate any arts topic, he talks repeatedly of crisis. He did so again only this week at Question Time. When the hon. Gentleman is in that mood, he reminds me of A. A. Milne's Eeyore, exuding gloom wherever he goes. I hope that he will be a little more balanced in his presentation today.

I can tell the hon. Gentleman one thing—it is not possible to fund the arts or anything else without a sound, healthy economy, and no Labour Government have succeeded in achieving that. In the recent Labour document, "Looking to the future", I found a section referring to arts and leisure. I looked for vision, but found none because there is no vision there. It is sterile. There is nothing which holds out great prospects for the future of the arts. If in the category of a school assessment examination, it would rate very low, and we know why —because, on the previous Labour Government's economic record, Labour could not begin to fund and support the arts as we are doing. The document lacks credibiiity.

I want to touch on one or two other major areas of interest which will concern us in the next few years. First, I shall respond to my hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) about the fabric of our institutions. I shall come to Mr. Palumbo's ideas in a moment. I recognise that constant work is required to maintain what are, in most cases, magnificant buildings which house our national collections. One of my major ambitions is to bring those museum and gallery buildings into tip-top condition by the end of the decade. I made my intentions clear in a speech in York last September. In the current year, I am providing some £57 million for building works at the national museums and galleries. Over the next three years, the total Government resources provided for building works is more than £180 million and should enable further progress to be made in improving those buildings. That is a substantial addition of taxpayers' money which will enable us to deal with the fabric of museums and galleries.

I was especially delighted to launch the museums and galleries improvement in March. That new initiative was made possible through the generosity of the Wolfson charities with matching funds from the Government. It will make available a further £12 million over the next three years towards urgent refurbishment and renovation

work in United Kingdom museums and galleries, both national and local. Meanwhile, a substantial amount of refurbishment work in our national institutions is already in hand.

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): What proportion of the fabric needs to which the right hon. Gentleman referred will be met by his £180 million over the next three years? He keeps on refusing a thoroughly reasonable request from Opposition Members—repeated by Mr. Peter Palumbo, I am glad to say—to have a national audit so that everyone can assess the needs over the next 10 years. We can then appreciate how adequate, or not so adequate, that £180 million will be in addressing those needs. Why does the Minister not have an audit? It would be so sensible and reasonable.

Mr. Luce: The hon. Gentleman must surely realise that the way we work with the national museums and galleries —it is on that point that I am answering the debate—is through corporate strategies which project three to five years' ahead for each museum and gallery. From that, we establish their needs and requirements for the fabric. I negotiate with my colleagues in the Treasury for a three-year agreement, which is an innovation by the Government. I have persuaded my colleagues to give substantial additional money over the next three years. My undertaking, my belief and my ambition is that by the end of the decade we can get the fabric of all those museums and galleries in good shape. That shows that we are already dealing with the fabric problem. The Queen's house at Greenwich has been refurbished at a cost of £5 million, the imperial war museum has been redeveloped at a cost of £12 million, the national portrait gallery is being extended and redeveloped further, and the Sir John Soanes museum is dealing with its fabric with the help of the Government and the MEPC.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): All hon. Members must welcome that expenditure on the fabric of so much of our museums and art galleries. My hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) made an important point. Unless we have a programme, we cannot assess to what extent we can deal with the long period of decay and disrepair that has been allowed to continue. What about the actual contents? The Public Accounts Committee called for an inventory control. We do not know how much there is in the British museum. We must first find out what is there, then value it, and then assess what can be done to keep it in a proper state of repair. If we do not know what we have, we do not know what needs to be done.

Mr. Luce: I appreciate that point. I also appreciate the Public Accounts Committee's work on this and I have noted the Committee's views. We are talking about the basic structure and fabric of these institutions. The corporate strategies developed in the 1980s for these institutions identified the special needs of their fabric. I shall find out whether I can help the House further on the overall requirements of these institutions as a result of the corporate strategies—looking well ahead, not just at the three-year period.

Last year, Mr. Peter Palumbo, chairman of the Arts Council, put some interesting ideas to the Government for restoring the fabric of historic theatres, museums and galleries, as well as cathedrals, by the turn of the century. As I have said, I have taken a lead on this matter with museums and galleries. The Arts Council is developing some ideas on theatre refurbishment. I stress the fact that the Theatres Trust is carrying out an assessment of the refurbishments requirement of theatres. In dealing with the fabric, we must identify needs and priorities, but it is for each Department to deal with the matter as it thinks best. I am grateful to Mr. Palumbo for his strong and imaginative interest.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow) *rose*——

Mr. Luce: I am in the hands of the House. Many hon. Members want to speak and I wish to touch on other matters. I hope, therefore, that the hon. Gentleman will bear with me.

On 13 March, I announced to the House a major restructuring of arts funding in England—the first such reorganisation since the Arts Council was established after the war. The main changes are the decentralisation of grant-giving responsibilities from the Arts Council to a smaller number of regional arts boards and greater accountability—I stress this point—by the boards for their spending of public money. This will result in a simpler, clearer system of arts funding and give better value for money to the taxpayer.

I appointed Mr. Timothy Mason, the retiring director of the Scottish Arts Council, to manage the reforms and I established a steering group to advise on their implementation. Good progress has been made and I will shortly be giving fuller details of Mr. Mason's proposals for implementing the package.

Inevitably, the changes have given rise to some concerns. One has been that the Arts Council would be left without a role. I can assure the House that the Government remain firmly committed to a strong and effective Arts Council and that the changes in prospect will not diminish its role or status. In future, while retaining the direct funding of appropriate clients, it will operate at a more strategic level, setting national priorities for the arts, and ensuring that its objectives are met through a system of joint planning and budgeting. The new system will also free the Arts Council from much of its burden of day-to-day administration to concentrate on addressing the major issues facing the arts in the 1990s and beyond. Far from weakening the Arts Council, the changes that I have announced will give it a clearer and sharper focus.

Another concern has been that devolution of clients will threaten standards of excellence. The arrangements that I have already described, under which the Arts Council will hold the regions to account for achieving its objectives, will ensure that this does not happen. I have every confidence in the ability of the new regional arts boards to raise their sights and rise to the challenge of the new funding arrangements. At the same time, however, I have made it clear that devolution of clients will not take place until the necessary systems and structures are in place and that I am satisfied that they will enhance and maintain excellence in the arts.

I share responsibility for the film industry with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and with my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs. All three of us were present at the seminar, which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister recently chaired, to

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consider how the British film industry might best respond to the new challenges and opportunities in Europe. The seminar produced a number of important initiatives, including a new fund of £5 million over the next three years to help our industry get into European co-production and £150,000 for the European film awards, which will be presented in Glasgow later this year. As important, two working parties are being set up. One, which will be industry led, will look at the tax structure for film production in this country. The other, chaired by the Department of Trade and Industry, will consider ways in which the structural problems of the industry can be addressed. In addition, we shall be looking for ways to build on the European Communities MEDIA programme to strengthen our industry's position in Europe by co-operation between member states.

The protection of our nation's heritage is a primary concern of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and myself and one which we jointly address as a priority. My hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside will refer to matters for which the Department of the Environment is broadly responsible. I shall deal with those that are my responsibility.

Mr. John Lee (Pendle): I am sure that the House will acknowledge my right hon. Friend's great success with his present portfolio. In what may be his final speech in this ministerial role—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] I say that in the nicest way—would he care to give the House his views on whether it makes sense to have the arts, tourism and the heritage in separate Ministries, or whether there is a case for considering amalgamating the three in one Ministry?

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for trying to settle my future. The responsibilities of the various Departments is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. Throughout the 1980s and beyond, we have had a totally separate Office of Arts and Libraries which deals with these matters, and that is a sensible way to proceed.

There is one important problem to address concerning the export of works of art—the phenomenal rise in the prices of works of art and antiques. In the past decade, the Sotheby's index has risen by an aggregate of 375 per cent. and in the past five years by 150 per cent. In these circumstances, it is not possible for the taxpayer to produce all the funds that we need to save the heritage. How, therefore, do we deal with this problem? I will begin by mentioning the range of useful measures that we have to preserve our heritage.

There is the national heritage memorial fund, established by the Government in 1980, which to date has spent over £108 million of taxpayers' money. There is a range of taxation incentives. In 1985, the Government announced the availability of approximately an extra £10 million per annum for the acceptance-in-lieu scheme. That announcement, together with additional incentives, such as the waiving of interest charges on AIL items, has encouraged the scheme to expand to the extent of last year's record expenditure when works of art were accepted in lieu of more than £11·5 million tax.

The tax incentives which encourage individuals to sell heritage items to our national museums and galleries by means of private treaty sale are also well used and are proving extremely valuable. Since 1985, objects with a market value of more than £50 million have been purchased at a cost to our national institutions of a little over 50 per cent. of that figure.

Mr. Fisher: Will the Minister explain why the purchase grants of the national museums have been frozen since 1985?

Mr. Luce: As I explained before the hon. Gentleman leapt up, I accepted that that was one of the issues that we faced in the arts world. A conscious decision was taken by my predecessor and by me. The directors and chairmen of the national museums and galleries all said in discussions that, as a priority, they would rather deal with the issue of the fabric of those institutions before dealing with the problem of purchase grants. I do not deny for one moment that there is pressure on museums and galleries and on purchase grants, but there is a substantial range of other mechanisms for preserving our heritage.

We face a dilemma because of the prices of works of art and the pressure for taxpayers' money. That is why we as a Government must explore every avenue to facilitate the preservation of the most important part of our heritage. It is against that background that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry announced on 4 May that in future he would take the existence of private offers—whether or not there were conditions attached—into account when considering whether to grant an export licence. I was fully consulted about that new policy, which was developed because we believe that an injection of private funds will assist in providing a balanced and reasonable system for retaining the most important items of our cultural heritage in this country. Retention has always been the prime consideration, and that will continue.

Mr. Timothy Raison (Aylesbury): I am sure that my right hon. Friend will have read Sir Nicholas Goodison's letter in *The Times* today. Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is a great deal of agreement with the point of view expressed by Sir Nicholas and that using the export licence mechanism to keep works of art in this country while not making them available to be seen by the public is a mistake?

Mr. Luce: If my right hon. Friend will bear with me, I shall place emphasis on one aspect which I hope will help him.

There are several misconceptions about the change in policy. The owner, not the Government, decides whether to accept an offer, and he has always been free to accept an offer from anyone—museums, galleries or private individuals. The result of the policy change is to enable private offers to play a role in the Waverley system at a time of ever-increasing prices of works of art.

I am obviously keen that the public should have access to important heritage items, and I wish to encourage suitable arrangements. The extent to which a private offer involves an arrangement enabling the public to have access could be an important factor in my advice to my right hon. Friend, but even where minimal or no public access is provided we shall wish to take the existence of that offer, and the owner's refusal to accept it, into account when

deciding whether to grant an export licence. The main purpose of the controls is to retain important items in this country.

Mr. Rathbone: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Luce: Will my hon. Friend bear with me? I am anxious that hon. Members should have a chance to speak.

The creation of the single market in 1992 is important for our heritage. The Waverley system for identifying pre-eminent works of art, the export of which should be deferred to allow time for funds to be raised to keep them in this country, has served us well. I believe that it strikes a good balance between preserving our heritage, respecting the rights of private owners and the needs of the market. Nevertheless, the position will be rather different after 1992, when routine customs checks at internal EC frontiers will end. The implications need careful thought, and I shall want to consult widely all those concerned before deciding whether underpinning of the existing system is needed to respond to the changed circumstances of the single market.

Consultation with heritage parties is important. I have therefore decided on a two-pronged approach. From time to time, I intend to invite senior people from the art trade and the heritage world for a round table discussion. In addition, I shall set up a consultative group to consider the United Kingdom's position post-1992. That will be composed of representatives from all sides—trade, heritage and museums—and will be selected from the membership of the reviewing committee's advisory council.

I have mentioned several practical issues which affect our policies in the 1990s. I want to end by reminding the House of the cardinal principles that the Government pursue to encourage the arts. First, there is the principle of freedom. It is no accident that courageous artists have led the way in the liberation of eastern Europe. Creative art can flourish only in a fully free country. Freedom of speech and expression are at the heart of democracy, and their preservation guards the health of the arts. When people stop having new ideas, the arts die. We must not let our veneration for the past cloud our acceptance of the art of today and tomorrow.

Secondly, we must preserve and encourage the excellence of the arts, not merely the higher level professional excellence although that sets the tone for the rest, but excellence at every level in every art form throughout the country. We must encourage people to enjoy the arts through participation as well as appreciation. I am in discussion with various television channels with a view to having a televised day of celebration of the arts throughout Britain so that a vast number of people can see for themselves the richness and diversity of the arts. I very much hope that one of the channels will implement that idea.

Thirdly, we must ensure that the best in our arts is available and accessible to all, whatever their background and wherever they live. Anyone has the potential to enjoy art—the music of Beethoven or Britten, a painting by Constable or Howard Hodgkin, a play by Shakespeare or Ayckbourn, the craftsmanship of Henry Moore, an opera by Verdi or Mozart, jazz from New Orleans, or simply by taking up the paintbrush, camera or craftsman's tools.

My ambition, and that of the Government, is to create the climate to enable that potential to be fulfilled, thus helping to enrich the lives of millions more people.

5.53 pm

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): The Minister spoke for almost 40 minutes and the House will have noticed that the longer he did so the deeper he dug himself into the problems that he identified and the weaknesses in the Government's policy.

The House, and everyone in the arts world, recognises that the Minister is a very nice man, and he is well liked, but the Government's record on the arts is so poor, and their credibility so slight, that his speech was nothing but an embarrassment. Conservative Members need not take my word for it, because perhaps they make the point more effectively than I do. The Minister will recall that last week the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) asked the Prime Minister

"why the Conservative party is still regarded as philistine". —[*Official Report*, 26 June 1990; Vol. 175, c. 181.]

She could not answer.

The Minister will have read the remarks of the chairman of the Arts Council, Mr. Peter Palumbo:

"The problem is that the great buildings of our country have been neglected"—

neglected by the Government.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): If the hon. Gentleman had taken the trouble to be in the Chamber on that day, he would know that the question was directed not to the Prime Minister but to my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House.

Mr. Fisher: Come on!

Mr. Colvin: That is not the point. Because the hon. Gentleman was not present and did not pay attention, he got the reference wrong. I asked why, when the Government have increased spending by almost 50 per cent. in real terms since taking office, and have announced a three-year rolling programme with an increase of 24 per cent., they are still perceived as philistine. That perception is wrong, and that may be the reason why the hon. Gentleman's perception is wrong.

Mr. Fisher: The hon. Gentleman is quite wrong. I heard the deputy Prime Minister answer the question. He could not explain why the Conservative party is regarded as philistine, because he knows that it is true. However, I acknowledge that he paid a fulsome tribute to the personal characteristics of the Minister and said that he would like him in his Cabinet.

The Minister will have noticed the comments made last week by the deputy secretary-general of the Arts Council, Mr. Anthony Everitt:

"The National Theatre itself is visibly leaking and needs to be repaired already."

Perhaps the Minister will digest those realities and recognise that all is not well with the arts.

Normally, the Minister's speech is a catalogue of complacency, but today, for the first time, he began to recognise the problems of inflation and the freezing of purchase grants, although rather disingenuously—God knows why—he attributed those to the problems of expansion and success. The directors of our great national galleries do not feel that they are suffering from expansion

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and success as a result of Government policy, but at least, for the first time, the Minister acknowledged that there are problems, which is an improvement.

I join the Minister in acknowledging that the arts are flourishing and in paying tribute to arts organisations, regional arts associations, local authorities, the private sector, sponsors such as BP and others and the Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts. I share his appreciation of those organisations, but he will have noted that the Government are noticeably absent from that list of contributors to the health of the arts. Arts organisations in this country are strong despite the Government, not because of them.

The Minister is doing little for the cities that he referred to—Glasgow and Birmingham. It is a bit of a cheek for him to take credit for choosing Glasgow. He put hardly anything into Glasgow.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): How much will the Labour party give?

Mr. Fisher: If the Parliamentary Private Secretary will restrain himself, I shall deal with the next Government's policy.

I was glad that the Minister recognised that there are problems, but I must put him right on one or two of his so-called successes. He mentioned, yet again, the expansion of funding, and referred to 48 per cent. The figure always goes up, but he knows that it includes abolition money and the British library. Despite that, 0·27 per cent. of total Government expenditure is spent on the arts. Only one country in Europe—Ireland—spends less. That should please the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks), but he will not be satisfied until we are bottom of the league. He will be glad to hear that we are almost bottom and that almost every other country in Europe spends more than us.

Mr. Colvin: I am sorry to have to correct the hon. Gentleman, but surely that increase does not include the additional money for the British library. He said that it did.

Mr. Fisher: I think that the Minister said it did.

With the exception of Ireland, we are at the bottom of the league in Europe. The Minister knows very well that, in the next two years, the Arts Council is set to get 4·6 per cent. and 3·8 per cent. respectively. He knows very well that those figures will be well below the rate of inflation.

I have paid tribute to three-year funding in the past, but it is no good giving three-year funding when all that the Arts Council and arts clients can do is plan for cuts and deficits.

Mr. Gregory: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fisher: I should like to make a little more progress. I shall come back to the hon. Gentleman in a moment.

Let us look at some more of the problems to which the Minister did not refer. First, the Education Reform Act 1988 is deterring children from attending theatres and live performances. Secondly, there are the problems of the Royal Shakespeare Company, to which, I note, the Minister did not refer and to which I shall return in a moment. Thirdly, there is the question of actors' PAYE. If the Minister wants to encourage acting skills, he should not deter and penalise performers. Significantly, in the Finance Bill Committee yesterday the Government voted against our amendment.

On all those issues——

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fisher: No, I must make some progress; I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment. *[Interruption.]* We tabled an amendment yesterday, but unfortunately the Government did not accept it.

Mr. Hanley: Would Labour reverse the provision?

Mr. Fisher: We will introduce such an amendment when we are in government. It is an excellent amendment, which is supported by Equity and the Theatrical Management Association.

On all those issues—the RSC in particular—the Minister is silent. He has said nothing. Perhaps he will say one or two things in answer to our questions today. Does he believe that the scale of the RSC's activities is about right? If so, is the company adequately funded? If not, how much more does the company need? What will happen next year, when the Government do not give any more to the RSC or the Arts Council? If that happens, the RSC will close not in November but in July. Why is the Minister not talking to the RSC? We had a debate on the RSC on an Opposition motion, but since then the Minister has not met representatives of the Royal Shakespeare Company. Or has he? Has he discussed the matter with the artistic directors?

Mr. Luce: Does the Labour party plan to abolish the arm's-length policy? Does not the hon. Gentleman understand that the responsibility for taking such decisions belongs with the Arts Council, which gets a global sum? The council is to get an increase of 22 per cent. in the next three years, and it is for the council to decide. If the Opposition wish to abolish arm's length, they had better tell the House now.

Mr. Fisher: The Minister interprets arm's-length policy in his own way: he does not mind; he says nothing about the problems; they are no concern of his. But the figures are there. The right hon. Gentleman knows that, next year, he will be giving the Arts Council less than the rate of inflation and that that will mean that the RSC will not be able to open for the whole year. This year, the RSC is having to close for four months because it is inadequately funded. The Minister did not take the trouble to say anything about that, and he has not even met the RSC. Labour will not abolish arm's length, but the Royal Shakespeare Company and the arts in general expect a Minister to take an interest in these problems.

The Minister has watched the Royal Shakespeare Company close for four months this year and has said nothing. That is disgraceful. Can the House imagine what would happen if the Comédie Francaise was to close for four months? Would the French Government say, "We don't mind; it is unimportant to us. Who cares?" Of course they would not. They have something called national pride —pride in their culture. This Minister does not seem to mind at all that our greatest theatre—along with the National theatre—is closing.

Let us deal now with the subject of the natural history museum, which was raised by my hon. Friend the Member

for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on an Adjournment debate. Does the Minister understand why 100 jobs are to be lost and key scientific areas to close? Does he understand that the natural history museum is trying to save £2 million? Does he really believe that that is desirable? Will he deal with those problems?

Will the Minister consider the question of the British Theatre Association library? He rightly took some credit last year when he acted as midwife for Mr. Robert Holmes à Court's deal for the BTA. He will know that this week that has fallen apart, and the BTA appears to have been left dangling with substantial problems with its lease. Having taken the credit last year, will the Minister now intervene to ensure that that resource, which is vital for our theatrical heritage, is properly funded?

Let me deal finally with Mr. Peter Palumbo's initiative. Is it not rather amateurish—I would say incompetent—of the Minister to say that the museums' three-year plans represent an adequate basis on which to plan? Is he really saying that he will commit further Government money not on the basis of the Government's view but on the basis of each museum's view of its needs? That strikes me as a very lackadaisical view of one's responsibility for public funding. If the Minister is giving money, he ought to know what proportion of the museums' total needs that sum represents. That is an eminently sensible point. Surely the Minister ought to have an audit to establish whether Peter Palumbo's guesstimate of £1 billion is accurate and, if it is, to determine how we should address the problems. But the Government refuse to face the facts. They are frightened to find out how bad the situation in the museums is. That does the Minister no credit at all.

Is the Minister awake to such problems? Does he understand them? Does he have an opinion? Unlike his predecessor, Lord Gowrie, who made the extraordinary remark that people would only value library books if they had to pay for them, this Minister is not getting it wrong; he is not getting it at all. He does not seem to understand the problem. The cities are expanding and the chairman of the Arts Council is buzzing with good and exciting ideas. On the other side of the channel, Mr. Jack Lang is galvanising the arts. But our Minister does absolutely nothing. He is a nice, kind, gentle person——

Mr. Tony Banks: No, he isn't.

Mr. Fisher: Yes, he is. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh no, he isn't."] Oh yes, he is. The problem lies not with the Minister's personality but with his appalling lack of policy and with the fact that he is silent while problems in the arts escalate. The arts world has a right to expect a Minister who speaks up for its interests and says something about these crucial matters.

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. David Trippier): Come on.

Mr. Fisher: It is interesting that the Minister for the Environment and Countryside should come to his right hon. Friend's defence. Let us turn our attention to him and look at the Government's record on heritage, which is every bit as bad as their record on the arts—if not worse.

Half a million sites in Britain have been identified as of schedulable quality. How many have the Government scheduled? They have scheduled 12,000, in spite of the monument protection programme, which appears to have had no effect. Landscapes are an important element of our culture. How many of them have been scheduled? The answer is, not a single one. Only five cities have been designated. English Heritage is underfunded. It is to get an increase of only 1·3 per cent. this year. It has asked for a further £6·4 million. Will it get it? It has not yet had an answer.

The Government place such value on rescue archaeology that they are to allocate the princely sum of £5 million a year for the whole country. Did the Minister do anything when the Icklingham bronzes were illegally exported? Did he look to ratify the 1970 UNESCO treaty which would have allowed us to recover them from the United States? He did not a thing; the Government did not seem to care.

When the Rose theatre and Huggin hill sites were at issue last year, the Minister did nothing. The Manpower Services Commission contribution of £5·5 million was withdrawn from archaeology—it was a sum on which archaeology depended—and employment training will not replace any of it. The Government's "developer pays" policy and their total inertia and lack of interest in archaeology and in our heritage are a national disgrace.

Mr. Gregory *rose*——

Mr. Fisher: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman because I am sure that he will want to recognise that, if only the Government had a policy, the Queen's hotel site in York—a site of international importance—would have been developed. The Government's lack of care about our archaeological heritage has meant that it is not to be developed.

Mr. Gregory: I note the paucity of Labour Members present. There are twice as many Conservative Members as Labour Members here, and that is a mark of our interest in the arts. Would the hon. Gentleman care to include in his catalogue of so-called disasters the fact that the Labour Government did not take action on any of the problems?

Is it Labour party policy to have a development levy so that archaeological sites, particularly in York—York was the first city to show that archaeology can pay and that people want to visit archaeological sites—can benefit as private enterprise is encouraged to participate with the state sector? I welcome the presence of my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside in the Chamber, and I am sure that he would like to see the development of such a policy. Are all Labour's policies based on the state sector?

Mr. Fisher: I would willingly welcome private sector money in archaeological developments, but there are many areas in which the developer will not or cannot play a part. The Government's inability to recognise that makes their policy lopsided, because they put all the emphasis on the private sector and do not accept any responsibility themselves.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): Will the hon. Gentleman acknowledge the role that the National Trust plays in saving landscape and archaeological sites? Is not the National Trust entirely funded by public subscription and is that not the way that we should proceed as we look for more resources for the arts, rather than finding the resources from the taxpayer? We all want better arts facilities, but there are other ways of achieving that end.

Mr. Fisher: The hon. Lady will know that the National Trust has, for a long time, been urging the Government to designate and schedule landscapes. It does a remarkable job, but it has no statutory power. If the Government cared about our great landscapes, they could do something about them. We look forward to hearing something from the Minister about what he is going to do for the landscapes.

What is the Minister going to do in his Budget round? What kind of package has he put before Treasury Ministers? What arguments has he been deploying? The Minister missed a golden opportunity today. The House expected some sign of the case that the Minister is going to put to the Treasury. We had hoped for an exciting and convincing case. Had he put a case for the arts today, either on cultural or economic grounds, or both, he would probably have got a good press tomorrow and he would have gained much support around the country. He might then have had a stronger hand when he went to see the Chief Secretary to the Treasury in the summer.

Instead, the Minister said that almost everything is okay. He scored the most monumentally politically naive own goal. When he goes to see the Treasury Ministers, they will refer him to the speech that he has made tonight. They will say to him, "But you said in the House the other day that everything was fine and you were doing so well and being so successful. How on earth can you be asking for more money?" The Minister's performance has been naive. It was not calculated to get money out of the Treasury. We hope that he will get that money, and we will do everything to encourage and help him in that end. However, he has not helped himself today.

Conservative Members are aware that, although funding is important, so are the right policies. I am glad to say that, in his one or two positive comments, the Minister has adopted Labour party policies.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockport, South): Then why are you condemning my right hon. Friend?

Mr. Fisher: No, I am praising these things. I am delighted about these developments.

For years, we have been urging the devolution of administration, and I am delighted that the Minister has backed that policy at last. We have also been urging that money should be spent on the fabric of buildings. Although the Minister will not accept the audit, he is at least spending the money; again, that is a good Labour party policy that he has adopted.

For years we have been saying that the Minister should do something about the film industry. At long last, the Prime Minister has taken up Labour party policy. I am confident that the recommendations which the two working parties set up by the Prime Minister will produce in three months' time will be similar to the package of proposals that the Labour party has put forward. We hope that the Minister will adopt those recommendations, as they make good common sense.

We also hope that the Minister will be emboldened by that and will recognise that, in adopting Labour party policies, he has gained popularity and has received applause. We welcome that, and hope that it will continue. Perhaps he will then take the advice of his hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside and press for a full Ministry. It is a disgrace that the Minister is not a full Minister, with his own independent Department. The hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside made that point at Prime Minister's Question Time last week. The Minister should be fighting for that. It is Labour party policy to have a full Ministry as is the case in every other European country to cover the cultural industries as well as the arts.

Mr. Devlin: As we have that concrete proposal from the Labour party, when the hon. Gentleman gets that wonderful new Ministry, what will its budget be and how much will it spend on the arts?

Mr. Fisher: I am coming to that point.

In his heart of hearts, the Minister knows that he should adopt a policy in which there is a statutory responsibility on all local authorities and an eligibility for rate support grant money. That would lead to a huge expansion of local authority funding in response to the needs of the constituents of the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin), which are bound to differ from those of the Minister's constituents.

Mr. Devlin: How much will it cost?

Mr. Fisher: If the hon. Gentleman will listen, he will understand that I have described a responsive budget. Through the rate support grant mechanism, central Government will match and respond to local government expenditure as happens at the moment in library provision, housing and social services. It will be up to the constituents of the hon. Member for Stockton, South and his local authorities to understand the needs of their area, which no doubt will be different from the needs in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), who will be speaking later about heritage. That is the way to expand budgets. Conservative Members must be aware that such a policy would be popular in their areas.

Mr. Devlin: We must be clear about this. Is the hon. Gentleman saying that he will consider bids from every local authority and meet them in full, or is he saying that he will allow people to present budgets and he will meet such parts of them as he thinks fit? If that is the case, he must have some idea of the global sum which his new Department will have at its disposal. How much is that?

Mr. Fisher: The hon. Gentleman does not seem to understand how local government works. There will be a statutory responsibility, rather akin to the statutory responsibility for public libraries. I believe that that will lead to an equality and a development of funding similar to the expansion in the public library service. If the hon. Gentleman considers the expansion in the public library service, he will understand that that statutory responsibility has ensured that there is good public library provision around the country.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): My hon. Friend will recall his successful visit to my constituency and visiting the people working with the SHAPE Up North art link involving people with learning difficulties. My hon. Friend saw those people making a mural, which has just been presented to Wakefield prison college. It is an excellent mural, and we should all be proud of the fact that those people produced such a lovely work of art. Is my hon. Friend aware that, with poll tax capping, that superb community arts scheme, aimed at those people who really

enjoyed producing that mural, could lose some of its local authority funding? Is that not a tragedy? The Labour party would not do that to local communities.

Mr. Fisher: I am delighted that my hon. Friend has mentioned that. The Minister is usually anxious to include a section in his speeches about widening access. I am sorry that he did not take the opportunity today to do that. The case for increased funding for people with disabilities in our society is acute.

For so long the Government failed to respond to the Attenborough report. When they last provided some money, we welcomed the establishment of ADAPT under the chairmanship of the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson). However, that is not enough. The needs of the people in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) and elsewhere in the country are responded to by SHAPE organisations and art link organisations. The Minister knows that those organisations do a good job and he also knows that they are acutely underfunded.

The next policy which the Minister should be adopting addresses my last point. The Minister will accept that one of the difficulties with funding arts projects for disabled people is that they cross departmental boundaries. That often proves to be a difficulty.

The right hon. Gentleman knows about the British Health Care arts centre in Dundee, which is doing valuable work. There is actually an expansion of the use of designers and artists in making hospital environments interesting places in which people want to get better. The Government are not putting any money into that. One of the problems, I suspect, is the division of responsibilities between the Department of Health and the Minister's Office of Arts and Libraries.

The Labour party's third major policy development, along with a full Ministry and a statutory responsibility on local authorities, would be to tackle the difficult matter of cross-departmental co-operation and joint works. The opportunities for developing the culture of this country and arts provisions are very great indeed, not only in the health sector, in combination with health authorities and the Department of Health, but in the Department of Transport. We could have a London underground system that looked like Stockholm's—it is beautiful—rather than the raggedy, horrible place that it is at the moment. We could back British Rail and the work that Jane Priestland is doing to revive the system, but we are hardly doing anything at all.

We could involve the Department of the Environment in work in parks. We have some of the most beautiful parks around our great cities. We spend £450 million a year mowing the lawns and weeding and planting the flower beds, but we spend almost nothing on activities that go into those parks. With encouragement from the Government, 1 or 2 per cent. of those budgets would transform our parks, as Birmingham did last year, as Battersea does annually, and as happens at Kenwood. Parks could be transformed into exciting cultural centres in our cities. It is a simple thing to do. The Government should be doing it, but they encounter cross-departmental difficulties.

The hon. Gentleman referred to London. He is wrong to say that London is a great cultural capital. It should be. It should be one of the greatest cities in Europe, but, unfortunately, because the Government have abolished the strategic authority, the Greater London council, there is no planning. To get anything done to develop the river, our canals and parks in London requires so many different authorities and a combination of so many different things that we are not taking a lead. The Minister should ensure that the arts have a key role—an anchor role—in developing London. Unfortunately, that is another matter on which he is silent.

The Minister could talk with his colleagues about design. I know that he does not have direct responsibility for that matter but, through the Crafts Council, he has a strong interest. The Government spend £40,000 a year as a consumer—as a commissioner—of goods and services. They could use that economic clout to make sure that British design is a priority and that the standards of design through that expenditure are setting standards that the rest of British industry should be following. Conservative Members know that that is the case, but design is not a priority of the Government. Although we have some brilliant designers, we are being left behind. The Government have enormous potential to set a lead and a standard and, as the Labour Government will do, say that the 1990s should be a decade of British design. The Minister should take that point on board.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): The hon. Gentleman referred most courteously to ADAPT, and I am grateful for his comment. He might like to know that, on the ADAPT board, there are architects who are bringing out codes of best practice for adapting arts venues and public libraries in the most acceptable visual way, as well as making them acceptable for the disabled and other people with handicaps, such as the elderly and those with young babies in pushchairs. We are working very hard on making design acceptable, which is not easy when we are often dealing with listed buildings.

Mr. Fisher: I am delighted to join the hon. Lady in her tribute to her working party, its work and its recognition that design actually helps to solve problems and often saves money. The Government could and should adopt the "British design first" policy. That would go a long way not only to solving our economic problems in the 1990s but to making this a more attractive and civilised society in which to live.

Conservative Members wanted some Labour party policy for the Government to pick up and run with. They have three things—a Ministry, statutory responsibility, and a cross-departmental cultural policy. Those three things together would transform matters. The Minister can have them. We should be delighted if the Minister had the wit and ingenuity to pick them up. There are plenty more good ideas where they came from—the next Labour Government—but let the right hon. Gentleman make a start with those.

We are glad that the Government have started to implement Labour party policy. We hope that they will continue in the short time that they have left. It will mark the changeover to the Ministry and to a decade in which British culture actually begins to count for something, we can begin to be proud of our artists, and audiences can get a square deal. That will be a good transition. The country has a right to expect a better and more vigorous cultural policy than it is getting from the Government. The next Labour Government will certainly give the country that cultural policy.

6.24 pm

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): The trouble with the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) is that he is never quite sure whether he is rehearsing "King Lear" or "Twelfth Night". He is not very good at being Mr. Nasty. Many Conservative Members knew and revered his father and had great affection for him. The hon. Gentleman inherits an abundant measure of his father's charm, but not his father's good sense. It is a great pity that the hon. Gentleman spends so much time trying to be Mr. Nasty and trying to rubbish my right hon. Friend the Minister who has performed a signal service to the arts for five years. When one considers his record objectively, my right hon. Friend will be remembered as an extremely fine Minister for the Arts.

I sincerely hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee) did not have some inside information. I sincerely hope also that it was not my right hon. Friend's last speech as Minister for the Arts. I should love his role to be expanded.

My first point takes up a comment that has already been made in an intervention and by the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central. If we were honest about the matter, we would recognise that no Government since the war have done well enough for the arts. No Government have given sufficient priority to the arts and our heritage. The Government have made a significant advance, and I have paid tribute to that on many occasions. I refer to the foundation of the national heritage memorial fund, the creation of English Heritage, as the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England is generally known, what has been done at the Tate gallery and at the Tate of the north. I could go on, but I shall not. The achievements are many and considerable, but no Government have done as much as they should have done.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cormack: I shall give way, but I do not wish to give way too often because many other hon. Members wish to speak.

Mr. Flannery: The hon. Gentleman omits something vital from his tribute to the Minister, and that is the very small amount of money that the Government are giving. Lord Armstrong conveyed to the Select Committee that at least £50 million would be required to set right the fabric of the Victoria and Albert museum alone. No matter how well-intentioned the Minister is, I do not know how in heaven's name that work can be done without the necessary money.

Mr. Cormack: Of course, there is a need for more money. There is a need for a plurality of funding and for a greater central contribution. I do not cross swords with the hon. Gentleman. He served on the Select Committee that I had the honour of chairing for most sittings, when we inquired into the arts way back at the beginning of the 1980s. That Committee made a number of recommendations, but the fundamental recommendation was that there should be one Minister with responsibility for the arts, heritage and tourism matters, and that that Minister should be a member of the Cabinet. That was an all-party recommendation. The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central should not claim that that is uniquely Labour party policy.

Mr. Fisher: It is.

Mr. Cormack: I could say just as easily that he pinched it from me. I wrote articles and a book on the matter in the early 1970s when the Labour party was in government, and I urged Labour Prime Ministers to do something about it, but they did not. We can all say, "Me, too." The Labour party has hijacked my policy, and I am delighted that it has. There is now a greater recognition spread across my party—it was given eloquent voice by my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) in the House last Thursday—that we need a Ministry that is more all-embracing than the present one. I should love the arts, heritage, tourism, film and broadcasting to be the responsibility of one Minister. That would make sense.

Last week during his question to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside referred to 1992 and to the fact that, as our Ministers sit side by side with their European counterparts, a Minister will have more clout not only in the Cabinet and in Government, but within Europe if he has greater responsibilities and a wider remit.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is not in the Chamber, so I hope that what I am saying will be reported to her. If she is contemplating a mini-reshuffle this month —some of the newspapers suggest that she is—I hope that she will reward my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts for his splendid service by giving him the place in the Cabinet that he deserves and by giving him those additional responsibilities. My right hon. Friend enjoys a great measure of respect and affection throughout the arts and heritage world. He has considerable experience, built up over five years. He would be a notable first holder of that office. That is something to which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister should turn her attention. If she does not feel that she can make that sort of administrative change this side of a general election, I hope that both parties will go into the general election committed to that policy——

Mr. Fisher: We will.

Mr. Cormack: I sincerely hope that both parties will do so.

Although one could range far and wide in such a debate, I shall not do so because I do not wish to take up too much time. However, two other things which deserve the House's attention have not received much up to now. There has been only the briefest passing reference in the debate so far to cathedrals. Despite all the problems to which he should be putting his mind, such as the Royal Shakespeare Company, Mr. Peter Palumbo seems intent on empire-building. I am sure that Mr. Palumbo is a man of great distinction, many talents and considerable gifts, but he should remember that he has been appointed chairman of the Arts Council of Great Britain which has responsibilities, opportunities and problems enough without his seeking to intrude into areas in which the Arts Council has no experience and no proper role to play.

However, Mr. Palumbo has rightly drawn the public's attention to something that many of us have been talking about for some time. I refer to the fact that our great medieval cathedrals constitute the finest group of buildings in this country. They are buildings of great glory, the flagships of our heritage. They contain some of the finest works of art in the world and are themselves among

our finest works of art. It is nonsense that they comprise the only group of important historic buildings that is not eligible for grants from public funds. Of course, there are historic reasons for that and it is not the fault of either this Government or the previous Labour Government. Indeed, when I and many others over the past 20 years have said, "What about the cathedrals?", the cathedrals themselves have frequently sounded a strong dissenting voice. A number of deans and provosts have been reluctant, thinking that such funding would threaten their autonomy and that it would not be right for them to be beholden in any sense. However, there is now a growing realisation among deans and provosts and all those who care for those great buildings that appeals, which have so often been successful, can no longer be the only answer.

Any country that allowed the spire of Salisbury cathedral to collapse or Wells' west front or Lincoln's west front to crumble into decay could not call itself a civilised country or society. It is important that money from central funds should be available to assist with the upkeep and maintenance of our cathedrals. I am not advocating a French solution. I am not suggesting that the fabric should become the responsibility of the state because I believe that it is important that the Church itself should have some responsibility. Appeals are important—they help to harness local affection, pride and patriotism, and all such good qualities are themselves good things.

Furthermore, I am not against cathedrals that have struggled hard, as Ely has, deciding to charge for admission to those who are going there not to pray, but to look and enjoy. When an all-party Select Committee recommended the consideration of admission charges, I believe that it was suggesting something perfectly reasonable, although I do not believe that it got the figures right. It would, of course, be unthinkable to have a compulsory admission charge at cathedrals on all occasions.

However, the inescapable central fact is that we need to make money available from the centre. The obvious vehicle for organising that is the body that we already have —English Heritage, the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England. Just as it has a separate committee to look after state aid for churches, it should have a separate committee to look after state aid for cathedrals.

There are those of us present who battled for state aid for churches. When I became a Member of the House in 1970, such aid was not available. I remember introducing a Bill to that effect in 1972. We battled and eventually a Conservative Secretary of State, Lord Rippon as he now is, agreed that that should happen. The implementation fell to a Labour Secretary of State, the late Tony Crosland, who was one of the finest Secretaries of State for the Environment that this country has ever had. That happened on a bipartisan—indeed, on an all-party—basis. I speak as chairman of the all-party heritage group when I say that it is important that when we have got over our bantering across the Floor of the House, which is perfectly natural and good fun, we should all remember that we have fundamental and basic responsibilities for such enduring things, and that those responsibilities transcend petty party differences.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) attended all the sittings of the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts which unanimously reported in 1981. All its recommendations had the support of all members of the Committee, ranging from the very far left to the fairly far right.

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): I agree with my hon. Friend about state aid for cathedrals. That is long overdue and much-needed. But does my hon. Friend agree that if state aid is to be given to cathedrals, they should fall within the planning framework? Frequently, ecclesiastical exemptions for planning have meant that cathedrals and churches have gone in for planning abuses that would not be tolerated in secular buildings. Does my hon. Friend agree that, if money is to be given, the Church must give up some of its autonomy over what it does with its buildings?

Mr. Cormack: My hon. Friend oversimplifies a complicated matter. As one who served on the Faculty Jurisdiction Commission of the Church of England, which wrestled with that point, my answer to my hon. Friend would, in one word, be no. I do not think that there is any need for that because the system of faculties that applies to parish churches provides great safeguards. Until now, the cathedrals have been so autonomous as to have an almost dangerous autonomy, but today's Order Paper contains a Measure relating to the care of cathedrals, which comes from the General Synod, which will mean that the Mappa Mundi affair could not be repeated. Thank goodness, that has now been resolved reasonably satisfactorily and the Mappa is now back in Hereford. There is no longer a problem there, but we do not want deans and chapters being able to get rid of things of priceless worth without paying any regard to anybody. However, in the interests of time and my colleagues, I must not be led too far along that path.

My right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts touched on my next point in his admirable opening speech. Like other hon. Members, I saw the letter from Sir Nicholas Goodison in *The Times* today. The letter demonstrates the great sense of unease throughout the heritage world at the recent decision of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. I might add that if there was one Minister and if that Minister were my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts, I do not think that we would have that problem today. However, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has brought into sharp focus the fact that as a result of the extraordinary and almost obscene escalation in the price of works of art, there is a real need for a further review of how we can try to keep necessary things in this country.

In 1981 the Select Committee was fairly prescient and made a number of important recommendations. For instance, it said that the so-called douceur was not enough. That is illustrated by the fact that there are now so few private treaty sales. The Select Committee also said that we should consider something along the lines of the former American system whereby if someone bought a work of art there could be an element of tax deductibility so long as the ultimate beneficiary was the nation.

In the recent decision over the Three Graces, I do not object to the fact that some private individuals have been allowed to buy the object or at least that their offer has been declared admissible. What worries me is that in return for saying that there can be some public access for 25 years, in effect they have been given a licence to print money. I am not casting any aspersions upon the integrity

[Mr. Cormack]

of the people concerned. I do not know them and everything that I have heard about them is to their credit, but however saintly and good they may be, the system which enables private individuals, at the behest of the state, to cash in on the system is wrong. I would not mind at all if those gentlemen—I believe they are called the Barclays—kept the Three Graces almost entirely to themselves so long as the ultimate beneficiary was the nation.

That is what happens in the United States. I am glad to see the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, nodding so vigorously. That is why there are so many large collections in the United States. Private individuals have bought works of art; they have been allowed an element of tax deductibility; they have enjoyed them, sometimes in the privacy of their own homes and sometimes sharing them, but ultimately those works of art have become the property of the state in which they live and the nation has been enriched immeasurably as a result.

Mr. Tony Banks: I very much agree with what the hon. Member said about the obscene prices being paid at auction these days. As the people who buy works of art —they all seem to be Japanese business men—are incredibly wealthy, what does the hon. Gentleman think about the idea of imposing a levy, a percentage, on the amount they pay that could then be channelled back into the arts to encourage emergent painters, sculptors or musicians? There is something ironic about the fact that a Van Gogh can be sold for £27 million yet the artist died in poverty. We should do something about that. Obviously, we cannot make retrospective payments to painters, but surely we could channel some of the money back into the arts.

Mr. Cormack: The hon. Gentleman's suggestion is not at all way out or outlandish and merits some consideration. After all, one could say that the public lending right scheme gives a precedent for doing something along those lines. I would not want to be tempted too far, although there may be some merit in a special sales tax, which I infer is what the hon. Gentleman is suggesting. However, that does not meet the basic problem.

We have to examine the douceur and the whole business of tax deductibility for private individuals. The nation must be ultimate beneficiary if those private individuals are to enjoy works of art and be allowed a tax concession for so doing, which I do not oppose. But what Sir Nicholas says in his letter is so right and so wise. The issue needs careful examination, whether by the reviewing committee or by a specially constituted committee, and the law which now operates—it is a pre-war law—needs looking at. We need to decide how best to address the problems created by the escalation of values.

There are other matters on which my right hon. Friend should be fighting, and I am sure he is doing that. It is nonsense that the purchase grants remain frozen at 1985 levels and that the national heritage memorial fund, should have almost spent its year's resources by 4 July. That memorial fund, which has been so brilliantly organised and chaired by Lord Charteris and which has performed a great service to the nation, needs extra resources and it must have them.

The failure of the Labour Government to respond to the challenge of Mentmore, although Mentmore was the catalyst, led to the Select Committee being set up to examine the national land fund from which the national heritage memorial fund was constituted. The capital of the national land fund had been filched by Governments of all parties, and if that sum had been given back, the problems that we are discussing today would not exist. More money is owed to the national heritage memorial fund. I am sure that the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), who played a notable part in our deliberations in Committee and tabled the amendment that made it the national heritage memorial fund, would agree.

It would be extremely dangerous for the memorial fund to become a clearing house or central purchasing agency for museums. It was not intended as that and it must not be allowed to become so, but it will if we do not consider purchase grants to museums.

There is so much that one could say about the future of our theatre and opera where there are also serious problems, but I shall finish on this note: we have cause for some quiet satisfaction in that the Government whom I am proud to support—I am discriminating and discerning in my support, but I am still proud to support them—have done a great deal over the past 11 years to give a new priority to issues which concern almost all hon. Gentlemen in the Chamber today. However, there is no cause for complacency. My right hon. Friend the Minister said that he is well aware of the problems. We should now look towards the turn of the century and our aim should be that all the great buildings that we inherited from our ancestors are handed on to our successors sound and well restored. Museums should have their contents properly displayed, they should have no leaking roofs and they should have continuing and living collections. Most important of all, let us not forget that if we are concerned about the arts and heritage we are concerned about the living, not the dead. I shall not start quoting Keats, but a true work of art is a joy for ever; it is undying and immortal.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) would change his tune if he had been with me in Romania a few weeks ago. I was talking to people who have had to face unimaginable privations, problems and hardships. They told me that without books, culture, art and a link with a European past as well as with other countries in Europe today, they would have had no hope and they would have felt that they had no future. We are dealing with enduring living art and we must not forget that we are also dealing with the encouragement of living artists. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Minister again, but I urge him never to give up his quest or his endeavour.

6.48 pm

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): The hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) has the conservation of our heritage at the forefront of his mind at all times, and I fully support him in that.

Our heritage is the most important aspect of the debate because it was accumulated when, for more than two centuries, Britain was the most powerful and prosperous country in the world. We are not likely to return to that,

so the articles and the buildings that were created at that time—with all the talents that went into their construction—must be passed on undiminished wherever possible.

The Minister for the Arts is to be congratulated, as he has been successful in getting more out of the Treasury than did most of his predecessors. To most Governments and Treasury Ministers, an Arts Minister is just another spender. He is not likely to create money, so he is viewed with a certain amount of antagonism because of the extra money that he is able to acquire. The right hon. Gentleman can make use of a number of assets, however, and I hope that he has learnt how to do so. He represents a civilised approach within the Government, and I am sure that he has been able to press his argument upon the Treasury and to exploit it as fully as possible.

I am also sure that the right hon. Gentleman has emphasised the importance of tourism to this country and the contribution that the arts can make to encouraging tourists. Many people come here not for the weather or the restaurants—good as they are nowadays—but for the theatres and historic buildings. The Minister's work directly contributes to Britain's attractiveness to tourists. I am sure that he has emphasised that aspect, but it could be emphasised still further.

Tourism helps our balance of payments, and although the Government have somewhat derided that idea in the past, given our £20 billion balance of payments deficit perhaps it may now be regarded as more important than it used to be. The money derived from tourism is not offset by large expenditures overseas, as most of the money that tourists spend in this country stays here. When we manufacture goods we have to buy raw materials from abroad, and there is offsetting expenditure, but 90 per cent. or perhaps more of the money from tourism goes to help the balance of payments because it stays in this country. The Minister should use that argument more often.

One could argue that value added tax should not be charged on the arts at all, let alone at a monstrous 15 per cent. When I was Financial Secretary to the Treasury and had responsibility for VAT, my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) asked me whether we could abolish VAT on theatres. He knew my views. I studied the matter and went to him with two views: I said that as Financial Secretary to the Treasury one must be aware of the repercussions and problems that would result from abolition; but, as the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne, my advice to my right hon. Friend was to abolish VAT on theatre admission. He took the first piece of advice, not the second. I told him, "If you are going to be Chancellor of the Exchequer, for heaven's sake enjoy it, and do something that you will be proud of in later years." VAT at 15 per cent. is absurd, but it is an argument for getting compensating money from the Treasury.

We spend a large amount of money teaching our children about the arts, music and literature, but the expenditure suddenly comes to an end, and there are few subsidies for the arts to compare with the enormous amount spent on teaching children to enjoy the arts. There should not be such an abrupt change.

How should we spend the money, assuming that we have perhaps been able to get more from the Treasury than the Minister has been able to obtain? I am worried about the decay of so many public buildings and their contents. From the first report of the Public Accounts Committee last year we know that, when dealing with the subject of conservation,

> "The Victoria and Albert Museum accepted frankly that this 'was a national disaster' and agreed that it 'represented lasting and irreparable damage to some of the national heritage.'"

The museum went on to say:

> "On present staffing levels backlog conservation"

on the prints and drawings collection alone

> "was estimated at 200 years."

Whatever the right hon. Gentleman has rightly announced today, it must be compared with the size of the task, as my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) said. If we regard the fact as important that we are merely the holders of these great collections, the least that we can do is to retain them, preserve them and pass them on in as good a condition as they were when we inherited them. That is the task before us.

Then there is the question of the export of works of art. We had the money and a certain amount of good taste and we acquired great collections, which we are proud of. I am against museum charges because they mean that people have to make a special effort to visit a museum, rather than popping in, perhaps to a local one, when they happen to be passing by. If we want to encourage children to visit museums, we should not think only in terms of party visits. How many times did hon. Members go to a museum in a party? No doubt excursions are better organised now, but I never did. Sometimes we went in to get out of the rain, and sometimes out of curiosity, and what we saw remains with us as an abiding memory. For the sake of a few million pounds it is absurd to handle our heritage in such a fashion.

Italy has far more great works of art than many other countries and it does not allow their export. So why do we allow exports? I agree with the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South that we should keep the works of art that we possess here. Perhaps we might not see them for 25 years, but they would be here at the end of that period, and we should be able to enjoy them—as would our children's children. We are not likely to be able to spend £30 million to keep painting here again. We must have another mechanism to keep outstanding works of art in this country without this nonsensical rushing round to find some wealthy individual who may be prepared to come up with a scheme to keep them here which would perhaps be to his advantage or give him a certain amount of local credit. That is not the way to handle a national issue of such importance and we must ensure that we keep these great works of art in this country.

No one has mentioned the role of the BBC, which has been one of the greatest civilising influences in our country. It has brought literature and music to millions of people who would not otherwise have been drawn to a concert hall or a theatre. The plays that it has put on have generated enjoyment and understanding. The BBC is one of the main reasons why London has become such a centre for music. In the 1920s, one would have laughed at the idea of London being a world centre for music, but it is today. London has always been a centre for the theatre. Better theatre of an international standard has resulted from the number of people who have learnt to appreciate acting and plays from the BBC. That is one of our advantages. We must retain it.

The Minister has done very well, and I hope that he will not leave his post. Until I came to today's debate, I did not know that that was a possibility. He has worked himself into the job, and he has an unrivalled grasp of the subject.

[Mr. Robert Sheldon]

I am sure that his relationship with the Treasury could not be improved upon by any successor who might be brought in to fill this role.

I would dearly like to see it as a Cabinet role. There was a time when we hoped that it would be—along with other responsibilities, obviously. I wish the Minister well, and ask him to continue the fight, be more vigorous and produce more money to be spent on this important sphere of activity.

Several Hon. Members rose——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I remind hon. Members that Mr. Speaker has imposed a 10-minute limit on speeches between 7 and 9 o'clock.

6.59 pm

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Let me warmly congratulate my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts on the splendid catalogue of achievements that he set out. He has been outstandingly successful as Arts Minister. On a personal level he is most highly regarded in the arts world. I hope that he will long continue in his present position, as he is doing a first-class job. In saying that, I speak for all the members of the Conservative Parliamentary Arts and Heritage committee, which I have the honour to chair. I, too, take the view that his should be a Cabinet post.

I was astonished that, in a speech that lasted for more than half an hour, the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) did not make one reference to our 10 great symphony orchestras, which play such a major part in the cultural life of our nation. I hope that he never becomes Minister for the Arts: that would bode ill for music in this country.

Let me return to what my right hon. Friend the Minister said. What matters most is how the arts enrich and fulfil people's lives in growing numbers. In this, the Government have been far more successful than any other. When I say that the Government have "done more", I mean that they have done more for audiences—the consumers rather than the producers. The producers and the performers are there for the audiences, and not the other way round. This applies to the arts, as to anything else.

What matters most is not the sum in the annual arts budget—we can spend too much time examining financial figures. Although we have a duty to do so—because it is the duty of Parliament to vote money and for the Government to make recommendations to Parliament—the money is only a means to an end. What is important is the number of people who enjoy their perception of works of art or performances. For all that, Government spending on the arts is 48 per cent. up in real terms on what it was 10 years ago. Even if we allow for GLC abolition money, the figure is still 45 per cent. up.

Mr. Fisher: Will the hon. Gentleman try to explain how it helps audiences when, as a result of Government policies, 31 out of 33 English repertory companies are in deficit?

Mr. Jessel: Repertory companies have nearly always been in deficit, because they perform mostly in small towns and suburban areas. They have always been closer to the margin than the principal theatres in our main cities—there is nothing new in that—but they are managing to survive.

I was impressed by the reference to Glasgow as the cultural capital of Europe for 1990. I was there in the recess during the last week of May, and was told that the number of people who would attend arts events of all kinds was expected to increase from 6·5 million in 1989 to 10 million in 1990—an increase of about 50 per cent. That is a tremendous achievement; the figure includes performances by some repertory companies. There are now 2,500 museums in Britain, which is double the number of 20 years ago; more people now go to the theatre than attend football matches. About 2·5 million people a year go to classical concerts.

I see my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) in his place. Perhaps I can anticipate what he is about to say on the basis of his comments in previous speeches. He seems to think that all pleasures are of equal value. That is nonsense. We all know it. The obvious excitement and tension, and the emotional and spiritual uplift, from great drama, beautiful music, brilliant painting, strong religious or patriotic feeling—or even the excitement of sporting events such as football matches—has a dimension and a quality totally different from the contentment of a cow or a cabbage. That is what distinguishes human beings from animals. Once we have accepted that those feelings are intrinsically superior to the contentment of a cow or a cabbage, it is a small step to come to the conclusion that some of those things are superior to others.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): My hon. Friend has made my point for me. He is saying that we are all different and that we like different types of activities and leisure pursuits, for which we should pay the full amount. At the moment, 24 million people are watching England play West Germany at football. They are not subsidised, as they buy their own television sets. Football is not subsidised, and it is a damn sight more important than the arty-farty people pushing themselves around the Royal Opera House.

Mr. Jessel: We all know that the works of Shakespeare are superior in literary merit to the Order Paper of the House which I have in my hand . Similar analogies can be made about poetry, music, architecture, painting or any of the other arts. If we can get young people into something good, then they have many years ahead of them to get something out of it. So the argument for supporting the arts with public funds is not very different from the argument for using public funds to support education.

My hon. Friend never faces up to the fact that the arts in this country attract substantial numbers of visitors from overseas. Their visits generate spending on hotels, restaurants, shops and internal travel. All those produce profits, a tax yield to the Government, and employment and income for the people who produce services. Therefore, they augment the invisible earnings of this country. That is a point in favour of the arts that my hon. Friend never answers.

There is no doubt that London has a superb range of live arts. As Dr. Johnson said,

"When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford."

My right hon. Friend the Minister referred to the City of Birmingham symphony orchestra. The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central did not mention orchestras, and we seldom give enough time to discussion of orchestras.

We are apt to discuss the Royal Opera house, the English National Opera, the royal national theatre and the Shakespeare theatre. They all do an excellent job, but when did the House last debate the Royal Philharmonic orchestra, the London symphony orchestra, the London Philharmonic orchestra, the Philharmonia orchestra, the City of Birmingham symphony orchestra, the Hallé orchestra, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic orchestra, the Scottish National orchestra and the many excellent orchestras of the BBC?

The Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee—the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon)—did mention and praise the BBC; I share his view. I should like especially to praise the BBC for its excellent promenade concert seasons: this year's is about to begin. Many of those orchestras have a high standard of excellence and are of world class. I find the sound of musical instruments playing together as a symphony orchestra at least as good as the sound of a human voice.

Of course it costs more to put on an opera than to put on a symphony concert. It involves the set, the staging and the orchestra, as well as singers. But a good symphony concert is not cheap to put on, and it is not self-evident to me why the subsidy of £15·2 million a year paid to the Covent Garden opera house should be seven or eight times as much as the subsidy which is paid to the four main London orchestras—the Royal Philharmonic orchestra, the London symphony orchestra, the London Philharmonic orchestra and the Philharmonia orchestra. Together, they receive a subsidy of about £2 million a year. The Paris orchestra, in contrast, receives £5·2 million, and the Munich Philharmonic orchestra £7·6 million each year—for only one orchestra in each case.

The underfunding of British orchestras leads to two unsatisfactory results. First, our orchestras are under-rehearsed. That defect is only partially offset by their remarkable standard of sight reading. Secondly, it is difficult to attract conductors of world class. We are always being told that the opera must have enough money to attract international singers. If so, then orchestras must have enough money with which to attract top conductors. I hope that the chairman of the Arts Council will be invited to reconsider the proportion—only 7 per cent.—of the total Arts Council budget that is now allocated to orchestras.

7.9 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): A wide consensus of view has emerged on many important issues. I add my personal support to the plea that the Minister who is in charge of arts policy should be given a Cabinet post. He should be in charge of an integrated Department. That decision should be made sooner rather than later. I hope that it will be made by the Prime Minister this month. I agree with the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) that many people have been arguing for a long time that the Ministry should have greater status. My colleagues have made a similar point in the past. I endorse it. My party has argued for a long time that there should be an arts and culture Ministry, incorporating tourism, the heritage and related matters. I hope that an integrated Ministry will be achieved soon, under whichever party is in office.

The necessary basis for a proper arts policy is significant public sector funding. One hon. Member who is in the House tonight, the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks), dissents from that view, but all countries in the developed world believe that it is necessary. This year's additional grant, 12·5 per cent., is generous, but it is not much more than the rate of inflation. Over three years, the average additional grant will be much lower. The average additional grant for the next two years is 4·5 per cent. Over three years, therefore, at current inflation rates, the increase in the arts budget will be less than the rate of inflation. We must increase public sector funding of the arts if they are to be properly sustained.

According to "Cultural Trends", comparable figures for comparable countries make it clear that, whether it is central Government or local government expenditure, expenditure per head on the arts in France, Germany, Sweden and Canada is greater than in this country. That needs to be remedied, whichever party is in power.

There is widespread support for arts administration to be organised on a regional basis. The Minister knows that my colleagues support the findings of the Wilding report. We must avoid duplication, but the strategy for co-ordinating the roles of the Arts Council, the regional arts authorities and local government is not clear. The Minister referred to the Arts Council's new strategic role, but it needs to be more clearly worked out and integrated into the structure of regional arts administration in England and into the national administration for Scotland and Wales. It is unsatisfactory that Scotland should have to depend on a single grant handout from the main budget.

The Minister is aware of the great concern in local authorities about arts funding. My borough is about to be charge-capped. One of the inevitable victims of limited local authority budgets will be the arts and other non-statutory expenditure. A few days ago I visited the Lyric theatre in Hammersmith, where I saw "Glory" by the Temba theatre company, which is based in Southwark. I had not seen any of its previous productions. It was an extremely good production, by any standards. That company is funded by the local authority as well as by the Greater London Arts Association. If we lose the local authority's contribution to high-quality art and popular art as a result of charge capping, it will be to the detriment of the cultural life of the borough.

Mr. Gerald Bowden (Dulwich): The hon. Gentleman referred to the contribution by Southwark borough to the arts and to the restrictions that may be placed upon funding of the arts by charge capping. Does he not acknowledge that Southwark's contributions to the arts in recent years has been derisory and that charge capping will not affect its contribution?

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman and I have taken issue with each other previously on this issue. There has been correspondence between the chair of the arts committee in Southwark and both of us. I agree that Southwark has not given enough to the arts, but charge capping will not help. It will certainly hinder the expenditure on the arts that the people of Southwark need.

It is a mistake to hold back the purchase grant level to that which was in force in 1985. That amount must be

[Mr. Hughes]

increased if a proper purchasing policy is to be achieved. I agree with the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South that the Government ought to build up again the national heritage memorial fund, not in order to supply general funding but to fulfil the specific tasks for which it was established.

It is important to work out a clear structure for purchasing policies and export licences to take us to 1992 and beyond. I urge the Minister to adopt a European convention on the heritage and culture in order to ensure that cultural treasures are not lost to this country through legislative loopholes. We ought to be able to keep them here. Furthermore, they ought to be seen. We do not want the drain to continue after 1992 under the new regime in Europe.

As for arts education, one of my concerns is that local authorities cannot make the provision that they wish to make for arts and music under the national curriculum. Teachers have told me how difficult it is to obtain time for music and arts subjects. If young people are taught nothing about the arts and are therefore denied the spiritual dimension that the arts can add to their lives, their education will be very mundane; it will amount only to a job-preparation activity. I realise that this a Department of Education and Science, not an Office of Arts and Libraries, responsibility, but I hope that the Minister realises that those gaps must be filled. Our children must be provided with tuition in music and the arts while they are at school.

The Minister heard my question on Monday. It is a mistake to charge young people for entry into museums. The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) referred to that point in his speech. Our museums and galleries must also provide more facilities for the disabled. Other countries provide more facilities for the disabled than we do. Moreover, they provide more audio-visual facilities. We must do likewise.

As for our cathedrals, I associate myself with what was said by the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South. Even if the cathedrals lose some of their autonomy, we ought to support with public funds some of the finest buildings in our land.

To turn to London issues, it gives me great pleasure, as one who is not a Londoner by birth, to live in a capital city with such a wonderful variety of arts provision. London provides us with some wonderful artistic opportunities. It is sad, therefore, that the big four—the Royal Opera house, English National Opera, the Royal Shakespeare Company and the National theatre—are in such financial difficulties that their activities cannot be guaranteed. They are the best of their type. All experience shows that they need to be funded properly. The only way to provide them with proper stability is to write off their current debts. I ask the Minister to try to persuade his colleagues to support that aim.

I am also concerned about the threat that hangs over the Museum of London and the Greater London archaeological service due to the proposed withdrawal of its grant, as announced by English Heritage. That is causing great concern in all parts of the House. There is to be a meeting about it later this month. I hope that the Minister will investigate that as the work of the Museum of London and the Greater London archaeological service must be sustained. To cut their grant would be a great mistake.

We still have not had any announcement about areas of archaeological importance. Five have been decided, but I hope that further decisions will be imminent. I also hope that the Government will be slightly more sympathetic about the costs in the Rose theatre case, about which I have been in correspondence with Lord Hesketh, and—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Gentleman has had his 10 minutes.

7.19 pm

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): I suspect that greater love hath no man than to give up the World cup for his artistic friends. I am delighted to take part in this debate.

Hon. Members have raised a variety of subjects, including music, and this has been a musical week for me. I started off on Saturday at Glyndebourne watching Peter Sellers clutch "The Magic Flute" —an interesting, good production. This Saturday I shall play the jingle bells in the Horowitz toy symphony at the Festival hall. I am not sure that that will enhance the musical tradition to which my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) referred, but it will extend my experience.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) and his hon. Friends have been churlish about artistic achievements in the Government's term of office and that of my right hon. Friend the Minister. The hon. Gentleman specifically referred to the National theatre. He did not mention the nine awards achieved by 33 productions at that theatre, nor the 650,000 people who attend it regularly—all that he mentioned was a leak in the roof. The hon. Gentleman has got things out of proportion. I hope that he will think again before he criticises the great work of our theatres.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to the acting profession and did his bit by auditioning for a part in "Allo, Allo". I am a member of the Committee considering the Finance Bill and last night I spoke up for the actors in my constituency and nationwide. My hon. Friends and I were delighted when the Treasury Minister made a substantial concession. It was therefore right that we sought to withdraw our amendment pending the measure to assist actors which is to be introduced on Report. The Minister deserves our support.

On other occasions, the hon. Gentleman has referred to the uniform business rate. I believe that the message has got through that UBR is assisting the arts. Greater London Arts has conducted a survey which shows that 65 per cent. of arts organisations in London will benefit from UBR, by, on average, £1,200. The remaining 35 per cent. will face an average shortfall of £500. The benefit to those organisations results from the 80 per cent. relief that the Government have introduced for bodies with charitable status. I hope that the hon. Gentleman appreciates that that is good news.

I regret that I have been called before the leader of the opposition to the arts, my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks). In an intervention he compared spending on sport with that on the arts. My hon. Friend should reconsider the support that the taxpayer gives to sport. The television licence fee is used to bid vast sums for the broadcasting of sporting events. I do not resent that. The tax from the football pools is to be

used to improve football grounds. The rate support grant and the community charge also contribute to local government support for sport in schools, pre-school groups, youth clubs and sports clubs. The taxpayer contributes an immense amount to sports. We should also take into account the even larger amounts of money devoted to policing sporting events. I do not resent the great sums spent on sport, but my hon. Friend must accept that those sums are comparable with the amount spent on the arts and their promotion in schools, youth clubs, art clubs and artistic venues. In common with expenditure on sport, the money is spent to promote access as well as safety. I hope that we can unite in supporting that. When sports events are broadcast, the promoters of the event are allowed to advertise their products. Alas, the same is not the case when an operatic or theatrical production is broadcast. Perhaps we should reconsider that.

The great difference between art and sport is that, ultimately, good art is eternal but sport is temporal. If there were no sponsorship of the arts, we should have a cultural desert. I am all for people thronging to see "The Phantom of the Opera" or "The Mousetrap", or visiting the Raymond Revuebar, but if they were the sole artistic productions of this country we should be much the poorer. We need to acquire sponsorship from the taxpayer as well as the threatre and opera-goer to guarantee the quality of our arts.

The heritage that we seek to pass on is as much cultural as environmental. Reference has been made to the way in which heritage and the arts merge. Town planning, landscape architecture and the use of green spaces is important, as art attaches itself to the environment. A wall painting is part of community art and contributes to the environment and the artistic life of that community. It is only a short step from that to the hung painting. The pageantry of trooping the colour leads on to public performances of the mystery plays and is part of our dramatic and musical tradition.

The arts are also important because of what they can contribute to the social welfare of our society. Self-confidence can be restored to people going through a bad patch when they discover that they have an artistic ability. My hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) referred to ADAPT. On Friday I initiated a debate on disability and today I again urge my right hon. Friend and his colleagues to promote arts for the disabled. That means not just access to theatres, but participation in the arts by people with disabilities. We should also encourage the arts to promote a positive image of disability so that it becomes more acceptable to our society.

I welcome the recent brochure produced by my right hon. Friend the Minister and the Secretary of State for Education and Science on the arts in our schools. The teaching of the arts in schools does not just mean outings to the theatre and being taught to play a particular instrument—it is about using the arts to teach other subjects. The brochure shows how that can be done. The Horniman museum uses the Dolmetsch collection of old instruments as part of its teaching programme for schools. That venture is welcome. I am pleased that the Horniman and the Geffrye museums have embarked on their new independent status—another sign of progress under the Government. I hope that the brochure will be used to expand such teaching methods throughout our education system.

Arts in education are important. I hope that my right hon. Friend will continue to press the case for resisting any suggestion from any place, on either side of the channel, to impose VAT on books. That would be wrong.

Reference has been made to the number of galleries and paintings in London. Our tradition of hanging the best collections in London is expanding at the Courtauld, Clore and Sainsbury galleries. I hope that my right hon. Friend will ensure that access to such paintings does not just mean taking them out of the cellars. I know that that is important, but we must ensure that they are on public display when the public can see them. All too often, galleries are closed on public holidays—the very days when families could see the paintings. Galleries should be open on those days, as well as at the weekend and in the evening.

I am grateful for this opportunity to raise a few arts-related issues which are of interest to me and, I hope, the House. I support my right hon. Friend in all that he has done. He has achieved a tremendous amount. If the message today is, "Onwards and upwards", it is one that we give to him personally for what he has achieved and will achieve in the many years during which, I hope, he will hold his office. He is doing a great job for the arts in this country.

7.30 pm

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): I welcome this opportunity to take part in a debate on the arts. I support the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), who agrees that the Minister for the Arts should have a seat in the Cabinet. Although good advice has been given to the Prime Minister, she is not known for accepting it, and we shall have to wait until my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) becomes the Minister for the Arts before we see such a Minister in the Cabinet.

This is a nostalgic debate for me, as the hon. Members for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) and for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) are present. I was at school in the Twickenham constituency when I went to see my first play at the Richmond theatre, in the constituency of the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes. To take the nostalgia further, I was born in Aden when the Governor of Aden was the father of the present Minister for the Arts.

Two aspects in my constituency are directly affected by this debate. I and other hon. Members who represent Leicester have been horrified at the deteriorating circumstances of the Haymarket theatre, which has a national and international reputation. In the past three years, the theatre has produced 26 main house and 24 studio productions, as well as hosting a variety of visits from different countries, including Russia and America. It has prepared and organised plays and events for children and local amateur companies, and developed a community base for concerts.

The theatre has produced many plays which have been taken to the west end and beyond. "High Society" started off at the Haymarket in Leicester, "Pride and Prejudice" went on a national tour, "Julius Caesar" went on a British Council tour of India, "M Butterfly" went to the west end, and other plays which started life in Leicester have ended up all over the world. That has all been put at risk because of the funding crisis now affecting the Haymarket theatre.

[Mr. Keith Vaz]

There are four reasons for the risk. First, the amount of grant aid received by the theatre is directly related to the fact that the three-year funding deals were made when the inflation rate was low. The increase in inflation has meant that the theatre's management simply cannot deal with the gap that has grown between the income that it receives and its expenditure. In 1987-88, it received an income of £2,220,000 and its expenditure was £2,240,000. That deficit has continued until this year. Although there is a projected budget surplus for this year, during the course of the year there was a crisis which resulted in the resignation of the theatre's director, Peter Lichenshield, the departure of the artistic director and a number of staff redundancies.

At that time, those of us in Leicester who were proud of the tradition of the Haymarket theatre were concerned and I raised the issue with the Minister in the House. His only response was that the theatre had to live within its means. The message that I receive from the theatre management—my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central was a recent visitor to the theatre—is that they have tried to do that. They have cut costs and accepted voluntary redundancies, but in the end the theatre simply cannot afford to survive because of the current climate.

As well as the funding difficulties, the management also face the trauma of current Government economic policy. High interest rates have affected people who go to the theatre, reducing their spending power so that fewer of them go to the Haymarket theatre and audience figures are affected. In addition, the introduction of the poll tax and the squeeze on local government expenditure in the past few years, specifically on Leicester city council and Leicestershire county council, has meant that such councils have had fewer funds available to support the arts.

I pay tribute to the work done by the recreation and arts department of Leicester city council, particularly its chairman, Derek Fryett, and its director, Alan Llewellyn. The provision of grants on a limited basis has enabled many important events to take place in Leicester. But for the grants available, De Montfort hall, a main venue for concerts and other functions, would not be able to host so many events. Grants from the city council and county council to local neighbourhood arts centres and schools have enabled such activities to take place.

We are all extremely pleased about the support for multicultural activities. Without a grant from Leicester city council, I should have been unable to organise a pensioners' concert in the Members' Dining Room in the House which was attended by more than 100 pensioners from Leicester and enabled a local school—Judge Meadow community college—to show off its ability to produce good music.

The Minister has said that there are always opportunities for funding to be sought from local businesses through sponsorship schemes, but we have found that impossible on a local basis because of current Government policy. There is a limit to the extent to which we can accept sponsorship from business. I would not like to see a production of "King Lear" with all the participants wearing Marks and Spencer badges.

I wish to address some remarks about local conservation and heritage, particularly planning, to the Minister for the Environment and Countryside, who is present. One of the most effective ways to protect our local heritage and environment is by updating our planning laws. We have heard that the Government are intent on bringing forward a major piece of planning legislation next year to satisfy people who are concerned about planning problems.

The present planning laws fail to take into consideration current conservation areas. I will give an example of what happened to my constituents in Humberstone, an outer district of Leicester. I know that the Minister has visited Leicester, but I think that he has always been taken on tours of the inner city rather than the outer estates. There was a pleasant piece of land, a wildlife area, bounded by three roads—Stanley drive, Vicarage road and St. Mary's avenue. That land had been used by local people as a wildlife reserve, but a local firm of builders called Jelsons decided to develop the land for housing at a time when it was impossible to sell new houses in Leicester. It purchased the land by buying bits of people's gardens—what I would describe as the domino principle—and when it had enough of the land, it applied for planning permission. As a result of a well-organised community campaign, the council refused planning permission. The builders immediately sent in bulldozers and completely flattened the land and we discovered that no planning legislation could have prevented them.

From the time when planning permission is refused to the time when a planning appeal is heard, there is no way to stop a developer changing the nature of the land. I introduced a Bill on this subject recently, but I am sure that it will never reach the statute book as there will not be enough time before the House rises. I should like the Government's new planning Bill adequately to reflect the concerns of the people of Humberstone, and other parts of my constituency such as Evington, who want to ensure that the conservation areas that they have established are maintained and that developers who are keen to build houses for profit should not put that profit before the local environment.

I hope that the Minister for the Environment and Countryside will take my points on board and will ask the Minister for the Arts to visit Leicester for discussions with the Haymarket theatre.

7.40 pm

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): I have moved from the Back Benches to a Front Bench because I am the only authentic opposition voice in the House. As my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts is likely to be moved, perhaps I shall get a phone call from No. 10 asking me to take over the arts. If that happens, I shall do away with the subsidies within a week.

We have wasted yet another day of parliamentary time on a non-issue. We spend a great deal of time talking about the arts spending other people's money for things that most people do not want to see or hear. Tonight 24 million people are watching the World cup semi-final. That is indicative of the importance that England attaches to its football team, despite its poor performance. That interest should be compared with the general approach to the arts.

Football must have an intrinsic interest or people would not watch it. There is a great deal of entertainment to be had from watching Roger Milla after he has scored a goal for Cameroon because he runs to the touch line and

does the samba. It is as good as or perhaps better than watching Rudolf Nureyev doing his "Nutcracker" or perhaps, as some people might say, cracking his nuts.

The arts world is not satisfied with £600 million guaranteed for three years, even though no other area of Government spending gets such a guarantee. The Arts Council grant of £175 million is rising to £190 million, but it seems that that is not enough. Some 60 per cent. of Arts Council clients have overspent their allocation and want additional funds. They do not need extra funds. It is just that they could not keep within their budgets in the way that everyone else has to and want another dip into the taxpayers' pocket.

The grant given by my right hon. Friend has a built-in inflation factor of approximately 12 per cent. That should be compared with the 3·9 to 4·2 per cent. factor allocated by the Government to the community charge grant. However, the arts get 12 per cent. built in and guaranteed for three years. In a press release issued by my right hon. Friend a short time ago, he apologised to people in the arts because inflation had eaten so badly into their funds. There is no apology from my Government to old-age pensioners or others about inflation eating into their way of life, but then the arts lobby is rather special.

The history of the arts is a catalogue of total mismanagement, financial ineptitude, productions that are too expensive, and artistes' fees that are too high. The arts are living beyond their means. Taxpayers' money is being poured down the drain and we should be ashamed of that. If the arts cannot afford to pay the proper price for their so-called stars, they should employ second division singers and ballet dancers. The arts are even worse than the race relations industry. Many incompetent hypocrites are seeking power without financial responsibility and are willing to sponge off the rest of us to maintain their status. The ballet, classical music and the opera are the nouvelle cuisine of the entertainment world. When I was a kid, my mother used to eat the peas and throw away the pod. In this modern age we throw away the peas and eat the pod.

Arty-farty people are running the arts and they want more money from us. As my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) tried to show, they are always emphasising how special they are. Neither he nor anyone else could define art. If someone is willing to try to explain it to me I would be willing to listen. The definition of the arty-farty world is quite simple. Art is what people want it to be and what they can con the taxpayer into paying for.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Dicks: No, I will not give way.

I shall now discuss the film industry, which is also on the gravy train. Richard "call me Dickie" Attenborough has made two of the most boring films that one could hope to see. They were "Gandhi" and "Cry Freedom". David Puttnam walked out of Hollywood because he could not cope with the pressure. Those two conned the Prime Minister into giving them £5 million for the film industry and then walked out of the meeting with the Prime Minister and joined the Labour party. If ever the Government were taken for a ride that was it. They said, "Thank you very much, Prime Minister. Please, Mr. Kinnock, you have no brains in your party, so let us in instead." What a gravy train it all is.

Mr. Fisher: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dicks: No, I will not.

Mr. Fisher: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for me to say that England are one-nil up? That might shorten the hon. Gentleman's speech.

Mr. Dicks: I hope that you will add that few seconds to my time, Madam Deputy Speaker. I congratulate the lads and am delighted to hear the news. It is much more important than the arts.

Richard Attenborough and David Puttnam have made a fortune from films, but they want more public money and will not take a penny from their own pockets.

Let us come nearer to home. The House advisory committee on works of art has just bought a painting. I do not know the exact price, although someone mentioned £300,000. That painting will be added to the 3,000 that are already in the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Cormack: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Dicks: No, I will not give way. Please sit down.

Mr. Cormack: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. What the hon. Gentleman has said is completely untrue.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): That is a matter for debate.

Mr. Dicks: I understand from a press report—I do not believe them all, although I tend to believe this one—that an artist called Milly Childers painted a picture called "The Terrace" which shows Members of Parliament lounging about, no doubt in a tired and emotional state, on the Terrace. If that is true—I bear in mind what my hon. Friend says——

Mr. Cormack: This man is a disgrace to the House of Commons.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. We hear all points of view in this Chamber.

Mr. Dicks: My hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) reminds me of Henry VIII—not with all the doublet and hose, but at least well fed. Andrew Lloyd Webber's "The Phantom of the Opera" and "Miss Saigon" demonstrate that shows can attract audiences and survive without subsidies. The same applies to professional football, although my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea disputes that. Any money that goes from the pools to professional football is private sector, not public sector, money. That is important.

Pavarotti is making a small fortune introducing football on the BBC. I wonder how much that overweight Italian is contributing to the Royal Opera house from the money that he receives. My guess is that he contributes nothing and that the money is going straight into his pocket. I do not blame him, but so much for the need to support the arts.

I shall give an example of an important aspect of independence. The tie that I am wearing is that of the Wooden Spoon society. In 1983, when England received the wooden spoon for losing all its rugby matches, a group of supporters—not hooligans—were flying back from Dublin and decided that, despite the despondency caused by watching England lose, they would start to raise money for charity as a means of remembering the day. They have

[Mr. Dicks]

now raised almost £1 million and they have done it without lobbying and without subsidy. They have not squealed or whinged, they just pushed on with hard work. I shall be happy to enrol for £10 any hon. Member who wants to join the Wooden Spoon society.

The Government should immediately stop all subsidies to the arts. There can be no justification for asking an ordinary chap to pay money for such nonsense. The arts should learn to cut their suit according to the cloth and productions should be economically viable. People should be taught simple double entry book-keeping because they do not understand what is going on. They should, of course, stop whingeing.

I quote from an article whose author is not known to me:

"The best way to lower 'cultural' standards . . . is to subsidise them. Men and women without wit, talent or experience of life-self-supporting are found decorating subsidised theatres, galleries and 'centres'. They overflow into radio and TV. Incomprehensible rubbish is described as the work of genius. Dull, confusing plays without middle, beginning or end are lauded as great works. At the centre is the Arts Council handing out your money. They tell you what is good for you. They are the experts . . . who said so? They did. The more money they get the more they demand. The culture vultures fight over the grants . . . Opera battles with Willie S . . . the little ones complain of the shortage of crumbs; but all are united, no matter if only one ticket in ten is sold, the show must go on until all the grants are spent. They are also united in their arrogance."

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. We should all be delighted that the hon. Gentleman can read, but is it in order for him to quote at such length?

Mr. Dicks: I did say that I do not know the identity of the author. Nevertheless, the article goes on to say that those people

"are willing to go slumming with the masses . . . like a bit of old time music hall, a limited offer of slap and tickle drama but the 'people' must not take to their hearts any of the 'higher forms' unless it is approved"—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have given the hon. Member a little injury time because he was interrupted by three points of order. I know that the hon. Gentleman will now respect the Chair. I call him to order, and I call the next speaker.

Mr. Fisher: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I believe that the House was misled by the Government, because the Minister's parliamentary private secretary informed us that England had scored against West Germany. In fact, it seems that the Government cannot get their facts right. I am sad to say that there is still no score.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The House is much obliged to the hon. Member for keeping it up to date with what is occurring elsewhere. Mr. Tony Banks.

7.51 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham North-West): I cannot say that it is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks), but he always makes an interesting contribution. I apologise to the House because I shall have to leave soon after I have made my speech to attend the press night of "The Dragon Can't Dance", a new play by Earl Lovelace at the Theatre Royal, Stratford East—and I promise not to look at a television on my way out of the House. I shall refer to that event again later.

It is good to have an arts debate, but there are times when they seem to exist only to provide a platform for the theatre of the absurd provided by the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington. I hoped that he would say something about the rumour that the BBC is to offer him a programme commenting on the arts. I understand that that rumour is absolutely true.

Mr. Dicks *indicated assent.*

Mr. Banks: I can hardly believe that, but I must take it as being true. I expect that we will hear sooner or later about the endowment of the Ronnie Kray chair in fine arts, or perhaps the SAS will open a charm school. Those are all unlikely events, but if the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington is to pontificate on the arts, anything is possible. If he offers me a slot in his programme, I assure him that I shall accept.

During the Minister's speech, I intervened to ask about local authority funding for the arts, and received the reply that it varied from authority to authority. The right hon. Gentleman said that it is for authorities themselves to decide how much to spend, which I thought was a disingenuous remark. The Secretary of State for the Environment and the Minister for the Environment and Countryside know all about the strictures imposed by central Government on local authority finance.

It is all very well for the Minister for the Arts to say that it is up to local authorities to determine their arts expenditure, but other Government Departments pursue policies that make it difficult for authorities to maintain their housing programmes, social services and so on.

One can imagine the situation in town hall after town hall throughout the country, where local councillors, much abused by the press and the Government, have to decide whether to go along with poll tax capping and cuts in central Government funding, and whether they should cut expenditure on housing, social services, education, or the arts.

The Minister cannot wash his hands of those real decisions that local councillors must take. He should start telling his colleagues at the Department of the Environment that, if local authorities are to fund the arts, careful consideration should be given to the restraints imposed on them by central Government. The right hon. Gentleman cannot walk away from the hard set of choices that local authorities must take because of central Government action.

I return to the subject of the Theatre Royal, Stratford East, which is an excellent theatre under one of our best directors, Philip Hedley. Its budget largely comes from the London boroughs of Newham and Waltham Forest. The sum of £222,000 comes from Newham, £53,000 from the London borough grant scheme, £26,000 from Waltham Forest, and £262,000 from Greater London Arts. The increase in Newham's grant was about 9 per cent. It is the second most deprived local authority area in the whole country, according to the indices of the Department of the Environment. Newham has massive housing problems, but the council is desperately trying to save the Theatre Royal by keeping it open and making sure that it receives

enough money to stage excellent productions. The council wants more than just a pat on the head from politicians and the Minister—it wants fairly substantial support.

When the Department of the Environment looks at the allocation of funds to Newham next year, I hope that it will hear from the Minister about the excellent work that the borough is doing, particularly in respect of the Theatre Royal, Stratford East.

That theatre tried hard to secure business sponsorship, to which we have no ideological objections. We will take money from anyone prepared to give it. Capitalist gold is as good as anyone else's gold in that respect. Wanting to maximise its income, the Theatre Royal appointed a full-time fundraiser to investigate business sponsorship. However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) said, it is difficult to raise money in poor parts of the country. It is extremely difficult to do so in Newham and the rest of the east end. Businesses want to support the prestigious national companies and are not too interested in provincial theatres or those on the fringe of London, however good may be their productions.

I received today from Philip Hedley some of the comments that the Theatre Royal received when it tried to raise money among the local business community. They included, "New work might fail". The Theatre Royal stages eight new productions a year. Where does the Minister think they all come from? Where is all the innovation coming from? It is coming from theatres such as the Theatre Royal. Business people do not want to know that, or to be associated with a possible failure—but the arts must have the right to fail as well. That is part of innovation. One cannot always guarantee success. Because art is a matter of taste, today's failure might at another time be deemed a great success. There are plenty of examples of that throughout the arts.

Another comment was, "You are too controversial." The arts are meant to be challenging and controversial. One does not want people to sit there looking at something that is like a moving chocolate box top. Instead, one wants to stimulate, encourage and enthuse the audience or viewer. Of course the arts are controversial. A further comment was,

"Your audience is too mixed, and doesn't make a good target market."

We in the east end are poor. That is one of the other reasons why a large number of black people patronise the Theatre Royal. It has one of the best mixed audiences in the country. That may not constitute an economically attractive audience to someone who views the arts as a way of getting money back on the investment that they make in the theatre.

One remark that I can attribute is that from the Midland bank. When asked to support the theatre, it replied:

"No, you do plays against Mrs. Thatcher."

Oh, dear. That was the reason given by the Midland bank, which of course takes a politically partisan position.

The other attributable quote was from the London Docklands development corporation, which has so much Newham land. There is much wealth in the south of the borough, but little of it finds its way anywhere near my constituency. The LDDC replied:

"We are giving money to the National Theatre and not you because the people who go there"—

meaning the National theatre—

"can afford our expensive flats down by the river."

They wanted to sell some of the unsaleable flats that they could not sell because of the high interest rates caused by the Government's economic policy.

Those are the problems that we have had in the east end when we have tried to raise money through business sponsorship. Despite all that, the play that I am attending tonight, called "The Dragon Can't Dance"—which, incidentally, is a play by Earl Lovelace—is about a carnival in Trinidad where one of the sponsors tries to clean up the carnival. I do not know whether one of the business sponsors of tonight's production knows that.

I approached the London electricity board for some money. It said, "We have a pot of money for some good causes; what would you suggest?" I replied, "Give some money to the Theatre Royal." We had £4,500 from the LEB, and we were very pleased with that, but it was just a drop in the bucket—although we were prepared to take it. I want the Minister to be aware of exactly what is happening. I also want him to know that theatres such as the Theatre Royal have major problems trying to get money from the local authority and the local community.

The Minister has obtained some good money for the arts. I do not wish to sneer at his achievements in competition with other Ministers. He has done a good job—we know that because the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington hates him for it, which is why we must be on the right hon. Gentleman's side tonight. However, 0·3 per cent. of our national wealth is pathetic in comparison with, say, the 11·8 per cent. of our national wealth that we spend on defence. I want that peace dividend. I want the defence budget to be slashed right the way through, and I hope that a Labour Government will do that. We can then start investing the money in the finest form of investment, which is the creativity and the arts of our people.

8.1 pm

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves (Birmingham, Hall Green): I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the debate. I preface my remarks by declaring an interest as I once worked in the arts business as a fine arts auctioneer.

I am disappointed—as, I suspect, are some other hon. Members—with the timing of the debate. Once again, the arts have been relegated beneath an important football engagement. Nevertheless, the House should have its attention drawn to the importance of the arts as a sector and as an industry. I regret that there are not more Opposition Members present. They might have been pleased to reflect on the fact that the arts sector nationally has a turnover of more than £10 billion and represents more than 2·5 per cent. of all the spending on goods and services. That makes it comparable with such major industries as vehicles or, indeed, anything in Britain. With that in mind, it is extraordinary that the Labour party does not take more interest in it.

The arts give direct employment to almost half a million people, or 2·1 per cent. of the working population. Twenty-seven per cent. of all spending on tourism is specifically attributable to the arts, and £2·7 billion of all general consumer spending is specifically attributable to the pulling power of the arts. The arts is a major industry in this country and should be treated as such. I join hon. Members on both sides of the House in supporting the idea of promoting the ministerial post for the arts to a Cabinet

[Mr. Andrew Hargreaves]

appointment. It would do the arts an enormous service. The combination of an arts, heritage and tourism post within the Cabinet would make good sense.

No hon. Member would seriously argue against the social benefits of a thriving arts industry—not only are the arts an integral part of our national heritage and culture, the very spirit of the nation, but like sport they have the power to draw people and societies together. They can be a key element in the revitalisation of inner cities—as Birmingham, the city that I have the honour to represent, has rightly recognised—restoring civic pride and bringing public safety and live people, who spend back into our otherwise deserted central city streets. In the evenings, the strong cultural infrastructure is an economic asset to the business community and can assist cities such as Birmingham to attract conventions, conferences and businesses to the area, as well as to retain important business executives and talented people in the area. It is a tremendous advantage to any regional centre.

My right hon. Friend the Minister mentioned the work of Birmingham both in promoting its share of the 1 per cent. scheme, and in sponsoring the City of Birmingham symphony orchestra, in attracting the Sadler's Wells Royal ballet—now the Birmingham Royal ballet—and the D'Oyly Carte opera. I ask my right hon. Friend to give strong support to the idea of Birmingham becoming one of the first in the city of culture scheme leading up to the millennium. Birmingham would do that with great aplomb. The creation of a new environment for the symphony orchestra would enormously enhance the city's prestige and would support the moves that Birmingham has made in trying to improve its image and its significant patronage of the arts.

I join my hon. Friends in praising my right hon. Friend the Minister for recognising the importance of regional centres of culture. I ask him especially to recognise the importance of Birmingham as a regional centre of culture. When making a distinction between where funding should go, it is important that, however important the flagships to which the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) referred, the natural tendency of the Arts Council will always be to put funding in the direction of the major flagship, often leading to a paucity in other areas which are doing their best to encourage sponsorship in partnership with the private sector, as Birmingham is doing.

As I have worked as a fine arts auctioneer, a business involving the sale of art abroad, I would be interested in my right hon. Friend's comments—or he may communicate with me privately—on the possible conflict of interest between the necessities of freedom of goods and capital consequent upon 1992 and the possible loss to collections in Europe of major works of art which might otherwise be retained for the British nation. There is a grave danger of our being hoist by our own petard. We support the idea of the movement of capital and goods within the EEC, but we want to ensure that we retain our works of national importance in Britain. Can my right hon. Friend give further clarification as to what steps will be taken to ensure that we do not lose out in that tug of war?

Mr. Luce: Article 36 of the treaty of Rome makes it clear that each member country of the European Community should continue to carry out protection of its heritage in whatever way it wishes. That does not mean that there is no problem with movement through the frontier because there would be no control, but article 36 gives member states the right to continue protection policies in relation to their heritage.

Mr. Hargreaves: I am most grateful to my right hon. Friend for that clarification. I hope that the position that I have outlined will not materialise. If my right hon. Friend wishes to make a lasting, valuable contribution to the future of the arts in this country, he should try further to persuade his Treasury colleagues that a special relationship needs to be established between the state and the private sector in funding for the arts. There may be arguments about how much, where and when. Gift aid is a step in the right direction, but it is not enough. If we want to keep major works of art in this country and to improve our national art collections, we have to offer tax advantages to private as well as commercial sponsors.

There have been arguments about the way that has worked in the United States. I do not necessarily agree with some of the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) because I am not sure that they would necessarily benefit us. Some stronger formula has to be established in the relationship between the tax advantage to an individual in purchasing works of art for the nation and its availability to the nation thereafter. That is the only way we shall secure and keep valuable works of art in this country. I ask my right hon. Friend the Minister to press that point with Treasury Ministers. We need a structure for the future, which could be inflation-linked in terms of state contributions and tax set-offs. We must give priority to tax incentives for this purpose. I would not normally say that tax incentives are a good idea, but we must make an exception for charitable giving or donations to the arts and national heritage. I urge my right hon. Friend to press his Treasury colleagues on that point.

I join others in congratulating my right hon. Friend the Minister on the tremendous service that he has performed for the arts in the past five years. Before I became a Member, I knew from friends in the industry that my right hon. Friend had many friends in the arts world. They all recognise the debt that the arts owe him for his service.

8.11 pm

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): I know that the Minister plays an excellent role—I have always respected him—but, as I said in an intervention, he must be a little more incisive. A struggle must be made to get much more money for the arts. It is no good saying that money does not exist—of course it does.

I should like to comment on the important subject of whether we should charge an entrance fee for access to our great national museums and galleries. I have served on each of the three Select Committees on Education, Science and Arts. The latest Committee's first report on museums was a major one. We rampaged around the country to put the information together and split up to visit theatres, especially in Newcastle. Like the Labour party, I profoundly believe that there should be free access to our great galleries and museums, just as there has always been.

Occasionally, a charge must be made when important bygones from other countries are brought here—for example, when the British museum held its Egyptian

exhibition. It could be proved that that exhibition paid off splendidly. There were great queues of people willing to pay large amounts of money. Labour Members are not attacking that practice. We know that it will continue.

When examining galleries, members of the Select Committee went to the Louvre and discussed entrance fees with its leading figures. Since Napoleon, the French have always paid entrance fees, so there is a great gap in their knowledge. The authorities do not know how many people are kept away because of the fees. The people who go into the great galleries change, so the authorities cannot form a correct conclusion. The Conservative majority on the Select Committee wanted the Committee to go to a place where people paid entrance fees. It would be wrong to generalise.

It is nauseating to talk about lack of money in this rich and powerful country. Labour Members believe that all the breast beating about poverty is nonsense. The coffers are filled with money as never before in our history. At least £100 million has come from North sea oil—a bonus that no other European country has had. The selling off of the family silver—the national assets—has brought in many billions of pounds. Those sources have provided a massive amount of money, yet the Government are prepared to charge people entrance fees for the first time.

During all our difficult periods in the past 200 years—slumps, immense poverty and wars—we have somehow managed to let people have free access to all our national treasures. My right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) pointed out that people wander into galleries to get out of the rain. If one takes a child into a great gallery on such an occasion, one may be convinced that the child will be bored, but the gallery may open the gates to tremendous enthusiasm for the exhibits. By excluding people from galleries, we are perhaps excluding them from culture and beauty for a long period of their lives. Most people can appreciate culture and beauty. Despite all the money at our disposal, as a percentage of gross national product we give to the arts and heritage only about half as much as Germany and France. The Swedes give three times as much as we do. The fact that we are low on that table is inexcusable. We must fight for more money.

I have referred previously to the mess at the Victoria and Albert museum. I went into the great Raphael cartoon gallery, which is miserable just because of lack of money but which houses some of the noblest works that humankind has produced. It was dark and looked almost tawdry. It is not fitting for a great nation. No matter how much we praise the Minister—I know of his integrity and honesty—as a nation we must go more deeply into this matter and realise the damage that we are doing by advocating payment to enter our great galleries and museums.

The three Select Committees on Education, Science and Arts have never before failed to achieve consensus. Although members of the Committee disagreed, we never parted company on issues and never presented a minority report—except on this matter, on which we took a stand. I know that as one who drafted the minority report and struggled for it. We were defeated all the way through by five to four.

Mr. Cormack: Not in 1981.

Mr. Flannery: No, not in 1981. The hon. Gentleman knows that if I had my way he would have been Chairman of that Select Committee after Chris Price went.

Charging cannot be separated from the regime under which we live. The Government talk about law and order, but they have spawned more crime as a result of the get-rich-quick mentality and, to some extent, have so corrupted us that we should even consider making admission charges. When charges were first made in Wales, attendances at the national museum of Wales dropped by 85 per cent.

Those in favour of making charges try to play down the number of people who are discouraged from attending museums and galleries, and the quality of the people who are discouraged. Research shows that those people tend to be visitors to London, probably a mother and father and two children. The Victoria and Albert museum put up a sign inviting voluntary contributions. I watched people read it and then go away. It is no good anybody saying that that did not happen. People either thought, "I am not paying" or "I will have to pay", but they still turned away. Attendances fell by 40 per cent. after that sign went up and the museum has hardly recovered—it is in grave difficulty. I think that Roy Strong led the opposition to voluntary charges at the Victoria and Albert, but he capitulated. We are slipping up badly by excluding so many people.

Some members of the Select Committee did not think that they were doing anything untoward when they decided that the issue was so important that they had to issue a minority report. The great Tory leader, Sir Robert Peel, decided that museums should be free. Speaking in 1832—the Victoria and Albert opened in 1824—he said that he wanted it to be free because many people did not have access to beauty whereas the wealthy had big houses and could buy their own pictures. I know that times have changed, but none the less this is part of our education system. If we take action which militates against people going into our——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I regret to have to call the hon. Gentleman to order, but his 10 minutes have passed.

Mr. Flannery: I have made my points. I would have liked to develop them further, but I shall leave the matter there.

8.22 pm

Mr. Gerald Bowden (Dulwich): I should like to take the opportunity of this debate to focus attention on the environment and the threat to the heritage—our architectural and art heritage—and the artefacts that form part of it.

The hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) drew attention to loopholes in the planning legislation, which tried to introduce safeguards to stop developers intruding on part of our national heritage. The planning provisions are frequently being circumvented not only in the way mentioned by the hon. Gentleman but in ways that are not so readily realised.

In recent months, we have seen attempts by large public bodies such as British Rail to avoid the statutory provisions protecting listed buildings. The now notorious clause 19 of the King's Cross Railways Bill attempted to oust the normal planning provisions safeguarding listed buildings. That issue should be brought to the attention of

[Mr. Gerald Bowden]

hon. Members who are concerned about protecting and safeguarding our architectural heritage. I have no doubt that when the Committee considering the King's Cross Railways Bill reports it will draw attention to that.

I should like to draw to hon. Members' attention three further Bills that are based on that point—the London Underground Bill, the London Underground (Safety Measures) Bill and the Midland Metro Bill. Someone has noticed the loophole in the legislation and, by clever draftsmanship, is attempting to avoid the proper statutory provisions that the House passed to protect listed buildings.

I understand that there may be good and innocent reasons for the inclusion of clause 19. Although it does not appear to affect a listed building, it fails to take account of the fact that after the Bill has been deposited the line of the route may be changed, perhaps posing a threat to buildings. The clause is too clever by half, and we should exercise our constitutional duty to object to it on principle to ensure that it is not included in the Bill. When those other Bills are considered by the House, there will be an opportunity to sound the siren and to ensure that parliamentary draftsmen and agents recognise the threat.

The answer is to have early consultation with English Heritage to allow it to discuss with any potential developer or promoter of private Bills what is or is not acceptable. Hon. Members who observed the disgraceful way in which English Heritage was barred from making any representations about the King's Cross Bill will recognise how important that is. It was only on the insistence of members of the Committee that English Heritage was given a hearing. It is disgraceful that the promoters of a private Bill, whether it be a public body such as British Rail or a private developer, should be able to oust, for private gain, the statutory provisions for protecting our heritage. I hope that the reforms of the private Bill procedure will close that loophole.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves) and the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) mentioned the protection of our movable heritage—arts and artefacts that can be moved from this country. My hon. Friends the Members for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) and for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes) and I spent this morning at the Wallace collection. It struck a chord when the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne implied that from now on there should be no export of art from the country where it was domiciled. Over the years, the magnificent Wallace collection has been gathered from all parts of the world, particularly France, but it is now domiciled in London. It would be regrettable if, in ensuring that those important aspects of our national heritage remain here, we were so to stultify and to place such rigid controls on the art market that there was no free flow of works of art on the continent of Europe. Only by allowing certain works of art to flow freely will we achieve that European feeling which should be engendered by the treaty of Rome.

It is interesting that the treaty foresaw the possibility of such a provision by trying to strike a balance between the free flow of works of art among Community countries while recognising that certain works of art belong so intrinsically to the country of origin that they are part of the national heritage.

That is why we should be careful about making any changes to the Waverley criteria. As my right hon. Friend the Minister said, those criteria have served us well in many ways by ensuring that we keep in this country that which should be here while not inhibiting the art market —an international market based in London, which contributes much to our national economy and which should be allowed to continue to flourish here. The art market attracts clients and brings with it spin-off benefits to our hotels and restaurants as well as our performing arts. The dealers, buyers and clients do not spend all their time in the sale room; they participate in other aspects of our national culture that contribute much to our lives. The insurance market and our fiscal provisions ensure that other contributions flow from that market.

I wish to query the proposals advanced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, which appear to affect the existing controls on the arts trade and what a seller may sell beyond the shores of this country. I understood that the position had in part been clarified earlier in the debate and that the proposition was that if a work of art for which an export licence was sought was already on public view it would remain on public view thereafter. However, I am still not entirely clear what my right hon. Friend intended and what the implications were.

There is a further point on which I seek clarification. If a private individual bids to buy a work of art at the export price, can that sale be effected during a museum's public appeal in connection with the purchase of that work? There appears to be some uncertainty about that.

Suppose that we have restrictions that are too tight. The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne mentioned Italy, where the rigidity of the rules should ensure a static home for the works of art in that country. But that has the unfortunate consequence of a great deal of smuggling and a lively black market in works of art from Italy. We must ensure that that does not happen here if we tighten the restrictions in one direction or another.

When a private purchaser purchases a work of art for which an export licence has been refused and which has been retained in this country, should there be a time limit on a further application for an export licence? If that remains unclarified, we may create a speculators' charter: people may buy works of art and keep them for a short speculative period before seeking a further export licence.

I felt that I should sound a siren signal about these matters this evening and I hope that we shall receive some clarification of them.

8.32 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): During his interesting and forthcoming speech, the Minister referred to 1992 and the review committee. I do not threaten; I merely say, in the nicest possible way, that in November we may have yet another Adjournment debate—although, it is to be hoped, not at 3.30 am. The export and movement of works of art is a very important subject and the debate may be linked with my constituent, Lizzie from East Kirkton in Bathgate, who is a 340-million-year old reptile.

I address my remarks to the Minister for the Environment and Countryside, who is to wind up the

debate, because our debate also concerns heritage. On 28 June, I asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he would

"publish the report, Strategic Roll-Forward Submission 1991-92, prepared by PE International plc"

of Egham

"concerning the Nature Conservancy Council".

The Minister replied:

"This report is a management document commissioned to assist the NCC in preparing its proposed forward plans. It is not suitable for publication. In line with past practice, the Nature Conservancy Council's corporate plan for 1990-91 will be published later this summer."—[*Official Report*, 28 June 1990; Vol. 175, c. *316*.]

As I understand it, the report exposes the way in which the NCC's permanent staffing level has been artificially depressed over the years. At present, the organisation's permanent staff complement is just over 800. That figure is artificially set by the Government, and bears little relation to the number of staff actually required to carry out the organisation's statutory functions. As a result, the NCC now employs an astonishing 400 temporary staff, at least half of whom are doing jobs that are permanent in all but name.

The report shows that the aggregate number of permanent staff required by the new bodies if they are to operate at the present—the NCC—level of output will be almost 1,200. That is no less than 50 per cent. above the current figure employed by the NCC. The report said that staffing levels required to deliver

"the enhanced conservation which it is believed will be essential to tackle issues within the decade to come"—

in other words, what is actually needed to do the job properly—will involve an increase of more than 100 per cent. in permanent staff, from 810 to 1,652.

As a Scottish Member of Parliament, I am perhaps more entitled than anyone to ask whether the break-up of the NCC is really sensible and what it will cost. I think that it was done for the worst possible internal Scottish reasons. Now that the bill has been presented, and in terms of efficency, I seek some comment on that.

On museums, I want to register my sadness at the admission figures for the science museum. In 1983, there were 4,784,000 admissions. In 1984, the figure was 4,510,000. In 1985, it was 4,607,000. In 1986, it was 4,824,000. In 1987, it was 4,732,000. For years, it was just under the 5 million mark. But in 1988, the figure fell to 3,861,000 and in 1989 to 2,607,000. Is that what museum charges have done? The sense of wonder experienced by the very young on a visit to the science museum—either with school parties or with their parents—is of value.

I come now to the natural history museum. I am not saying just that palaeontology is important for its own sake, which it is. The lessons of the past tell a chilling tale about the warming of the future. I do not think that anyone outside the natural history museum—in Government or in the universities—is producing the long-term data that we need in some areas. Global climate change has occurred before, but not at the rate at which the earth's climate seems to be shifting today. It is crucial to be able to look at the past to understand the present trends in climate change. Only from that knowledge can successful strategies for dealing with future changes come. Scholars at the natural history museum are not engaged in some hypothetical calculation of what might happen; they are observing what actually happened. Incidentally, I am speaking from nobody's brief. I am expressing my view, distilled from visits and from conversations with other scientists.

An uphill battle is being fought in Kensington and the Smithsonian, but the appreciation of what earth system history can offer is better than it was a year ago. Earth system history is the study of the geological and historical record. Fossils can be used to test predictions of global climate models. They can be used to assess changes in diversity and ecological structure. Museum scientists are piecing together clues about ancient ecosystems. For example, uniquely in the world as far as I know, Kensington and the Smithsonian are pioneering palaeoecology and are pulling together data from all over the world as part of the evolution of the terrestrial ecosystems programme. The data lets us see the patterns in changing ecosystems and is the basis for assessing how the current global change will affect life on earth. That is topical and important now.

I want to ask certain precise questions. If palaeobotany was cut, as proposed in the corporate plan, what would happen to research on the unique Jurassic rain forest flora of Yorkshire? That question has climate and rain forest connections. I hope that that will be one of the questions that the Minister will put to Sir Walter Bodmer when he sees him.

The Minister might also ask Sir Walter, if palaeobotany is cut as proposed in the corporate plan, what will happen to research and collaboration with Spanish colleagues on climatic changes in the Permian period based on world wide distribution of plants? The Permian period was about 220 million years ago and followed a period of extensive glaciation. This present period today follows extensive glaciation, and research on the Permian period is highly relevant to what might happen in the future.

The Minister has drawn attention to an increase in Government funding for the natural history museum of 12·8 per cent. in real terms over the past 10 years. For the running costs as opposed to building costs, which is the only component at all relevant to the museum's scientific work, the figure for 1979-80 in present day terms was £14·062 million and for 1989-90 was £14·069 million. How can it therefore be claimed that Government expenditure on science has risen at all significantly?

If the Minister meets Sir Walter Bodmer, I hope that he will meet representatives of the Institution of Professionals, Managers and Specialists. That is important.

I received a letter from Professor Boulter of the International Organisation of Palaeobotany. He wrote:

"At our recent meeting in Frankfurt am Main it was noted that:

1 fossil plants are the source of oil, bituminous coal and browncoal

2 there is growing international concern about the effects of these fossils on the world environment

3 eastern Europe relies heavily on browncoal for energy and this has caused very bad pollution after 40 years of irresponsibility. Our view is that the study of fossil plants is a central part of the scientific investigations needed on the effect of fossil fuels on the international environment."

Professor Boulter was writing on behalf of his executive committee.

I have a letter from the Soviet Union which states:

"Soviet Palaeobotanists constantly apply to the Palaeobotany Section of the Natural History Museum for help. Only in 1989-90 two of us were specially sent on a mission to the Section for the study of stored collections."

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

That was a long letter about the museum's value in Russia.

I have another letter to Sir Walter Bodmer from Frankfurt which states:

"This international meeting of some 120 palaeobotanists from 25 countries wishes to urge upon you and your fellow trustees our deep concern."

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Dalyell: I have made my point.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Thank you. I am obliged to the hon. Gentleman. It is obvious that three more hon. Members wish to speak. We must begin the winding-up speeches at 9.30 pm. I will now relax the time limit. However, I hope that those hon. Members I call will use their common sense and divide the time reasonably sensibly among themselves.

8.43 pm

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): It is always a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). Once again, he characteristically asked the kind of precise questions that invariably send Parliamentary Private Secretaries scurrying to the Box to find the answers. I am glad to state that this evening the only reason why the PPS scurried out was to confirm that the score between England and Germany was 1:1. That was indeed good news.

I subscribe to the view that the pent-up passion, venom and invective that the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) inflicted on us was hollow, slightly phoney and did not really ring true from such a thoroughly nice guy. It seemed to be an attempt by a decent person to placate the left wing of his party. The hon. Gentleman spent much of his time pouring scorn on the Government's policy, but he had little to say about the policies of a Labour Government if they were ever to be elected. He simply said that there would be a return to centralised state direction. There would be little freedom of choice.

Mr. Fisher: Obviously the hon. Gentleman was not listening to my three substantial commitments—an integrated ministry, a statutory responsibility on local authorities and a cross-departmental cultural policy. All those are novel and very far reaching. The most important and significant of those proposals was a statutory responsibility on local authorities. Far from being a centralised plan, that is a development of cultural and arts policy that grows up from the roots of our society differently in every area and district of our society. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will acknowledge his mistake. It is the opposite of a central, top down system—it is a bottom up system.

Mr. Colvin: That is not good enough. It is a well-known trick in this place for hon. Members to say the exact opposite of what are really the facts. Under Labour, there would be centralised direction and little freedom of choice.

That somewhat out-dated socialist dogma on the arts is extraordinary when we consider what has been happening in eastern Europe. In eastern Europe the people who have been prominent in bringing about the reforms which we are all delighted to see have been prominent in the arts world. Those people have taken the lead in rejecting the centralised dogma which the hon. Gentleman is trying to put forward as Labour party policy. Those people in eastern Europe believe that freedom of choice is important. The arts world and the Conservative party believe that it is important, but the Labour party does not share that view.

It seems to be a long time since my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts and I sat together in his office the morning after his appointment in 1985.

Mr. Buchan: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Colvin: On this subject?

Mr. Buchan: Yes, I think so. I am a slow thinker so I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me.

The hon. Gentleman was talking about freedom of choice. Can we distinguish between the freedom of choice of someone living in a cardboard box under Waterloo bridge and Peter Palumbo when it comes to choosing who will get to the Royal Opera house?

Mr. Colvin: That is an irrelevant question, although it may be relevant to a debate about homelessness such as we had yesterday. It is not a relevant question for an arts debate, although I take the hon. Gentleman's point.

As I was saying, I sat in my right hon. Friend the Minister's office the morning after he became Minister trying to find encouraging press cuttings about his appointment. I shall not embarrass my right hon. Friend by recalling some of the comments. *The Daily Telegraph*, which normally gets things right, said that my right hon. Friend had a liking for jazz, which was all very well, but it was hardly a qualification for handling the multi-million pound arts budget or the people involved in the arts. One of the problems in the arts world is that we seem to have to contend with as many prima donnas off stage as on stage.

My right hon. Friend the Minister was no artist when he was first appointed, but I gather that he has now taken up his paintbox. I am delighted to know that. He was a diplomat with distinguished service in the Foreign Office. Obviously, that diplomacy has worked in the arts. We now see how wrong all those press reports were. My right hon. Friend is the longest serving Minister for the Arts and has earned credit from all hon. Members and others who are interested in the arts. He has managed to deliver more money, much more encouragement and, what is more, better management through the three-year rolling programme of funding that he was able to introduce. He has given a lead, and the arts world has responded.

Much has been said about the amount that the Government are now spending. I shall not reiterate remarks about the 48 per cent. increase, and so on, but that is good news. However, it raises the point that the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central raised when he got at me for suggesting in a question the other day that Conservative Members are still regarded as philistine. That sent me off to the Library to try to confirm what I had meant. We probably use the term philistine too often. I was able to confirm that Matthew Arnold first coined and popularised the phrase about those who opposed innovations in the arts. That is hardly a description of the Conservative party's arts policy.

The Chambers encyclopaedia stated that the Philistines were an aggressive, militant people, highly civilised and bearers of agriculture and commerce. That description comes slightly closer to myself. Matthew Arnold, in his

analysis of society, divided society into aristocrats, the middle classes and the people. He referred to the aristocrats as barbarians, the middle classes as philistines —I suppose that all hon. Members would be in that category—and the people as just the populace.

Leslie Stephen probably got it right when he said:

"Philistine—A term of contempt applied by prigs to the rest of their species."

We want to hear no more about Philistines.

Mr. Fisher: You raised it.

Mr. Colvin: I shall not raise it again—I promise.

There is a popular misconception that Labour Members are big spenders on the arts and that Conservative Members are tight-fisted. Socialist Governments tend to be big spenders, but usually on the wrong things. Conservative Governments, through good management and caution, have created the climate in which people are encouraged to invest their money and, in return, make profits on which they pay taxes. Therefore, more general national wealth is created and there is more out of which to fund an additional arts policy. That is precisely what has happened under this Government and under the stewardship of my right hon. Friend the Minister.

I now refer to a matter that has been touched on by only one other hon. Member—the role of local government in the arts. Support and funding for the arts is a plural business. Central Government spend a lot. Consumer spending is probably the biggest component of spending on the arts. Sponsorship—private and commercial—is also important. Funnily enough, however, local government spends more on the arts than the national Government do. That has always been so, although it is extremely difficult to analyse and put a precise figure on it.

Local government arts spending depends on supportive county, district and sometimes even parish councils creating the right environment. They have a great deal to do. They are probably closest to the grass roots and are able to target expenditure. There is no doubt that, in targeting expenditure, we often improve the quality of expenditure rather than the quantity. With the introduction of the community charge, local authorities will be far more accountable to their electorates, so it will be interesting to see the effect on present local authority art budgets and expenditure.

I have referred to plural funding. A local council often takes the initiative and is the catalyst which provides the pump-priming money that gets other things happening locally, but it is usually supported by its regional arts authority. It gives the stamp of approval to the local effort and helps other providers of resources to rally round, particularly at local level. Business sponsors have much to do and often finish up as the underwriters of local arts endeavours. They rather than local government become the funders of last resort. I do not think that it is right that councils should pick up the tab when there are failures.

An important role for local government is to help with the local arts infrastructure. That would leave artists to their own artistic endeavours. Local councils can often do that in kind rather than in cash. They can help with office overheads by providing, say, a room in a local museum for an arts director from which to operate, some rent-free accommodation, car park spaces for staff, and so on. Silly little things such as that can mean so much when a small artistic movement is afoot. Local directors' salaries could be paid by a local authority. The important thing is that local authorities must put the arts on their agendas, but they often do not. Too many local authorities have no arts policies and no arts strategies.

Mr. Fisher: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on a most unusual speech. I absolutely concur with him. It is a long time since hon. Members have heard a Conservative Back-Bench Member speak persuasively and passionately in favour of local authorities and the arts. Do I take it that he supports my point? Does he support a statutory responsibility on local authorities for developing arts policies and for making arts provisions at a local level in response to local needs? That is the Labour party's policy. May we take it that the hon. Gentleman supports it?

Mr. Colvin: I am a firm believer in voluntarism rather than compulsion. I am a firm believer in freedom of choice and in the voice of the electorate. If people in a locality want more to be done about the arts, they will bring pressure to bear on their councillors because, thanks to the introduction of the community charge, their councillors are now much more accountable to the electors than ever before. That is how we shall see things happen. It should not be the heavy hand of Government saying to the local authorities, "You will do that," because in the past central Government have spent too much time saying to local government, "You will do this and you will do that," but have then not provided the wherewithal to enable the local councils to do what central Government have instructed them to do. Therefore, although I totally reject the hon. Gentleman's whole philosophy, we nevertheless agree about the importance of local government taking a lead in local arts endeavours.

The expansion of the arts in the regions, which was originally envisaged in the "Glory of the Garden" strategy, is all about developments outside the London arts hothouse. However, in welcoming my right hon. Friend's decisions on the Wilding review, my own regional arts association, Southern Arts, has said that it believes that "improved resources" will be the "acid test" of my right hon. Friend's reforms. Southern Arts has stated that it has "consistently received less grant per head of population from the Arts Council than any other RAA—43p per head in 1990-91 against a national average of 69p".

It continued:

"This anomaly arises from the historic basis on which the Arts Council funds the RAA's and is acknowledged both in the Wilding Review and, more recently, in the National Audit Office report on government arts funding. Southern arts believes that a determined effort must be made now to correct imbalances and to rationalise the allocation of funds to the new Regional Arts Boards as part of the implementation of the Minister's reforms."

I concur with that. However, one must note that the Arts Council's grants to the regional arts authorities have doubled in real terms since 1979 and now stand at £33 million.

The House will ask why, if the regional arts associations —Southern Arts, for example—are so starved of money, the arts in my county of Hampshire are booming. The answer is that some very good initiatives have been taken by the local authorities. My right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts has been to my constituency and seen one such initiative in Romsey, where the Romsey amateur operatic and dramatic society has done great things to establish a theatre and now has a thriving triennial arts festival under the chairmanship of the redoubtable Mrs. Pam Gale. My

[Mr. Colvin]

right hon. Friend then visited Andover, where I live, and saw what has been done by the Andover arts festival, which is now in its sixth year, under the direction of Mr. Digby Littlewood. Both those arts festivals have received some help from Test Valley borough council, which has now begun to develop an arts strategy for the whole district.

Those are just two examples of what is happening nationwide. There are now more than 600 arts festivals nationwide which have a professional performing element, and many thousands of others are run on an amateur basis.

In conclusion, I remind the House that the latest edition of "Social Trends" stated:

"Writers, artists and intellectuals—professionals not generally reckoned friendly towards Mrs. Margaret Thatcher—have been the biggest beneficiaries of her years in power . . .

Compared with other groups they saw their real earnings increase between 1979 and 1986 by nearly 30 per cent. During the last Labour government, their earnings fell."

Does that say it all? No, it does not. The real beneficiaries are those whom we represent—what Matthew Arnold called the "populace". When we say that life is better under the Conservatives, we mean that the quality of life is better. It is the flowering of the arts under this Government that has done so much to improve that quality and to enrich people's lives.

9.3 pm

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in this debate. I did not expect to be in the House today, but I had to come down because of this debate on the arts. I am afraid that I shall leave the House for a week or so immediately afterwards.

I want to add to the paean of praise that has been given to the Minister. I have grown to be very fond of the right hon. Gentleman and I like him. He has done his very best for the arts in this country. He has listened to what has been said in some of our policy documents and he has borrowed from them. I praise him for that. The difficulty is that he cannot operate a sole hand. He is a relatively progressive Minister in a philistine Government—if I may be forgiven for using the word "philistine". That has been his problem. However, we must congratulate him on what he has achieved against the background of an appalling Government. Instead of being able to say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: you have led the country forward", I believe that the Minister has been more of a bulwark to prevent the development of philistinism than being in the vanguard and leading us forward.

Perhaps it is the nature of his job in the Government, but I am afraid that the Minister has had to follow some of their ideological characteristics. My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) said that he could not consider the introduction of charges for museums and galleries to be separate from the prevailing ethos of the Government. He is quite right and history bears him out.

The first time that we introduced charges for national galleries since the war was when the present Prime Minister was Secretary of State for Education. She did not really understand what we were talking about. I was the shadow spokesman for Scotland, but on that issue I also dealt with England and Wales. I remember the Minister for the Arts, Lord Eccles—who Lord Crawford and Balcarres always described as "Lord Shekels"—being reported as saying that Mr. Buchan apparently would like us to go into museums and galleries to get out of the rain. I replied that I could not think of a better place to shelter from the rain than a museum or art gallery.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hillsborough was entirely right, and his point was scientifically endorsed by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) who spoke about the importance of palaeontology in defending the natural history museum. He spoke about the palaeontologists currently working in the natural history museum, but I am concerned about future palaeontologists.

I do not believe that any kid wakes up one day and says, "When I grow up I want to be a palaeontologist". That does not happen, but what can happen is that a kid goes to a museum and asks his dad, "What is that?" and his dad says, "That is a fossil. It is millions of years old." That might spark the youngster to become a palaeontologist. None of us knows what sparks off a child's interest and what adds to a young person's enthusiasm. It is a crime to put up a barrier to the accidental encountering of experience and knowledge, and it is monstrous that we should have encouraged and developed the habit of charging for museums and galleries. It is as bad as insisting on payment for education. At the moment that is only for the privileged. Let them have that privilege, but I hope that none of us today would argue that all children who attend school should pay a contribution. At least we have got past that. However, the Government have broken into that principle and we have seen the result. If we charged for education, half the kids would not get to school. Attendances have halved since the introduction of museum and gallery charges.

Mr. Flannery: My hon. Friend has made an important point. When the Minister spoke about freedom of choice, I used the example of an ordinary family coming to London and having to pay about £12 to get into a museum. That is not freedom of choice. If they do not have the money to do that they are excluded from education.

Mr. Buchan: That is an illustration of the problems that the Minister faces in dealing with the Government. He has learnt from his time in Government and from the people he has met and had discussions with over the years. Everyone seems to be in a valedictory mood. I hope that does not mean anything. I cannot imagine us getting a better Minister for the Arts out of the present Tory Government, so I hope that there was not too much valediction in the air. I hope that he sticks with it.

The Minister had three interesting things to say about the arts that I was delighted to hear. First, he mentioned freedom of speech. He should watch his back. If he keeps on saying such things he might be out on his ear very quickly. It has never been more true or more important now that there is increasing monopolisation and contraction of independent voices in the printed word. Three people now control more than 80 per cent. of the national press in Britain. There is not much freedom of speech there when only three people determine it. Incidentally, five people control 94 per cent. of the Sunday and daily national press. It is an appalling form of monopoly.

The arts, and broadcasting is one of the arts, matter because they are one of the bulwarks which support independence of communication. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) was talking about the theatre at Stratford in east London and defending the often anti-establishment plays that are produced there as an antidote to the monopoly of communication by a few people in the press. I endorse his view that the arts are, above all, a weapon for freedom of expression. As the Minister said, it is no accident that some of the movements in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union have been led by the liberal intellectuals of the period—by writers and poets.

Shelley said that

"poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world."

A Scotsman said the same earlier and I am very fond of the quotation—hon. Members may remember my quoting it before. Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun said:

"If a man were permitted to make all the ballads, he need not care who should make the laws".

The arts—created by the singer, writer, dramatist and novelist—help to create a mood in which communication can take place. That is why, with the present press monopoly, the arts are so important.

When the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) talks his philistine gibberish, he demonstrates that he has not got over the threshold of understanding what we are talking about.

The second matter that the Minister referred to was excellence. Again, he surprised me, and I welcomed that, because he meant excellence not merely in the sense of performance ability, but in the sense of the ability to participate and appreciate. He recognised that we are dealing with a much wider spectrum than mere centres of excellence—a pretty awful term to use because it compartmentalises. The third aspect was the importance of availability and accessibility of the arts. I welcome the three important points that the Minister raised, and I do not imagine that any of his hon. Friends, with the possible exception of the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack), could have made them.

I challenge what the Minister said about funding, as I have done before—and I still think that I am right. There has not been a major step forward. The last award, which came in the autumn, meant a 12·9 per cent. increase on last year's grant of £155 million to the Arts Council—to £175 million this year. However, the previous year, the update had been only 3·7 per cent. So the combined increase last year and the year before adds up to only 16·6 per cent., which is barely above the rate of inflation. In 1990-91 and 1991-92 the increase will be 4·5 per cent. and 3·8 per cent. respectively, but inflation is now running at 9·7 per cent., so the award will drop below the level of inflation.

I think that the Minister has heard of my argument for a three-year rolling programme and I remember that he criticised me for criticising the three-year uplift, on the grounds that I had argued for the same idea. But what I meant by a rolling programme was that each year one should fix a three-year rolling programme. One should not say in 1970, "This is the funding for the next three years." One should say, "This is the percentage increase over the next three years" and in the following year give the figures for the next five years, with the third year's figure changed if one wished. That way we would all know and anyone working on a project would know that they were getting a sum, indexed against inflation, for three years so that they could plan ahead. Such a three-year grant would mean that activities would not be cut short in midstream.

If we adopted this system, and each year the percentage was shifted—perhaps we could write in a safeguard that the figures could not be cut by more than x per cent. in the third year—we would be giving some guarantees to the arts. That would not be much more expensive, but it would prevent this continual rundown and jolting, and planning could take place.

That is why I am anxious about what is happening to the museums and galleries. They are in a worse state than the Minister understands. For last year and this year a total of 15 per cent.—an average of 7·5 per cent.—has been provided. That is below the rate of inflation. But for 1990-91 and 1991-92 the figures are 4·9 per cent. and 4·7 per cent. respectively. There has therefore been no great leap forward in the protection of our museums and galleries, unless there has been a sudden shift that I do not know of. We still have a major crisis in the condition of our major national museums and galleries.

The Minister referred to broadcasting as being part of our arts. The Broadcasting Bill has been brought in by his colleagues in other Departments and has not helped in terms of quality and excellence that he referred to; nor has it helped in terms of the independence of communications. One person has been exempted from the restrictions of the Broadcasting Bill—Rupert Murdoch. Everyone else has faced restrictions in terms of nationality, and in the holdings that a newspaper proprietor may have. The Government have created a new class called non-domestic broadcasting by satellite, in which he is the only substantial proprietor and owner, so he will be exempted. That is what lunch at Chequers at Christmas has brought about. Good luck to him with the Prime Minister.

The hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) —the Minister of State, Home Department—said that he recognised that the Broadcasting Bill would bring the service a notch or two below public service standards. The proposed new chairman of the Commission for Independent Television—George Russell—says that it will be equivalent to about 80 per cent. of the value of existing public service broadcasting. We are in for a tawdry future, and we cannot expect the best of public service broadcasting to continue to protect us against the monopoly and tawdriness of so much of our press.

The Minister has been helpful and generous in regard to Glasgow. Many of us pushed alongside him for Glasgow to be established as the European centre of culture for 1990, and we welcome that decision. There has been a substantial response in Glasgow. There have been more than 2,000 different events this year in Glasgow; there have been 15 different festivals, including Mayfest, the international jazz festival, the choral festival, the European early music festival, the folk festival—in which I am involved—the literary prize, the festival of Jewish culture, the women's festival and others. There has been an astonishing amount of activity. There have been 300 exhibitions, including those on Degas, Pissaro, Henry Moore, Stephen Campbell, Ken Curry, and contemporary work from Europe. There have been 1,200 different performances, and 1,000 local projects in schools, churches, synagogues, mosques and so on. Some 52 galleries have been used for exhibitions, and 38 venues have been used for performances in the city.

[Mr. Buchan]

Much of that success will not depend only on the increases in ticket sales—which have been considerable; they are double last year's. Much of it will depend on what permanent developments come out of the events and exhibitions. We know that we will have the concert hall, and the development of the Tramway theatre.

As it happens, I was talking about the city of culture before the city of culture started. Discussions took place in a certain lady's flat in Athens, when we discussed the matter before she, Melina Mercouri, ever came forward with the concept. I was involved at the beginning—at the basement level—and was against it. My wife was for it, as was Melina Mercouri, and it was the latter who told me that we could not do it without Government funding. Although initially no Government funding was brought forward, there has now been £500,000.

These are the figures. Glasgow district council has put in £7·5 million, and Strathclyde regional council £12 million. Private sector sponsorship accounts for £4·5 million—that is about a fifth of the public sponsorship—and the Office of Arts and Libraries has put in only £500,000. It was not good enough that that decision of almost no Government support should have been made. I am grateful that the Minister managed to squeeze £500,000 out of this mean Government, but it is not sufficient.

There has been controversy in Glasgow about the arts, which I welcome, although I dislike the cause of this particular controversy: the appointment of a new keeper of social history in Glasgow. It is appalling that the present incumbent, Elspeth King, was not appointed. It has caused great dispute in Glasgow. I know of nothing like it. Those who say that the arts do not matter should look at the controversy that has been let loose in Glasgow. The *Glasgow Herald* has received more letters about the appointment of the new keeper of social history in Glasgow than on any other subject, including the poll tax. There have been more letters on the subject than were received even as a result of the letter writing campaigns that I or others initiated—for example, on peace. The response has been astonishing.

A new keeper has been appointed, but the leaders of Glasgow city council should redefine the job. The new keeper should be made responsible for outreach and development work in schools. Miss King, however, should remain in post to continue the brilliant work that she has done during the past 15 years on developing the people's palace in Glasgow as a palace of some fame in social history. It is known throughout Britain. I discovered a few months ago that it is also known in Australia, where Miss King has given a lead to other people on similar developments. Her role should be enhanced and she should be allowed to continue her work. Old hands here will recognise why I am using this opportunity to comment on what has happened to Miss King.

9.21 pm

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): I am grateful, having sat through last year's arts debate and this one, to have been given a chance to reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks). My region spends the highest amount per head on the arts in England, so it is a shock to listen to my hon. Friend underrating the value of the arts. He puts me in mind of Goldsmith, who said:

"When they talk'd of their Raphaels, Correggios, and stuff,
He shifted his trumpet, and only took snuff."

In 1818 Victor Cousin coined the phrase "art for art's sake" while lecturing at the Sorbonne. It is sad that so often the arts are attacked as a drain on a society that is already hard pressed to provide the quantity and quality of services that are demanded by the modern consumer of the welfare state. It has also meant a reformulation of the value of the arts in society, a process which has been going on continuously since the establishment of the Office of Arts and Libraries and the Arts Council. In the last 10 years, however, the arts have flourished. The new funding arrangements—particularly the partnerships with private sponsors and local government—have led to refinements of the arguments for the arts and their role in society.

I wish to examine two particular areas in my contribution to the debate. First, I applaud the part that the arts are playing in the process of urban regeneration. I know that the Minister who is to reply to the debate has an interest in that subject. Secondly, I urge further encouragement of the arts as part of the productive society.

In 1987, our first pledge as a Government was to tackle the very serious problems of declining inner cities. The issue, some might say, has gone off the political agenda, but to my mind—representing, as I do, one of the areas concerned—it cannot go away until the problem is solved. That is what we are in the process of doing through the urban development corporations in Teesside, Tyneside, Trafford, the black country and elsewhere. These projects have achieved the most significant success where they have incorporated the arts.

The most dramatic transformation has already been alluded to by the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) and others. Glasgow—this year's European city of culture—started with its "miles better" campaign and followed it up with the opening of the Burrell collection and the cleaning of its principal buildings. Critics might argue that the arts have no economic use, but when I visited Glasgow earlier this year, specifically to see the Burrell collection, I was impressed by the great range of cultural activities that were taking place, the many other good quality museums that were available and the obvious prosperity that tourism had generated.

Bradford is another surprise for the outsider. It has made startling progress centring around the "city of entertainment", which includes the national museum of photography, film and television and the Alhambra theatre, which has recently been restored. They are soon to be joined by the Indian collection of the Victoria and Albert museum.

In Liverpool, the northern Tate opened to receive 300,000 visitors in its first three months. I was particularly struck by the people of Birmingham's pride in their orchestra when I visited there on Saturday. I am told that theatres in Birmingham are packed every weekend and that Simon Rattle and the City of Birmingham symphony orchestra are held out by the ordinary people of Birmingham as the centrepiece of the city's culture, even though many of those boasting about that might never have been to a performance.

There is no doubt that the arts are a major revenue earner and employer. The Myerscough report said that 2·1 per cent. of the population work in the arts while tourists account for 42 per cent. of attendances at arts events in London. Tourism with an arts ingredient is worth £3·1 billion a year or 25 per cent. of total tourist earnings.

The Washington-based Urban Land Institute drew particular attention to the way in which arts can put the heart back into inner cities. It said:

"A healthy central core—economically strong, lively at all hours, activity oriented, pedestrian focussed, containing a rich mixture of uses—now is perceived as key to the vigor of the city as a whole. A variety of economic and social forces have combined to change perceptions of the needs and goals for downtowns, and to bring public agencies in close alignment with the private and arts sectors."

One of the leading property developers in the United States, Michael Marston, said:

"Real Estate projects that include the arts appropriately have the opportunity to offer commercial space that is unique, thereby achieving a highly desirable position in the marketplace. I personally feel that mixed-use projects including the arts have, over the longer run, stronger value appreciation potential than more standard forms of real estate development."

The Prime Minister expounded that message when speaking to the Royal Academy about the inner cities. She said of a city:

"It was only a real, true city when it also had libraries, art galleries, music, orchestras, choirs. You needed the whole of the arts to make the cities . . . The spirit of community, the spirit of feeling that life is not whole unless the arts are part of it, is returning."

I look forward to the extension of that work into new areas.

Speaking parochially for a moment, I hope that my constituency will one day be the site of a major flagship arts project. A substantial part of our local area is covered by the Teesside development corporation. It should listen to pleas for a major facility, perhaps a concert hall, theatre, national museum or other arts centre. I am pleased to note that knowledge of the disparity in funding between Teesside and Tyneside by Northern Arts led to a report on the future of the arts in Teesside published by Northern Arts and the Teesside development corporation.

The point must be emphasised again and again that arts projects act as ambassadors for a city. The Cincinnati city orchestra has undoubtedly helped to attract investment to that city, and the same can be said of the Chicago symphony orchestra. Some people only visit Pitlochry in Scotland to attend its marvellous theatre. The Burrell collection is a marvellous ambassador for Glasgow. The northern Tate in Liverpool and the Royal Shakespeare Company of Tyneside have also attracted people to those cities. I believe that Teesside could be every bit as much a part of that success story. More than 3·2 million people live within 90 minutes drive of it and, from the end of this year, 40,000 sq ft of exhibition space will be available.

I hope that the Minister will heed calls to send out collections and part-collections from the basements of the national museums to places such as Teesside, so that people who do not have access to London can enjoy them.

The report that has been compiled on the future of the arts in Teesside is helpful, as it states that there should be a three-pronged strategy. First, that strategy should ensure that arts provision serves and reaches the population. Secondly, existing arts activities should be developed and the Cleveland arts economy should be expanded. Thirdly, new arts facilities and buildings should be developed to enable the county to capitalise on regional, national and international opportunities. As ever when things are done in Teesside, the author tries not to offend anyone and enlist the support of the local Labour-controlled authority.

The Government have offended many people and challenged the local authority when it set up the development corporation, which has brought a spectacular amount of new investment to the area and unrivalled new opportunities for development. We should do the same again for the arts and reorder our priorities so that they are: the development of a city arts flagship project for Teesside, which will put it on the international map; develop existing efforts; widen participation and interest in the arts locally.

The arts have a vital role to play in the development of a productive economy. Sometimes, I fear that, having been a nation of shopkeepers, we have become one of moneybrokers, turning money around and making a profit, rather than adding value to objects. In the world of making things—I represent a manufacturing constituency—design is every bit as important as price and productive technique. Why then are no British manufacturers making a new design of sports car, whereas Japanese companies are launching several this year? Some 150 years ago, that problem was first highlighted by the national exhibition at Crystal Palace. Since then, trade has exacerbated the problem.

I hope that further encouragement will be given to the arts, especially design. I know that that is not specifically a matter for the Minister who is to reply, but I hope that he will emphasise the role of the visual arts and the part that they have to play in encouraging design.

9.32 pm

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): It is my lot to wind up for the Opposition at the precise moment that England is taking part in a penalty shoot-out, so I shall not be surprised if the attention of hon. Members lapses at times, especially when news reaches the Chamber.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) said, we welcome the opportunity to debate not only the arts but our heritage. My hon. Friend is always pressing for more time to debate such matters. From his opening speech, it was obvious that, in terms of his awareness of problems facing the arts and policy development, my hon. Friend has considerable clout. I am sure that if Ministers do not share his priorities, they must respect his contributions to these debates.

I make no claim to be an expert on the arts. I have viewed the debate as a consumer, and have listened to what has been said by people with greater expertise. However, having spent several academic years studying economic and social history, I have more than a passing interest in our heritage and, more importantly, as a parent, I am extremely concerned that we place a proper value on the quality of life that we create for future generations.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House praised institutions from the natural history museum to cathedrals. Most of them exist for our benefit only because of the investment and decisions made by past generations. We are under an obligation to be equally far-sighted in our treatment of our heritage and our investment in the arts today.

I have listened carefully to most of the speeches this evening, and found them—especially those of my hon.

[Mrs. Ann Taylor]

Friends—interesting and enjoyable and, at times, a useful education. However, if I am totally honest, I would rather have spent the past two hours watching the World cup match on television, especially at 8·34 pm, when the sound of the cheer reached the Chamber. I mean no disrespect to my colleagues, but I hope that other hon. Members share my feeling that there is a clash of interests this evening. It is strange that the Government should schedule a debate on the arts and heritage so that it clashes with what, judging by the small part of it that I saw, is an extremely good display of art. Football is an important element in our heritage and I hope that Ministers appreciate that it is not just a sport but a cultural event. Anyone who doubts that should stand in the terraces or sit in the stand at a football match and listen to the wry humour. I know that many Conservative Members are somewhat prejudiced against football but, as I say, it is part of our cultural background and heritage.

I regret the clash of events. Perhaps this debate should have been scheduled for tomorrow and we could have had a Scottish debate this evening. When I say that, I mean no disrespect to Scottish Members. I was born in Scotland and have mixed loyalties—no doubt the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) will be interested to know that. Tempting though it is, I do not want to hijack the debate into a discussion on football. Some of us could get carried away in the manner of the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) when he described Roger Milla. I agree that Roger Milla is extremely artistic. The hon. Gentleman did not talk about poetry in motion, but if we are not careful we could find ourselves straying down that path. I do not want to do that.

I should like to deal with the definitions that have been used in the debate. It is right that hon. Members should debate great works of art, orchestras, theatres, fine palaces, great houses and the wonderful architectural achievements of the past. It is important to preserve those things and support the fine arts generally because of the role that they play in a civilised society. However, there is another side which is in danger of being neglected or considered to be of secondary importance in our debates. There is a wider definition of the arts and heritage, and I hope that in future debates it will move nearer to the centre of the stage.

My heritage does not have its roots in big houses and palaces, although I understand that my Scottish grandmother was in service in one fine big house. My heritage, and that of most people, is working-class life. It is a heritage of terraced houses, two up, two down and no bathroom, and of parents and grandparents who worked in mills, factories and mines. We must foster the understanding that those things are part of our heritage. In literature, such things are often glamorised but we must get the balance right.

Whatever the balance between glamour and reality, it is important to ask the Government what they are doing to make the young people of today aware of that part of their heritage. Of course we want to preserve the fine heritage and the houses and palaces, but just as history should not teach only about kings and queens, so, in discussing our heritage, we should not fall into the trap of talking only about castles and palaces.

I note that, like me, the Minister is somewhat disturbed and thrown off course by the bad news that has just reached the Chamber about the World cup match. We all commiserate with those who have worked so hard for a better result. There seemed to be a great deal of unfairness in many of the results, and I am sure that we all congratulate the England team on its performance and regret that the final outcome was not more satisfactory.

Mr. Fisher: Football is part of our heritage.

Mrs. Taylor: I dealt with that when my hon. Friend was out of the Chamber.

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside is a northern Member. I should like to hear what he is doing to ensure that the heritage of the majority gets proper recognition. An increasing number of small industrial museums are being established, very often with little or no Government assistance, and the Minister's action is hindering the development of some of those museums.

Adjacent to my own constituency is the Caphouse mining museum. It was once a real colliery, and when it was due to close it was turned into a museum with the help of West Yorkshire county council, Kirklees and Wakefield district councils, and some EC funding—but no Government money. When the Government abolished county councils, the financial burden of supporting that museum increased. The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 makes it difficult for local authorities to subsidise and maintain the museum, because it is not an arm's length company. There is now concern about its future.

The museum's trustees have established a new governing body to attract sponsorship. The museum should serve as a showpiece of mining in an area of declining mining activity, but instead of helping, the Government introduced legislation that could cripple that project. The Minister's delay in introducing regulations is increasing uncertainty. I hope that the Minister for the Environment and Countryside will consider the possible consequences. The museum is used by thousands of children each year, who at small cost can visit a live pit —not an artificial creation. I suggest that that museum is more relevant to the background and heritage of families in my constituency than many of the great halls and other places that receive a subsidy.

I do not follow the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington in saying that there is no place for subsidies in respect of fine buildings, but I do not believe that they have an exclusive right to them. I hope that the Minister for the Arts will take on board the need to broaden the definition of heritage, as should the Minister for the Environment and Countryside.

Another part of our heritage is our natural landscape, and public enjoyment and appreciation of the countryside. As I have always lived in northern towns but in sight of open country, it is an aspect of our heritage that I particularly value. It is all too easy to take for granted our countryside and open spaces, but working in Westminster all week is a good counter to any temptation to fall into that trap. I only feel sorry for right hon. and hon. Members whose constituencies are not as attractive as mine. I am sure that the Minister for the Environment and Countryside agrees, because his constituency is in an extremely attractive part of the country.

Ministers have a fundamental conflict between the need to protect such areas and their dogma of non-interference

and belief that market forces should rule. That may be why not even one piece of landscape has been designated under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. What does the Minister propose to do in respect of the Common Land Forum's recommendation? The Minister for the Environment and Countryside recently supported family rambling day to demonstrate his solidarity with the ramblers' demands for access to the countryside. However, I understand that his walk a week last Sunday was rained off. We on the other side of Yorkshire are made of sterner stuff, and we went ahead. Nevertheless, the Minister's support was welcome.

He is somewhat rare, in that he urges local authorities to spend extra money on establishing and encouraging more rights of way and signposts. I hope that he can square that with poll tax capping.

What does the Minister intend to do in respect of the Government's promise in the Conservative party manifesto in May 1987:

"We will legislate to safeguard common land on the basis of the Common Land Forum."?

Had we time, I would recount all the occasions on which Ministers have repeated the guarantee that legislation of that kind was about to be introduced. We are told that the Government intend to introduce a comprehensive Bill at a suitable opportunity when parliamentary time permits, and that it will be based loosely on relevant reports. We have had a little slippage on occasions, when we have been told that it will take a little time. We were told by the Minister of State in February that legislation would be coming soon. In March he said that a statement was expected sooner rather than later. At the beginning of April, he said that he expected a further statement about the Government's intention within a few weeks. Later that month, he said that a further statement of the Government's intentions would be made soon.

Mr. Fisher: We are getting closer.

Mrs. Taylor: As my hon. Friend says, we are getting closer. We have been told for three years that a statement was coming. It would be helpful to have an indication of the Government's intentions this evening. If we do not, we can conclude only that the Government intend to renege on their past promises.

Time is short. The debate has been varied and it has concentrated, perhaps wrongly, more on arts issues than on heritage issues. I hope that in future hon. Members on both sides of the House will have more time to deal with the whole wealth of issues that have been touched on this evening.

Mr. David Lightbown (Lords Commissioner to the Treasury): On this important day.

Mrs. Taylor: Yes, on this important day, as the Government Whip, who usually does not speak, has pointed out. It is a black day for English football. I hope that hon. Members will understand the need to appreciate and protect our arts and heritage, including football. Then perhaps we will have learnt something from today's events.

9.46 pm

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. David Trippier): Like the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), I am mortified at the England result. A bright, efficient civil servant managed to put into my hand the amazing statistic that more people go to theatre, opera and dance performances than to football matches. I am beginning to wonder whether that helps the current position.

I say to the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) and the hon. Member for Dewsbury—both of whom have a fondness for the city of Manchester—that there is some consolation in what happened at lunchtime today, when I had the privilege of attending a function which was also attended by the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher)——

Mr. Fisher: Distinguished Member.

Mr. Trippier: Yes, the distinguished Member. I had the privilege of awarding the museum of the year award, which was jointly won not only by the imperial war museum, which could be expected and was richly deserved, but by the Manchester museum of industry and science, so I hope that there will be dancing in the streets of my favourite city.

The richness and the diversity of Britain's heritage is not in doubt. After six hours of debate, I am not in much doubt about the richness and diversity of the views of hon. Members on the subject—perhaps more the richness of the contribution from my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) than the diversity of the views of my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks).

Some of the arguments, especially those of the hon. Member for Stoke-upon-Trent, Central, were like parts of England's heritage—very old. Unfortunately, his ideas are in nothing like such good condition as much of the English heritage. The difference is that the owners of Britain's great art and heritage care deeply about their possessions and ensure that they are looked after. I am afraid that the hon. Member does not make the same effort with his opinions. He does not care what he says, whether it is true or even whether it makes sense. That is why he found himself in a terrible muddle in linking together the responsibility for municipal parks, which he should know by now come under local authorities, and for the royal parks, which are the responsibility of my Department.

Mr. Fisher: No.

Mr. Trippier: The hon. Gentleman specifically mentioned the royal parks, as the record will show.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the document "Looking to the Future", on which he was quizzed by my hon. Friends who sought to extract a more accurate figure or estimate of what it would cost a future Labour Government to implement the policy. The hon. Gentleman ducked the question. I will gladly allow him to intervene on this precise matter if he can tell the House the cost of implementing these proposals in terms of the arts and heritage.

Mr. Fisher: I wish to take up a previous point about the royal parks. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh no!"] Oh yes! The Minister referred to the royal parks. Does he approve of the royal parks banning the 300-year-old tradition of flying kites on Sundays in Kensington gardens? Does he feel that access to the royal parks should be widened rather than diminished in this way? Will he give the Government's view?

Mr. Trippier: We are going to get carried away one way or the other about the flying of kites. The hon. Gentleman

[Mr. Trippier]

has been flying a few during this debate. I agree that there should be wider access to public parks and to royal parks wherever possible.

The hon. Gentleman said about five times in his speech that he wanted a national audit. I give him notice that the Government are putting the Labour party and its policy document under audit. Every pledge that the hon. Gentleman made today will be carefully and closely examined and costed. Given that the first salvo by the Leader of the Opposition into this difficult territory was his statement that the first two benefits that the Labour party would introduce in the unlikely event of its ever being elected would cost £2 billion, and given that everyone has now confirmed that it will be at least £3·5 billion, I assure the House——

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Trippier: No, I will not.

Mrs. Taylor *rose*——

Mr. Trippier: All right, I give way.

Mrs. Taylor: The Minister is uncharacteristically generous. He seems to be proving yet again that he belongs to the Maradona school of drama—whenever he is under attack, he does the parliamentary equivalent of rolling over three times and shouting "Foul."

The Minister said that all these plans will be audited. If it is so easy to audit the Labour party's policy, why is it proving so difficult for the Department to audit its position and all that has happened so far? Who will pay for the audit—the Government or the Conservative party?

Mr. Trippier: I assure the hon. Lady, if she did not already know, that the Government are consistently audited. Every Department of state is subjected to rigorous scrutiny by the National Audit Office and various Select Committees. We need to turn the attention of the Select Committees to the Labour party.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central went on to mislead the House once again—unintentionally, I am sure—by saying that the Government had not done anything to help tackle the problem experienced with the Rose theatre site.

Mr. Fisher *rose*——

Mr. Trippier: I am sorry, but you have had your opportunity. You made a very long speech. I have a short time in which to respond. You must not get so thin skinned about the fact that I might be picking you up on one or two points.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am "you".

Mr. Trippier: The sum of £1 million was given to allow the extra time for the redesign of the office block on the Rose theatre site, so the hon. Gentleman's comment was not accurate.

To respond to the point made by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) about areas of archaeological importance—an important matter——

Mr. Fisher *rose*——

Mr. Trippier: —I expect to announce later this month——

Mr. Fisher *rose*——

Hon. Members: Sit down!

Mr. Trippier: I give way.

Mr. Fisher: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way. He made a serious accusation that I had misled the House, and it is important to put the record straight. The help has not been given to the Rose Theatre Trust. Indeed, the Government are now saying that it will have to pay the full legal costs. They have given just £2,000 towards the legal costs and they say that the Rose Theatre Trust will have to pay the rest. Is that really the Government's attitude towards this important archaeological site?

Mr. Trippier: In the unlikely event of the hon. Gentleman being a Minister, would he strongly advocate that the Government should help with the legal costs of an organisation that brings a case in that way? Is he seriously suggesting that?

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey made a fair point. I expect to announce later this month my conclusions on the operation and effectiveness of statutory areas of archaeological importance following the review and advice provided by English Heritage. As to the point that the hon. Gentleman made about the Museum of London's grant, English Heritage is discussing with the Museum of London and other interested parties the provision of an archaeological survey in London, which primarily is a matter for that body.

In his excellent speech, my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts spoke of Government policy on the arts. I intend to concentrate my remarks on the subjects for which the Department of the Environment is responsible.

We live surrounded by a rich legacy of the past. Castles, palaces, stately homes, archaeological remains and attractive villages and towns serve to remind us of our proud history as a land of culture, commerce and history. Like the living arts and the treasures of our museums and galleries, the built heritage contributes vitally to the quality of life. A sense of history and stewardship helps to weld our society together.

In his excellent speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South referred to the nation's concern for our cathedrals. I might share his views, and I assure him that we hope to address that matter in the forthcoming White Paper, which should be launched in the autumn.

Our generation values the built heritage more than any previous generation and in recent years, under a Government who have encouraged people to think and act for themselves, there has been a marked increase in that trend. It is significant, for example, that the National Trust has doubled its membership in the past 10 years to almost 2 million. The Labour party's analysis of art and heritage policy is still fundamentally corporatist and bureaucratic. The individual's instinctive feeling for an association with the past has no place in Labour party policy. One cannot legislate for stewardship, but if it were possible the party would try.

The Government's role lies not in drawing up grand plans—that is an absurd notion. The fabric of our nation was laid long before we politicians came on the scene and will certainly be there long after. What continues are the bonds formed by an individual's pride in his nation's history and landmarks. We should cherish the values of

ownership and stewardship. The Government's policy is to provide the framework in which those values are allowed to flourish.

I wish to identify five separate strands to that policy. First, the Government and their agencies aim to set standards of excellence in the care of properties in their ownership or guardianship. Secondly, we have an excellent system for identifying and recording the best of our built heritage. Thirdly, we aim to harness the energy and resources of the private and voluntary sectors in conserving the heritage, backed where necessary with financial assistance from public funds to help meet the extra cost of maintaining and restoring heritage properties. Fourthly, the Government seek to promote greater understanding and enjoyment of the heritage and to encourage wider public participation. Last, but not least, we have a mature and effective legislative system to protect and preserve the heritage.

In those, and in other matters, the Government and their agencies can set an example and give a lead. English Heritage manages 400 castles, abbeys, historic houses and other sites and properties in England, including such famous sites as Stonehenge, Dover castle, Osborne house and Hadrian's wall. This year, it is spending almost £34 million from a total grant in aid of £78·5 million on maintaining, repairing, displaying and marketing those properties. The historic royal palaces agency was set up as an executive agency within my Department in October last year. It has 350 staff and a budget of about £20 million.

Mr. Fisher: Give the figures.

Mr. Trippier: The hon. Gentleman keeps asking me to give him figures, but he does not like the figures when I give them. The agency is headed by the first chief executive to have been recruited from an agency outside the civil service.

I have spoken of the cultural value of the built heritage to both our own and future generations, but heritage is also good business and contributes substantially to a tourist industry worth about £19 billion in total. That point was effectively made by my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel). Tourism is the strongest and largest growth sector in the whole of the British economy, creating a net increase of about 50,000 jobs year by year. I accept that there can sometimes be a conflict between heritage and tourism, although it seems to me that those who oppose such tourism would prefer people to send their money in a sealed envelope through the post rather than turning up in person. We must realise that we attract an enormous number of overseas visitors who come here to appreciate our heritage—I hardly think that they come here for our climate.

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Mr. Paul Howard

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lightbown].*

10 pm

Mr. Jack Thompson (Wansbeck): I am grateful to have the opportunity to introduce this Adjournment debate, even if this evening's experiences outside the House have not been pleasant. Having watched the match, I recommend that we do not go into extra time in the House tonight. I sympathise with you, Mr. Speaker, and with the Minister. We have to stay a little longer, despite the disappointing events outside.

Parliament is concerned with individual rights, and the case to which I shall refer has a bearing on those rights. The fact that we are debating it reflects the significance of the parliamentary system in Britain. I regret that I have had to seek an Adjournment debate to bring it to the attention of the House, because for two years now I have been trying to solve the problem with the Ministry of Defence and the Army medical authorities, but a response to my clear requests for information has not been forthcoming.

A constituent of mine, Paul Howard, was given a temporary discharge from the Scottish division on 28 December 1985. I have with me a copy of the relevant document which is entitled:

"Certificate of discharge issued to a soldier discharged with less than six months service or discharged from type 'O' engagement."

The document lists his name, surname, army number and the place at which he enlisted. The service particulars on discharge specify that Paul Howard had served as a private and that his service on discharge was five months and 20 days, including 28 days on leave without pay before reporting for duty. The document states as the cause of his discharge:

"Ceasing to fulfil Army medical standards."

His military conduct is described as

"Exemplary assessed on five months' service."

The document is signed by the officer in charge of infantry and GSC manning, Imphal barracks, York.

The papers also include a temporary certificate of discharge or transfer to the reserve, which also gives his rank, number and name, and states that the cause of his discharge was medical and that his military conduct was exemplary. That is the only information that has been made available about Paul Howard's discharge.

Paul Howard joined the Army on 5 August 1985. He underwent the normal medical examination required for those joining the armed forces and had a clean medical record. He was undertaking training with the Gordon Highlanders when he took ill and was transferred to the Royal Victoria infirmary in Edinburgh. He was diagnosed as having

"urinary tract infection, contusions of the soft tissue in the lower back and contusions of the scalp."

Following his period in the Royal Victoria infirmary, a medical board held in November 1985 discharged him as "temporarily medically unfit."

Two appointments were made for Mr. Howard to see Dr. Bates, a consultant neurologist, but he was unable to keep the appointment. The Ministry said that that was his fault, but in fact he was a patient in Catterick military hospital which would not release him for the appointment. He was then requested to obtain, at his own expense,

[Mr. Jack Thompson]

reports from a neurologist and urologist. Mr. J. S. W. Feggetter, an eminent consultant urologist and a serving officer in the Territorial Army, was requested to examine him. Dr. David Bates, a consultant neurologist with the Northern regional health authority and a senior lecturer at the university of Newcastle, also examined Mr. Howard. I have copies of those reports and they suggest that there is nothing wrong with him. The Minister has also seen copies of the reports. Mr. Howard has a clean bill of health. Those examinations took place in February 1989 and the findings were supported as recently as March this year by Mr. Howard's general practitioner, Dr. Donald Irvine, who is a highly respected practitioner and a senior figure in national medical circles.

Since 1985, Paul Howard had been encouraged to believe that he would be allowed to re-enlist once his health situation was clarified. In his opinion and in mine, that clarification was forthcoming. However, in 1988 when he approached me, it was evident that that was not the case.

Despite evidence and correspondence between myself and three Under-Secretaries of State for Defence—the hon. Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman), the hon. Member for Romford (Mr. Neubert) and the Earl of Arran—and a meeting with the hon. Member for Romford in his capacity as Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement, I was unable to obtain the reasons why Mr. Howard was unable to re-enlist. All that I learnt, in a letter from the Earl of Arran of 5 April 1990, was that

"Mr. Howard remains and will continue to remain below the minimum medical standards for service either with the regular or reserve forces."

The position with the reserve forces was confirmed when Mr. Howard's application to join the Territorial Army was rejected.

In a letter to me, Dr. Irvine—Mr. Howard's GP—wrote:

"I have . . . made a careful re-exploration of his medical records . . . I can find no medical reason why he should not be accepted for service in the armed forces."

The Minister has a copy of that letter.

I raise this issue on the Floor of the House in an attempt to obtain two pieces of information. I am sorry that I have reached this point because until now the discussions between myself, my constituents and the Minister have been in private as would normally be the case.

First, on behalf of Dr. Irvine, I would like to have the medical reasons for Mr. Howard's temporary discharge in detail. Mr. Howard is still only temporarily discharged. If he has a medical condition that warrants investigation by Dr. Irvine, he at least should know the circumstances. Secondly, why has Mr. Howard not been given a permanent discharge which should indicate specifically the reasons for ending his Army career so abruptly?

Although finding civilian employment in my constituency is not easy at the moment, it is not helped by the mystery surrounding Mr. Howard's discharge. His attempts to seek civilian employment are being seriously hampered by the bureaucratic attitude of the Army's recruiting and medical departments.

Mr. Howard is the kind of young enthusiastic person our forces need. I applaud his persistence in trying to ferret out information from behind the closed doors of those two departments. He and I have both failed to do that. When the Minister responds, I hope that he will finally come clean on behalf of the Ministry and explain why there has been a constant refusal to relieve the concerns of Mr. Howard about his health and his prospects in his attempts to resume his Army career and about the blight on his opportunities to take up a civilian career.

10.8 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Michael Neubert): I begin by congratulating the hon. Member for Wansbeck (Mr. Thompson) on his commitment to his constituency and, in particular, to his constituent Mr. Paul Howard. The hon. Gentleman has displayed great tenacity in pursuing his constituent's case. As he said, it is more than two years since he first entered into correspondence with my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman), now the Minister for Public Transport. The intensity of that correspondence increased with my arrival in December 1988 as Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces, and the dialogue has continued at full flow since last August under the tenure of my successor, my noble Friend the present Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces.

A few words by way of preface on the general policy of the armed forces towards medical matters may be helpful. The House will of course appreciate the demanding and stressful physical nature of service in the armed forces and how important it is that service men and women should be medically fit to withstand the full rigours of the varied and exacting life that the services offer. Medical fitness gives confidence that they can then perform their role in peace and war. But it is also essential, in the interests of an individual, and of those with whom he or she works as a unit, that they do not fall prey to avoidable mishaps or injury. In this context, it is only fair to remind the House that the services can be, and often are, severely criticised when young men, particularly those undergoing arduous training, suffer serious injury.

The Army, therefore, like the other two services, places great emphasis on maintaining high medical standards of fitness for service. Particular care is taken on entry and again in the early stages of training.

The central system of medical classification operated by each of the three services lays down employability standards by which to measure an individual's medical fitness. The system is designed to provide a functional assessment of an individual's capacity to work and to assist in expressing the physical and mental attributes appropriate to the various roles that service personnel may be called upon to perform. The system also helps in determining the fitness of personnel to undertake certain postings. It is applied equally to all ranks of the three services, both male and female, including officers. It is that system by which Paul Howard was not only discharged from the Gordon Highlanders in 1985 but was refused re-enlistment at various times during the period that has elapsed since that date.

It is important to say at this point, in particular in relation to the general practitioner's report, that, although the system of medical classification is operated by service medical authorities and is a medical responsibility, the various arms of the services set the minimum standards

required for each of their services. Paul Howard was, therefore, medically assessed against the requirements of the infantry—in this case, the Gordon Highlanders.

It may be helpful if I too set out the history of Paul Howard's brief service as we have seen it during 1985 with the Gordon Highlanders.

Paul Howard first sought to enlist at the Army careers information office in Ashington, Northumberland. As is required of all potential recruits to the services, he had to undergo a pre-service medical examination. That took place on 22 March 1985, and was performed by a civilian medical practitioner working to military standards and regulations. Mr. Howard was advised that he would be examined again by a medical officer at the training unit within the first six days of service—the initial medical examination—and again at the conclusion of his basic training or the 16th week of training—the service medical examination. That comprehensive and well-tested procedure is designed expressly to expose, during training, obscure or dormant disabilities not evident in the pre-service medical examination. Mr. Howard reported for training at the Scottish Infantry depot and underwent his initial medical examination on 5 August 1985.

As the hon. Gentleman said, neither the pre-service nor initial medical examination showed any disabilities, and Mr. Howard revealed no history at that stage to show any medical reason why he should not be allowed to continue. Unfortunately, as we have heard, within six weeks of entry, he was taken ill and was admitted to Edinburgh royal infirmary, where he spent 20 days before being transferred to the medical reception station, Edinburgh, which he left on 5 October 1985. At that stage, a medical board was convened, and that board concluded that he was temporarily medically unfit and should be discharged. Just three days after his discharge from the medical reception station, he was readmitted to the royal infirmary with symptoms similar to those for which he had previously been an in-patient. He remained there for a further eight days.

During his time in hospital, he underwent a number of investigations and was also seen by a representative of the neurology department. He was then sent home on leave and, after having several similar attacks, did not return to barracks. Unfortunately, he was to return to hospital again on two more occasions before finally being transferred on 21 November 1985 to the Duchess of Kent's military hospital in Catterick, where he stayed until 26 November.

That same evening, following his release from the Duchess of Kent's military hospital, he reported himself to the accident and emergency department of the Edinburgh royal infirmary, complaining of further illness. He was examined once again and discharged to the care of the military authorities in order for him to follow up an appointment with a consultant in neurology at the Royal Victoria infirmary, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

In the light of his medical history during his very short time in the Army, Mr. Howard was given examinations which were to form the basis for a second medical board at the Duchess of Kent's military hospital because the Duchess of Kent's military hospital did not at that stage have access to the results of the first board.

The House should know that there has been some confusion in previous correspondence with the hon. Gentleman as to whether or not these medical boards did in fact take place, as his constituent was not himself present. The hon. Gentleman has, however, been informed by my noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces, in his letter of 30 November 1989, that it is not a pre-requisite for a patient to be present for a medical board. It is often the case that evidence is collated and subsequently examined in turn by board members, who then give their findings and make their recommendations. Before the second medical board could be approved, authority for discharge had been given on the basis of the conclusions of the first medical board.

In this case, Mr. Howard was assessed by the first medical board as being below retention standards, and he was finally discharged from the services on 28 December 1985. This was in accordance with Queen's regulations for the Army and because he could not fulfil Army medical requirements. The hon. Gentleman will know that he was found by the first medical board to be temporarily unfit for Army service. In retrospect, and in the light of later medical reports, including that of the second medical board, it would perhaps have been more appropriate to have discharged him as permanently unfit for Army service. Had he not already been discharged on the basis of the first board, that is what would have happened.

While I cannot go into the medical details of the case for reasons of medical confidentiality, it will be obvious from what I have said that Mr. Howard was subject to a number of medical examinations while in hospital. It is not open to me to discuss the nature of his illness, his treatment or the results of the medical investigations, because it is not our practice to disclose personal medical details except to other medical personnel with responsibility for the continued care of the patient. That does not mean there is anything to hide. The medical records in this case have already been made available to Mr. Howard's GP following the hon. Gentleman's meeting with me last July.

Since his discharge, Mr. Howard has been persistent in his attempts to rejoin the Army and latterly the Reserves. He has been seen by a number of medical practitioners, both service and civilian, including civilian specialists in urology and neurology, and his case has, as the House knows, been vigorously represented by the hon. Member for Wansbeck.

The hon. Gentleman has concentrated his attention on the grounds on which Paul Howard's repeated applications to re-enlist have been turned down. He and his constituent appear to suggest that the medical reasons which have consistently been cited are not the true reasons, and that some other reasons lie behind the decision. That is not so. The House will appreciate that, again, medical confidentiality prevents me from giving full details of the medical grounds on which we have declined to accept Mr. Howard's applications, or indeed the full extent of any advice received from the civilian consultants involved.

Nevertheless, in the light of the hon. Gentleman's initial representations, my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering undertook in his letter of 30 April 1988 that the Army medical authorities would consider the case again on production of any favourable medical reports covering the period since his discharge to the present. After further correspondence, two reports from civilian urology and neurology consultants were then forwarded to me, as the then Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces, with the hon. Gentleman's letter of 7 March 1989.

While those civilian reports were favourable, there remained a need for them to be considered by the Army

[Mr. Michael Neubert]

medical authorities alongside the service medical findings and service medical requirements. My letter of 22 March 1989, therefore, informed the hon. Gentleman that any application from Mr. Howard for re-enlistment would now be dealt with in the normal manner through the Army careers information office, Ashington. Unfortunately, the wrong impression was drawn from that letter, as the hon. Gentleman seems to have regarded it as some sort of guarantee that Mr. Howard would be able to rejoin his regiment, and that the Army medical authorities were now satisfied with the medical reports. I re-emphasise to the House that, while the Army medical authorities can and do take account of all medical information presented to them, the decision on the medical suitability of candidates for the Army must, ultimately, rest with them.

Mr. Howard then reapplied to AC10 Ashington and was referred by the examining civilian medical practitioner there for specialist neurological assessment. That took place at the Duchess of Kent's military hospital at Catterick on 30 March 1989. The consultant's report confirmed the earlier opinions of the members of the medical boards which recommended Mr. Howard's discharge in 1985, and concluded, in line with the standard system of medical classification, that Mr. Howard was below entry medical standards and that there was, furthermore, no evidence to suggest that he would in the future meet those standards.

Following that, Mr. Howard was again informed that he did not meet the very high standard of medical fitness required for the Army and that AC10 Ashington could not, therefore, proceed further with his application for re-enlistment. This assessment was also later held to be applicable to Army service in the reserves. I can quite understand that Mr. Howard will have been disappointed once again by this decision. Nevertheless, I hope that the House will agree that Mr. Howard has in fact been given every opportunity to prove to the Army medical authorities that he could meet the minimum standards required and that the authorities have fully considered and reconsidered his case.

Finally, I would like to touch on the fears that Mr. Howard has expressed through the hon. Gentleman tonight and previously that his unfitness for the rigours of service life may have some adverse impact on his chances of civilian employment. No failure to satisfy the very high medical standards set by the services for their uniquely stressful and exacting requirements should be taken in itself to imply that an individual is unfit for a wide range of civilian employment. I am naturally pleased that Mr. Howard has obtained reassurance from civilian specialists on his state of health and I hope he will take comfort from this. If he does have any lingering doubts that being found unfit for the Army will affect his prospects of civilian employment, he can also take reassurance on that account from his civilian medical advisers.

With regard to his brief military experience, I assure the hon. Gentleman that the decision to discharge Mr. Howard as medically unfit was not taken lightly nor on the basis of a single incident or examination. Mr. Howard was an in-patient in more than one hospital and therefore subject to medical examination on several occasions between September and November 1985, and the service medical authorities then and later gave due weight to all the evidence before them on reaching their conclusion.

I should like to conclude by wishing Mr. Howard well in civil employment. It is a matter of regret to us all that he has been unable to pursue his chosen career in the services, but, as I hope has become clear from the detailed remarks I have made tonight and from the previous correspondence, the firm view of the competent service medical authorities is that it would not be in the interests either of the Army or of Mr. Howard himself for him to rejoin the forces. That view has been subject to repeated re-examination, and the conclusion of the service medical authorities is that Mr. Howard is not medically fit for service with the Army. But, as I have also made clear, that does not mean that he is not medically fit for a wide range of civil employment, and the views of his general practitioner should, I hope, serve to reassure him and any potential employer.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-three minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 5 July 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

ASSOCIATED BRITISH PORTS (NO. 2) BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question proposed [25 June],

That this House doth agree with the Lords in their Amendment to Clause 3, page 3, line 10, to leave out '85' and insert '85E', instead thereof:

Debate further adjourned till Thursday 12 July.

REDBRIDGE LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

Order for consideration of Lords amendment read.

To be considered on Thursday 12 July.

MEDWAY TUNNEL BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Order for Third Reading read.

To be read the Third time on Thursday 12 July.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (NO. 2) BILL *(By Order)*

Order for consideration, as amended, read.

To be considered on Thursday 12 July.

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL (NO. 2) BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question proposed [26 February],

That the Bill be now considered.

Debate further adjourned till Thursday 12 July.

LONDON UNDERGROUND BILL *(By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday 12 July at Seven o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: As the remaining nine private Bills set down for Second Reading have blocking motions, with the leave of the House I shall put them as a single group.

GREAT YARMOUTH PORT AUTHORITY BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

PORT OF TYNE BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

HEATHROW EXPRESS RAILWAY BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

CATTEWATER RECLAMATION BILL *(By Order)*

VALE OF GLAMORGAN (BARRY HARBOUR) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday 12 July.

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT (PENALTY FARES) BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question proposed [10 May],

That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Debate further adjourned till Thursday 12 July.

SOUTHAMPTON RAPID TRANSIT BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday 12 July.

EXMOUTH DOCKS BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question proposed [29 March],

That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Debate further adjourned till Thursday 12 July.

KILLINGHOLME GENERATING STATIONS (ANCILLARY POWERS) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday 12 July.

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL FINANCE

Bank Loans

1. **Sir Robert McCrindle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what reaction he has obtained to his appeal to the banks for greater care in offering loans to their customers.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. John Major): My remarks on the marketing of credit were addressed to all the lending institutions. There are encouraging signs that they are taking the matter very seriously.

Sir Robert McCrindle: While welcoming the recent attention paid to that important matter by my right hon. Friend, may I ask whether he is as concerned as I am by the recently issued figures showing that credit is still far from being under control? Does he accept that the financial institutions still engage in practices that pressurise people into effecting credit and that are far from the traditional practices in some corners of the City of London?

Has my right hon. Friend given any consideration, even at this late stage, to the possibility that the banks and building societies should be required, on a temporary basis, to make special deposits with the Treasury, thereby limiting their opportunities to encourage people to engage in irresponsible credit-taking?

Mr. Major: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his well-deserved honour in the recent birthday honours list which will give considerable pleasure to his many friends.

On my hon. Friend's specific points, I confirm that I share his view that the volume of credit being advanced is still higher than I would wish. That means that we will retain a level of interest rates higher than it would be otherwise. On his advocacy of special deposits, I feel that, alas, their disadvantage is that their practical effect might be to raise rather than to reduce interest rates which would be difficult territory. The prime difficulty with the activities of lenders lies not with the banks or building societies, but elsewhere. Sir Gordon Borrie, the Director General of Fair Trading, has expressed his view on that matter.

Mr. Robert Sheldon: Is not it clear that the policy of relying on a single instrument for the control of credit is not working? Should not the right hon. Gentleman pay more attention to the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Sir R. McCrindle) and think more seriously about proper credit controls, rather than rely on a weak form of exhortation?

Mr. Major: My recent speeches were related not to credit controls, but to the marketing of credit. Credit controls are a separate matter. Although I understand the right hon. Gentleman's advocacy of them, I do not believe that a deregulated economy without exchange controls would be even remotely effective.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does my right hon. Friend accept that when he appeared before the Treasury Select Committee, some hon. Members pointed out that organisations like the Halifax building society were making offers such as, "Take a second mortgage and have the trip of a lifetime round the world"? Many of us are pleased that, at long last, the Treasury is taking the view that long-term investment is good for the country, but that people mortgaging their homes for holidays is the way to financial and economic disaster.

Mr. Major: I entirely share my hon. Friend's view. He will be aware that following the Jack report, a code of practice to cover the banks' and building societies' relationships with customers, including credit marketing and the use of confidential information, is being drawn up under the chairmanship of Sir George Blunden. I welcome that and look forward to the code in due course.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: When perfectly sensible suggestions such as those made by hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Sir R. McCrindle) were being put forward by the Opposition, they were derided by Treasury Ministers. Why does the Chancellor believe that the same ideas are now gaining currency among Conservative Members?

Mr. Major: I have yet to hear any sensible ideas emanating from Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen.

Sir William Clark: Will my right hon. Friend resist any suggestion that we should return to the stupidity of special deposits? Does he agree that they will work only if we reintroduce exchange controls which is quite against our economic philosophy and that of the European Community?

Mr. Major: My right hon. Friend touches on an important point, but I reiterate what I said a few moments ago. There is a very real danger that special deposits would have the practical market effect of driving short-term interest rates up, not down.

Balance of Payments

2. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the monthly balance of payments deficit was last under £1 billion.

3. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the monthly balance of payments deficit was last under £1 billion.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): Last December.

Mr. Patchett: Does not such a high balance of payments deficit need to be financed across the exchange rates? Does not it cause high interest rates? If the Government could control the deficit, would not that contribute to reducing interest rates?

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Gentleman's question referred to the current account, not to the balance of payments which, by definition, cannot be in deficit. I do not believe that the current account deficit is a force for high interest rates. Interest rates are determined largely by domestic factors. The main reason why we need the present level of interest rates is to get on top of inflation.

Mr. Cox: Is the Minister aware that since the last election the balance of payments deficit figures have been utterly appalling? After 10 years of having a Conservative Government in control of our economic affairs, why do we

have such huge balance of payments deficits, and the highest interest rates and inflation of any comparable western European country?

Mr. Lamont: We also get the same questions week after week from the hon. Gentleman. It is a pity that he cannot comment on the highest rate of growth of any EC country other than Spain and that he cannot concentrate on the fact that Britain has had such dramatic investment growth and that our rate of inflation is very much lower than it was when the Labour party was in Government.

Mr. Marlow: Is not one of the reasons that we have a balance of trade deficit the fact that whereas most people would obviously far prefer to buy British goods, which are of far higher quality and much more reliable, many people do not know what is British? For example, did my right hon. Friend know that Sierra and Granada cars are not assembled in Britain? Will he point out to people that if they want to buy a British car, they should take great care to buy British and not foreign-assembled goods?

Mr. Lamont: I am sure that hon. Members will pay attention to what my hon. Friend has said, but the main reason why we have a current account deficit is simply excess demand because of changes in monetary policy in 1987 and not a lack of competitiveness. If it was a lack of competitiveness, we would not be experiencing such a spectacular growth in exports. Exports in the three months to May are up some 11 per cent. compared with the same period a year ago, whereas imports have gone up by only about 4 per cent. So the fundamental and underlying trend is strong and good and our rate of growth in exports now compares very well with any period in our history.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Will my right hon. Friend explain to me and the House why the Government do not give manufacturing industry far more encouragement, bearing in mind the fact that manufacturing industry is the only non-inflationary source of economic growth and that in most European Community countries where there is a balance of trade surplus, they have low interest rates and a healthier economy?

Mr. Lamont: I do not know why my hon. Friend—I hope that he is my hon. Friend—does not think that the lowest rate of corporation tax in the western world is of considerable help to manufacturing industry and that the restoration of profits to the highest level for 20 years is not the biggest possible help that can be given to every sector of the economy.

Mrs. Beckett: Is not the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) perfectly right: the most worrying aspect of the trade deficit is the continuing high level of imports, particularly of manufactured goods? Since the trade deficit in manufactured goods first appeared under this Government—last year it amounted to £16 billion—is not it time that the Government reconsidered their refusal to take any serious steps to support manufacturing?

Mr. Lamont: I totally reject what the hon. Lady says. As she says, manufacturing is extremely important from the point of view of the external trade balance, but the greatest help that we can give to manufacturing is to have low inflation and good growth. During the past decade we have had a far better combination of those two factors than the Labour party did when it was in government.

Mr. Butler: If we joined the exchange rate mechanism at broadly the current rates of exchange, would not West Germany be particularly pleased, as that would lock us permanently into a £9 billion deficit?

Mr. Lamont: I certainly do not intend to comment on any particular exchange rate parity and policy on the exchange rate mechanism. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has made our position clear.

Inflation (Europe)

4. Mr. Loyden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many European countries currently have a higher inflation rate than the United Kingdom.

Mr. Major: Two, Sir.

Mr. Loyden: The Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister constantly make claims about the health of Britain's economy, but Britain has the worst inflation rate of the seven most industrially advanced countries. Is not that a disgrace?

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman is correct. The rate of inflation is a good deal higher than I would wish it to be, or than it will be in due course. As the hon. Gentleman clearly shares my view, I am surprised that he supports Opposition policies that would raise inflation and keep it high for a very long time.

Mr. Higgins: Is my right hon. Friend aware that we may be giving the impression that our currency is declining in value faster than that of other countries because of the appallingly poor quality of the paper used for the new £5 note? Will he ensure that paper of the proper quality is used and that he does not harmonise in that respect with the other European countries, whose currency notes have always been of far poorer quality than ours?

Mr. Major: My right hon. Friend makes an important point that will be echoed in many quarters.

Mr. John Smith: Does the Chancellor reflect that it is a poor comment on 11 years of Conservative Government that we have the worst rate of inflation of all the G7 countries, and that nine of the European Community countries have a better inflation record than ours? After 11 years in government, is not that a pitiful record?

Mr. Major: The right hon. and learned Gentleman is being typicaly selective. He has overlooked the greatest growth in investment and productivity and the greatest underlying improvement in the economy over that 10-year period compared with any other nation in Europe.

Mr. Beith: Now that the Chancellor has had an opportunity to discuss with the president of the Bundesbank the working of the anti-inflationary policy, why does he still believe that an autonomous central bank, with responsibility to maintain price stability, has no place in Britain and can be no part of European monetary union?

Mr. Major: For precisely the same reasons as I have explained to he hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Ian Stewart: With the approach of 1992 and the greater harmonisation of many activities in Britain and the other member states of the European Community, will my right hon. Friend give serious and urgent consideration to

introducing a more reasonable and equivalent measure of inflation than the retail prices index, which is quite unlike the measure used in other European countries? The inclusion of mortgage interest rates greatly exaggerates the supposed rate of inflation, although interest rates are raised to reduce inflation. Does my right hon. Friend accept that the sooner that change is made the better, particularly so that comparisons with other Community countries can be more realistically understood outside the House?

Mr. Major: My right hon. Friend is entirely correct that, on a more comparable basis that takes account of the differing factors in the relative inflation measures, the more correct rate of inflation in the United Kingdom is about 7 per cent., compared with a European Community average of about 5 per cent. He made an important point.

Value Added Tax

5. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what a family with two children on average earnings paid in a year in value added tax in 1978-79 and in 1989-90.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Richard Ryder): Approximately 2·7 per cent. of gross earnings and 5 per cent. respectively.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Minister aware that, for an average family with two children, that represents an increase of £364 a year over the figure that applied in 1979, when this wicked Government came in? Why does not he tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth about total taxation? Why does not he tell the British people that total taxes have increased from 34 to 37 per cent. under this Government? Instead of ripping off pensioners with value added tax, why does not he claw back the £26·2 billion that the wealthiest 1 per cent. in Britain have had from the Government in the past 10 years?

Mr. Ryder: The hon. Gentleman's remarks were based on a working man with two children.

Mr. Skinner: Is it true?

Mr. Ryder: The truth is that the take-home pay of a working man with two children has risen by 34 per cent. in real terms since the Government took office. Under the Labour Government, it rose by a measly 1 per cent.

Mr. William Powell: When my hon. Friend is telling the nation about the effects of VAT and the tax burden will he remind our people that the Labour party has a habit of inventing new indirect taxes, such as selective employment tax, which add considerably to the burdens of our taxpayers?

Mr. Ryder: My hon. Friend is right, and we look forward to receiving the full details of the new taxes that the Labour party would impose if it ever took office.

Dr. Marek: Will the Economic Secretary confirm that the Government are good at inventing new taxes and increasing indirect taxes—for example, almost doubling VAT, increasing national insurance contributions and inventing the poll tax? Will he confirm that the burden of taxation has increased under his Administration, and will he admit that the Conservatives are the high-tax party and that Labour is the low-tax party? Will he further admit, without squirming, that the rich have benefited from cuts in income tax in the past 10 years which have not compensated for the increases in indirect taxation, whereas those who have no jobs or low-paid jobs have borne the brunt of the Government's disastrous tax policies?

Mr. Ryder: The hon. Gentleman asked several questions. The Labour party has four new taxes planned for Scotland alone. The contribution to the Revenue of the top 5 per cent. of income tax payers has risen by more than a quarter since 1979. The hon. Gentleman made several other claims about taxation. The truth is that if the Labour party ever took office it would need to raise taxes enormously to pay for the pledges made by the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends.

Sir Anthony Grant: Does my hon. Friend agree that the figures merely show that there has been a shift from direct taxation, which is a tax on work, to indirect taxation, which is a tax on spending? Was not that policy precisely the one on which the Government were overwhelmingly elected to office in 1979?

Mr. Ryder: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. The policy is based on the extension of the freedom to choose. That was the reason why we made that change in 1979.

Inflation

6. **Mr. Alfred Morris:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the underlying rate of inflation.

Mr. Ryder: There are a number of ways of estimating the underlying rate of inflation. As measured by the RPI, excluding mortgage interest payments and the community charge, it was 7 per cent. in May.

Mr. Morris: Will the Minister confirm that the measure of the RPI which excludes mortgage interest payments is now at its highest level since July 1982? Why do some Conservatives now try also to exclude the poll tax from the calculation? Is not this very unfair on people with special needs, not least the many severely disabled people who are now paying over £700 more in poll tax than they paid in rates, due to the repeal of Labour's Rating (Disabled Persons) Act 1978?

Mr. Ryder: I had a hunch that the right hon. Gentleman would raise the question of the disabled, so before I came here, I looked up the figures. In 1989-90 the Government will spend £8·3 billion on the disabled, an increase of £4 billion in real terms since 1979 when the right hon. Gentleman was responsible for disabled people.

Mr. Michael Brown: Will my hon. Friend give the House some idea what the level of inflation would be if it were calculated on the same basis as for our European Community partners?

Mr. Ryder: The only other country in the European Community that counts mortgage interest payments in its RPI is Ireland. Our figures would be far lower if mortgage interest rates did not count towards the RPI.

Monetary Integration

7. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when, and in what year, he placed his proposals for further monetary integration within the European Community before its Council of Ministers.

Mr. Major: I have not yet done so, but I expect to discuss it later this month.

Mr. Spearing: I thank the Chancellor of the Exchequer for that reply, especially as the question should have been "in what form", not "in what year". Does the Chancellor agree that in an authority that was charged with the responsibility of supervising a common currency, there would be some responsibility for the economy of the area over which that currency was dominant? If that supervising authority is to be accountable, should it be answering questions only to a person or body who must lump it or like it, or should it be accountable to a body that can do something about it? Will the right hon. Gentleman's paper address the distinction between the two types of accountability and which form do the Government prefer?

Mr. Major: I certainly concur with the hon. Gentleman's view that the question of precisely what accountability means and to whom will be critical in future debates in the intergovernmental conference and elsewhere on economic and monetary union—whatever sort may emerge in the European Community. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the Government do not believe that the Delors prescription for stage 3, with its single central bank, its single monetary policy and its present lack of accountability, is a concept acceptable to the House of Commons. I will carry that view to all my fellow Finance Ministers.

Mr. John Townend: Does my right hon. Friend agree that his proposal that the hard ecu should be accompanied by a European monetary fund which could require central banks to repurchase their own currencies with the ecu or equivalent hard currencies would be a powerful sanction against lax monetary policy and, as such, could be the beginning of an embryonic European federal bank?

Mr. Major: I agree that the hard ecu would be the most effective counter-inflation currency yet devised and, for that reason, may commend itself to people in future years. The essence of my scheme for a hard ecu is that it is optional, evolutionary and gradualist. That is an immense improvement on what is presently on offer in the Delors report.

Mr. Bell: In relation to monetary integration, does the Chancellor of the Exchequer recall the remark of Sir Alan Walters that by joining the exchange rate mechanism, currency speculators could force a realignment of the pound—and thus a devaluation—and take us back to the stop-go policies of the 1960s? In anticipation of our joining the exchange rate mechanism, has not the pound increased in value? How does the Chancellor reconcile the views of Sir Alan Walters with the pound's stability now?

Mr. Major: I see no particular reason why I should. My view about the exchange rate mechanism is entirely clear —I believe it to be in the interests of the country to join, and in due course, when the conditions that we have set out are met, we will most certainly join.

Mr. Dykes: As the independent central bank has been so spectacularly successful in Germany, and as a similar mechaism is now proposed for the European Community, why are the Government, who are anxious to counter inflation, so timid about the suggestion?

Mr. Major: I certainly do not accept that we are timid about countering inflation or that there is a necessary parallel between the activities of the Bundesbank and the German national legislature, and the position of the Bank of England and our legislature. It is my clear view—I regret that my hon. Friend does not share it—that the man or woman responsible for monetary policy should be available to the House of Commons to answer for his or her policies.

Scientific Research

8. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce fiscal measures to benefit scientific research.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Peter Lilley): There is already a generous tax relief for capital expenditure on scientific research related to a company's trade, which is fully relieved by a special 100 per cent. capital allowance.

Mr. Dalyell: On public company gifts for scientific research, would a Treasury Minister be prepared to meet David Baldwin, chairman of Hewlett-Packard in Britain, who says that if the arrangements were more generous —as they are in the Federal Republic of Germany and the United States—his company would be prepared to give significantly more to universities such as Edinburgh, Strathclyde, Bristol and Cambridge? Would such a meeting be possible?

Mr. Lilley: It might indeed—if we received any such request. When I was responsible for these matters, as Economic Secretary, I was in correspondence with the gentleman to whom the hon. Gentleman has referred and I believe that I asked him for any evidence that there was more favourable treatment in the federal republic. I do not know whether my successor ever received it, but I certainly did not.

Sir Ian Lloyd: Does my hon. Friend accept the important and significant conclusion of the Select Committee on Science and Technology in the other place that as a nation we are spending too little on civil research and development and that the situation is getting worse?

Mr. Lilley: I would certainly not agree that the situation is getting worse. Over the past five years, spending by British industry on research and development has risen by 46 per cent. and companies now spend some £5 billion per year on research and development. We all welcome that trend.

Mr. Cryer: Is not it true that our enormous and growing balance of trade deficit—currently more than £20,000 million—has risen at least in part because of the lack of scientific-based research and development, which has helped to diminish our manufacturing base? Is not it true that we are not catching up with Japan and West Germany and that under this Government we are becoming a nation of assemblers, without proper or adequate manufacturing research and development?

Mr. Lilley: There were so many mis-statements in the hon. Gentleman's question that I cannot put him right on all of them. It is simply not true that things are getting worse—they are getting decidely better. During the 1980s

manufacturing industry's productivity increased—not least because of research and development—faster than in any other G7 country. That is good news for the future.

Mr. Rathbone: Does my hon. Friend accept that, in spite of his answers to previous questions, the majority of the money to which he referred is in fact spent on development rather than research? Will he consider how the Government can help to encourage more research, particularly among manufacturing companies?

Mr. Lilley: As I said in response to the main question, there is already more generous tax treatment for research than for any other kind of investment. We also have the lowest level of corporation tax on profits earned of almost any country in western Europe. That is beneficial to industry and leaves more money in industry's hands for investment in such activities, and I welcome the fact that that is increasingly happening.

Excise Duty (Petrol)

9. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Chansellor of the Exchequer how much revenue was raised in excise duty on *(a)* unleaded and *(b)* leaded petrol (i) in the three months prior to 20 March and (ii) subsequently.

Mr. Ryder: In the three months to mid-March, £417 million worth of duty was collected on unleaded petrol and £1,128 million on leaded petrol. In the two months to mid-May—the latest period for which figures are available—the figures were £347 million for unleaded and £847 million for leaded.

Mrs. Fyfe: I expect that the Minister is aware that the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders estimates that sales of unleaded petrol represent about 34 per cent. of the whole. Does the Department have a target figure for sales of unleaded petrol, and what steps is it taking to achieve it?

Mr. Ryder: Last year we set ourselves a target of 30 per cent., and we have reached that. This year we set ourselves a target of 40 per cent., which we hope to achieve by next March's Budget. We have reached 33 per cent. already, so I have high hopes that we can reach this year's target.

Mr. Madel: New cars fitted with three-way catalytic converters have to run on unleaded fuel. Will my hon. Friend therefore consider removing the 10 per cent. car tax on such new cars? How much longer must cars have two taxes imposed on them—VAT and the 10 per cent. car tax?

Mr. Ryder: As my hon. Friend knows, catalytic converters will have to be fitted to all new cars by 1 January 1993. For that reason, my hon. Friend's points are not relevant in the context of our European obligations.

Mr. Boateng: Does the Treasury have a mechanism for assessing the impact of fiscal policy on the environment? If so, when will the Minister report to the House the impact of the Budget in that respect? If he will not do that, will he explain why?

Mr. Ryder: I have already described the impact of the Budget in increasing the use of unleaded petrol. With regard to wider environmental considerations, the hon. Gentleman, like the rest of us, will have to wait for the publication of the White Paper from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment which is due in the early autumn.

Mr. Hanley: Do not those figures show that our Government are prepared to make fiscal changes for environmental purposes when there is proper scientific evidence and when the fiscal studies show that that would be constructive? Does not my hon. Friend therefore believe that other fiscal changes might help the environmental cause? Does he believe that a differential road tax might also help and lead to savings for the environment?

Mr. Ryder: Road tax has remained the same for five years. That is designed to encourage people who travel less to pay less. The differential was the subject of an amendment tabled by the Labour party during the Committee stage of the Finance Bill. We turned that down on the basis that if we had that kind of differential there is no reason to believe that people's decisions about the sort of car that they may purchase would depend on a differential which any Government might introduce.

Inflation

12. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the tax and price index rate of inflation.

Mr. Ryder: The tax and price index rose by 8·1 per cent. in the 12 months to May.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Is not it remarkable that no matter how the Government seek to change the method of calculation, our rate of inflation is still among the worst of all manufacturing countries? Would the Chancellor of the Exchequer like to tell us when his miracle is going to start so that our inflation will drop and our manufacturing deficit be eliminated?

Mr. Ryder: Before the election.

Mr. Gow: What is the cause of the present inflation rate?

Mr. Ryder: Excessive demand.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Will the Minister tell us which measurement of inflation the Treasury intend to use in estimating when we enter the exchange rate mechanism? Will he guarantee to tell us that now, so that we can judge exactly when the Government are likely to meet that average rate of inflation which will bring us into the exchange rate mechanism?

Mr. Ryder: As we have said before, it will be a proximate rate of inflation.

Mr. Oppenheim: What would be the effect on the underlying rate of inflation of a massive increase in public expenditure in addition to an immediate cut in interest rates, both of which are Opposition policies? How could any Government implementing such policies and committed to immediate entry to the exchange rate mechanism, however vague the conditions, hope to maintain the pound's parity within the ERM system?

Mr. Ryder: That is a question for the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), the shadow Chief Secretary.

If the Labour party were ever returned to office, she would be the Minister responsible for ensuring that all the gravy trains arrived on time.

Mr. John Smith: The Minister told his hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) that the cause of inflation was excessive demand. Will he say who caused that excessive demand?

Mr. Ryder: It was caused by over-confidence among consumers, especially in the wake of the Wall street crash of 1987. I notice that the Leader of the Opposition is whispering advice to his right hon. and learned Friend. Perhaps they are correcting each other. The shadow Chancellor did not advise the then Chancellor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson), to deflate after the Wall street crash of 1987.

Charities (Tax Relief)

13. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from charitable organisations on the decision to introduce new tax reliefs for single gifts to charity; and when he proposes to issue detailed guidance for donors and charities on the arrangements for claiming relief.

Mr. Major: Charitable organisations are enthusiastic about gift aid, the new tax relief for single gifts to charity. Detailed guidance will be made available in good time for the start of the scheme.

Mr. Taylor: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Charities Aid Foundation and other organisations have welcomed the Budget as the best news ever for charities? That is also shown by the fact that in the past few years the income of the 200 major charities has more than doubled. The Government have shown that we wish to restore the generosity of spirit of our people, who give to charities in which they feel most involved. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the negative, carping attitude of Opposition Members, who think that the work of voluntary organisations should be taken on by the Government, shows the lack of generosity of spirit on the Opposition Benches?

Mr. Major: My hon. Friend puts his point extremely well. The Charities Aid Foundation was gracious about the budgetary elements that I announced earlier in the year. I hope that a large number of people will take the opportunity of the new tax relief to give generously.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Does the Chancellor really believe that The Adam Smith Institute should be treated in charity law in the same way as Barnardos, the Save the Children Fund and Oxfam, when all that The Adam Smith Institute does is to pump out irrelevant, right-wing nonsense and rubbish?

Mr. Major: Perhaps The Adam Smith Institute should be treated in precisely the same way as the Fabian Society, as indeed it is.

Income Tax

14. **Mr. Neale:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans for further reforms of the income tax system.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer intends to continue to reform, simplify and prune the tax system, and to reduce the basic rate of income tax to 20p in the pound when it is prudent to do so.

Mr. Neale: Does my hon. Friend accept that the actions of the Chancellor's two immediate predecessors to reduce the rate of income tax led to an increase in the incentive to work and an increase in the income tax take? Does he agree that it must be beneficial to go on reducing the rates of income tax as soon as it is prudent to do so?

Mr. Lilley: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. There is no doubt that lower marginal rates of tax improve incentive and the supply side performance of the economy. Sadly, that is a lesson the Opposition have not learnt—hence their plans to increase marginal tax rates, especially for the more successful members of society.

Mr. Tony Banks: Are not the Government perpetrating a monstrous fraud on the British people by reducing the level of direct income tax but heaping up indirect taxation levels, so that people are more heavily taxed under the present Government than under any previous Government? Does the Minister not accept that most people, given the choice of improvements to provide decent services in this country, would vote for an increase in income tax?

Mr. Lilley: There is a small element of consistency in the hon. Gentleman's position. Like the rest of the Opposition, he has voted against every cut in income tax that we have introduced, but at least he has been honest enough to admit that he favours a higher rate of income tax, which the policies of the Opposition would clearly require if they were honest enough to cost them.

Central Unit on Purchasing

18. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects the new head of the Treasury's central unit on purchasing to take up his post.

Mr. Lilley: The new head of the Treasury's central unit on purchasing is expected to be in post on 1 October 1990.

Mr. Knapman: I am obliged to my hon. Friend for that reply. Does he accept that, assuming that public money must be spent as carefully as we would spend our own, all the spending Ministries should take full advantage of the activities of the central unit on purchasing?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The unit has played a very valuable part. Since it was established, cumulative savings have amounted to about £1 billion, and that is very welcome. We expect an even higher rate of savings in the coming year, amounting to something like 6 per cent. of the expenditures covered.

Mr. Allen: Will the Minister ensure that the central unit on purchasing and every member of the Treasury Bench receives a free copy of Sir Alan Walter's new book—or will they be given complimentary copies because, as I understand it, some of them are friends of the family?

Mr. Lilley: Is that the best that the hon. Gentleman can do?

European Currency

19. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on his proposals for a European currency unit.

Mr. Lilley: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor gave my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) on 21 June.

Mrs. Hicks: By proposing the hard ecu, is not my right hon. Friend the Chancellor offering the best of both worlds in that we should retain control over our national currency and monetary policy while at the same time adopting a common European currency for use when appropriate? As we actively prepare for 1992, the removal of trade barriers to our European partners, and easier travel throughout Europe, is not that the most logical and flexible approach that we can take at this stage?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend puts the advantages clearly and well. A common currency would be valuable to people travelling, working and trading in Europe. The whole of Europe can unite around our proposals. They are not divisive or exclusive, as are some other projects before the Community.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 July.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): I have been asked to reply—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is hosting the NATO summit meeting. This evening, she will be attending a dinner for NATO given by Her Majesty the Queen.

Mr. Skinner: Gallivanting again.

Mr. Tony Banks: Drag her back here.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Leader of the House has every right to answer questions for the Prime Minister.

Mr. Bruce: Speaking as one Welshman to another, does my right hon. and learned Friend share with me—and, I hope, the whole House—a feeling of pride at the way in which the English football team conducted itself over the past three weeks? Does he agree that it deserves the warmest congratulations and good wishes of the whole House for its next game on Saturday?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am sure that right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House share the sense of pride expressed by my hon. Friend. The English team has got further in this contest than ever before on foreign soil. Even more important is that the team's quality of play and behaviour has been a great credit to the nation. We are proud of that as well. We certainly wish the team well in the match on Saturday.

Mr. Kinnock: I at least agree with the right hon. and learned Gentleman in saying that the lads done magnificent.

Will yesterday's decision by the Cabinet mean that people will pay lower poll taxes next year?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: There has been no consideration by the Cabinet of the matter raised by the right hon. Gentleman. The review of the operation of the community charge is well advanced. As the Prime Minister has made clear, the outcome of the review will be announced at the end of the month. It is a great deal further advanced than any review undertaken by the Labour party of its proposals. The Opposition have gone through every gamut in the book—one tax, two taxes, local income taxes and capital valuation taxes—and have finally arrived back where they started, with rating system of the type that they used to condemn as discredited, as we condemn it now. We look forward to hearing the Opposition's proposals in a year's time. Our own proposals will be brought forward at the proper time and in the proper way.

Mr. Kinnock: I rather believe that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is being kept in the dark on this subject, as he is on others. Perhaps he can answer a question from his fellow Conservatives. Is he aware that senior Conservative councillors have said, through their associations and very publicly, that next year in order to be "realistic and reflect the true costs of providing local services", the Government's grant should be at least £2·9 billion higher simply to meet inflation? Can he tell them how £2·5 billion will do the job? Which set of Tories have got it wrong—the Tories in local government who have to deal with the realities, or the Tories in the Cabinet who have to deal with the Prime Minister?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: A huge range of speculative figures are being published in the press. The figures on which the Government decide will be vouchsafed to the House in due course in the ordinary way when the grant proposals are announced in the ordinary way. The country continues to wait for an answer from the Labour party as to what it proposes to put in place of the rating system.

Mr. Kinnock: Perhaps the deputy Prime Minister at least knows this much—that the poll tax is of itself regressive, unfair, very expensive and incapable of reform. Can he tell us whether anything decided by the Cabinet yesterday changes anything in that?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The review, which is still taking place, is of the operation and not the structure of the tax. What the country is still waiting to know is what the Opposition propose in relation to the rating system. If the Opposition still agree, as they originally did, that domestic rates are unfair and discredited, why do they propose to return to them?

Q2. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 July.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. MacKay: Does my right hon. and learned Friend share my view that the commendable performance of Mr. Bobby Robson and his team in showing that we are at least the third or fourth most successful footballing nation in the world has been severely tarnished by the behaviour of

many so-called supporters in Brighton and elsewhere yesterday? Does he agree that they should be severely punished, with prison sentences?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Once again, the whole House is bound to agree with my hon. Friend that the disappointment of yesterday's result cannot afford any justification for the kind of wanton violence and hooliganism that took place in Brighton and elsewhere last night. Especially regrettable was the willingness to damage cars because they had been made in Germany. We welcome the prompt police action in relation to such misconduct. It should certainly be dealt with effectively.

Q3. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 July.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Alton: Will the Leader of the House take this opportunity to emphasise his support for the commitment of all the parties in Northern Ireland represented in the House to dialogue and partnership in the moves toward genuine power-sharing in Northern Ireland? Will he tell the House what new road blocks have been erected today, who is responsible for erecting them and what he is doing to remove those obstacles so as to ensure that that partnership can continue?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that that topic is to be debated within a few minutes of the conclusion of business questions. The whole House wishes to see progress along the lines that he described at the beginning of his question. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will be addressing himself to the matter later in the afternoon.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is entirely fitting that the Prime Minister should be hosting today's NATO summit, as it was her resolution which ensured that, when the Soviet Union increased its armaments in Europe, they were matched armament for armament? Does he further agree that the only people who do not understand that that is why the Soviet Union came to the negotiating table are the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and the parliamentary Labour party?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. I am astonished that even one member of the Labour party expressed astonishment or dismay at the fact that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was hosting the meeting. It is an entirely appropriate place for the Prime Minister of this nation at a time of such importance.

Q4. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 July.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Fyfe: If there is a ballot on whether a hospital should acquire self-governing status, and if the majority say no, is there any chance that the people who voted will get their way and be able to exercise that choice?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Hospitals which are to achieve self-governing status will achieve that status in line with arrangements approved by the House and designed to improve standards of performance in those hospitals for the sake of those who work there and the patients who go there.

Q5. **Mr. Fishburn:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 July.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Fishburn: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that leasehold reform in this country is long overdue —especially reform that would allow individual flats to carry their own freehold rather than be tied to a leasehold? Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that such a reform would complete the home ownership revolution which has occurred under this Government by permitting people in inner cities to own their own homes?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend about the merit in extending opportunities for home ownership. He will know that the leasehold system has been the subject of many proposals over many years. We are about to undertake a detailed evaluation of the working of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987. It would be premature to contemplate any particular changes until that study is completed.

Mr. Trimble: Irrespective of any welcome devolution to an assembly in Ulster, this House will still have some legislative powers with respect to Ulster. Will the deputy Prime Minister therefore ensure that all such legislation is made properly by a Bill, thus ending the temporary, contingent and offhand manner in which the House has handled Northern Ireland affairs? It would also end the grotesque mistake that I discovered this morning, whereby a person moving from London to Belfast was refused income support because

"England pays under Act of Parliament whereas Northern Ireland pays under Order in Council."

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the system for legislation in respect of Northern Ireland has been in its present form for some time. The question that he raised has been asked on a number of previous occasions. The hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to address it during this afternoon's debate.

Q6. **Mr. Gorst:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 July.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Gorst: Will my right hon. and learned Friend make it crystal clear to the Romanian Government that there can be no economic aid from this country or from anywhere else until there is a sign of genuine democracy in that country? Does he agree that the arrest of Mr. Leon Nico and two others about three weeks ago contrasts very strangely with the marauding club-wielding miners who were praised but not prosecuted, that that constitutes evidence that there is no rule of law and no justice in Romania, and that, until there is, there can be no proper democracy in that country?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Again, I think that the whole House will share my hon. Friend's concern about the fact that there is still, as I understand it, no news about the three student leaders to whom he referred. He is certainly right in commending the proposition that we should continue to withhold aid except on humanitarian grounds until there is real progress towards democracy and economic freedom, in particular including respect for human rights and the rule of law.

Q7. **Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 July.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Fraser: Is the Leader of the House aware that last night, following a cash crisis, at a meeting held in secret without proper consultation, it was decided to close one in 10 of the beds at King's College hospital in south London? When the Prime Minister said that the national health service was safe in her hands, did she mean 90 per cent. rounded to the nearest 100?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I think that the hon. Gentleman will find that the arrangements that were made last night were designed to prevent the kind of short-term shortfall in revenue that has occurred in the past, and to provide for a sensible and sustainable pattern of health provision within the health authority's area.

Q8. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 July.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Jack: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that under this Government 15 out of 15 taxpayers have enjoyed lower rates of tax, that a man on average earnings now pays £1,000 per year less tax than in 1979, and that 15 out of 15 taxpayers can look forward to lower tax rates under this Government?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am glad to confirm what my hon. Friend has said. Under this Government, there has been progress not only in the direction of steadily reducing taxes on income, but towards the abolition of borrowing, with a movement towards the repayment of Government debt and a substantial expansion of real spending programmes as a result of the real growth that we have been able to achieve.

Mr. Turner: I have a conundrum about the poll tax with which the deputy Prime Minister may be able to help me. How can it be fair that the good folk of Wolverhampton have to put £47 each into the safety net while the citizens of Wandsworth take £116 out?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The arrangements for the distribution of the safety net in relation to the community charge are in line with those approved by Parliament. I have a conundrum for the hon. Gentleman. When is the country likely to know what kind of arrangements the Labour party would put in place?

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): Will the Leader of the House tell us the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): Wearing another hat, I can tell the House that the business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 9 JULY—Opposition day (18th allotted day, 1st part). Until seven o'clock, there will be a debate on environmental policy on a motion in the name of Plaid Cymru.

Supplemental timetable motion and consideration of Lords amendments to the Social Security Bill.

Motion on the Education (Student Loans) Order.

TUESDAY 10 JULY—Estimates Day (3rd allotted day). Until about seven o'clock, there will be a debate on sea defences and the avoidance of sea flood damage in Wales, followed by a debate on gipsy sites.

Details of the estimates concerned and the relevant Select Committee reports will be given in the *Official Report*.

At ten o'clock, the question will be put on all outstanding estimates.

WEDNESDAY 11 JULY—Motion on the Charge Limitation (England) (Maximum Amount) Orders (1st day).

THURSDAY 12 JULY—Conclusion of the debate on motion on the Charge Limitation (England) (Maximum Amount) Orders.

Motion on the Army, Air Force and Naval Discipline Acts (Continuation) Order.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

FRIDAY 13 JULY—There will be a debate on policing in London, on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

MONDAY 16 JULY—Progress on remaining stages of the Finance Bill.

The House may also be asked to consider any Lords amendments which may be received.

The House will wish to know that subject to the progress of business, it will be proposed that the House should rise for the summer Adjournment on Thursday 26 July.

[Estimates, Tuesday 10 July:

Class III, vote 3, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food: agricultural support, animal health, arterial drainage, flood and coast protection;

Class XVI, vote 1, Agricultural support, Wales;

Class XVI, vote 5, Tourism, roads and transport, housing, other environmental services (including civil defence), education, arts and libraries, and health and personal social services, Wales; and

Class XVI, vote 9, Welsh Office administration, so far as they relate to sea defences and the avoidance of sea flood damage.

Class VIII, vote 4, Local environmental and planning services, etc., England so far as it relates to Gipsy sites.

Relevant document: Third report from the Environment Committee of Session 1989-90 on the Department of the Environment's main estimates, 1990-91, (House of Commons Paper No. 373). (To be published on 9 July).]

Dr. Cunningham: Can the Leader of the House confirm that, before the House rises, we shall have an opportunity to debate the imminent recommendations of the Select Committee on the Televising of Proceedings of the House and, I hope, approve those recommendations? It is in all our interests that that report is considered by the House and debated before the summer recess. Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman planning that that will happen?

As it is becoming increasingly obvious that the Government intend to attempt to solve their problems with the poll tax simply by throwing money at it, and as there is evidence that that money will be aimed partially at Conservative marginal constituencies, may we have an assurance that there will be an oral statement to Parliament about the Government's intentions before any announcement is made? I hope that we shall receive an absolute cast-iron assurance about that. Indeed, if the Government think that they have a good case, I hope that they will want to come forward and be honest about it. Surely it is preferable that those matters should be widely examined in this Chamber before the summer recess.

Last week's highest ever figures on crime in Britain, taken with the increasing widespread, disgraceful scenes, such as those of last night, of hooliganism, vandalism and anti-social behaviour, surely show that the Government's policies for Britain as a whole are failing to create a climate in which civilised social behaviour can flourish. Against that unprecedented background, none of which can be blamed on the football authorities, will the Leader of the House find time for a debate on the failures of Government policy in those areas before the summer recess?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: On the last point, I am afraid that the House cannot accept the simplistic analysis offered by the hon. Gentleman. He will appreciate that manifestations of hooliganism—for example, in the context of football—are by no means confined to this country; nor have they been confined to people from this country. In that respect, the Government are following the right policies. Our proposed implementation of the Taylor report urging the football authorities to install all-seater stadiums is clearly a move in the right direction. That has been demonstrated by the experience at grounds in Italy in the past few weeks.

On the hon. Gentleman's second point, the House will be kept informed of the outcome of any such considerations in the appropriate way. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is meeting the local authority associations this afternoon to hear their views on next year's spending. That is one factor that he will take carefully into account before he makes a statement to the House later this month, as is customary, on our proposals for the settlement.

On the hon. Gentleman's first point, I am glad to confirm that the report of the Select Committee on the televising experiment will be published next Wednesday and that I hope to arrange a debate on the subject before the House rises for the summer.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): Will my right hon. and learned Friend try to arrange an early debate on the workings and procedures of Parliament and of this House? Does he agree that, in the past 48 hours, we have seen perhaps the most shameful scenes that I can remember since 1983? Does he agree that Opposition

[Mr. Patrick Thompson]

Members in particular have behaved badly during the past 48 hours? Will he arrange an early debate so that the workings of this place can be improved and have more respect outside?

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): You should have seen Heseltine with the mace—those were great days.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I agree with my hon. Friend about the need to keep the procedure of the House continually under review. We had a debate on one aspect of the matter last week, and there will be another before too long. I am afraid that no debate in the House can be guaranteed to deliver proper self-control from Opposition Members.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Given recent reports that the Prime Minister is anxious to promote family life by, among other things, making divorce more difficult, can the Leader of the House tell us whether she is aware of clause 53 of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill which makes divorce easier? Is not that indicative of the shambles that the Government are in over the Bill? Will the Leader of the House announce next week that the Government will make things easier by dropping parts III and IV of that confused Bill?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As I understand it, the particular provisions of the Bill which relate to divorce law are founded essentially on the recommendations of the Scottish Law Commission. Therefore, they deserve careful consideration by the House. As a result of the arrangements announced by my right hon. and learned Friend the Sectetary of State for Scotland yesterday about the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill, it should be possible for due consideration to be given to all four parts of that significant Scottish measure. I am sure that the whole House will welcome that.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): Will the Leader of the House arrange for the Secretary of State for Health to come to the House and explain how he can possibly justify the closure of the children's ward and the proposed closures of a general medical ward, a general surgical ward and even a ward where people who have had radiological treatment can stay overnight in the Leicester royal infirmary? Does he appreciate that the refusal of the Secretary of State for Health to listen to Members of Parliament from both sides of the House is a continuing disgrace which should be debated in this place?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. and learned Gentleman has raised various aspects of the matter on more than one occasion. He must recall that the management of the resources available to local health authorities is essentially a matter for them to decide. He will also recall, as I have told him before, that the initial budget of Leicestershire health authority was significant and that it has been increased, since the initial figure, to £217 million.

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): Will it be possible some time next week to have a statement about the Prime Minister's meeting with Mr. Mandela? Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that that would give us an opportunity to appreciate clearly that this country is completely against apartheid, and that Mr. Mandela recognises it? Does he further agree that we would have an opportunity to demonstrate completely the lie in the Opposition's accusations that the Conservative party in some way supports apartheid in South Africa?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend about the importance of the meeting yesterday between the Prime Minister and Mr. Nelson Mandela. I agree also with the importance of his observation about the Prime Minister's determination as an enemy of apartheid. I think that the whole House will agree that that should afford justification for the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) to withdraw the shocking statement that he made some time ago, that the Prime Minister was a friend of apartheid. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that *The Sun*—yes, *The Sun*—has reached another new low? In yesterday's edition of that newspaper, if it can be called a newspaper, a certain Mandy Smith and her husband Bill Wyman were attacked and embarrassed by an article and photograph which clearly should not have been published. It brings us back to the question of the invasion of privacy that repeatedly takes place. I am not concerned with hon. Members or pop stars, I am concerned with the working class, because it is clear that, unless one has money in this country, there is no justice. What do the Government intend to do about that—*[Interruption.]*—and about articles of that kind? The people at large want an answer to that question.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not follow *The Sun* quite as closely as the hon. Gentleman does. On the wider matter, the House will have an opportunity of considering the recommendations of the Calcutt report in due course.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Will my right hon. and learned Friend arrange for two statements to be made next week? First, despite his earlier reply, we need a statement from the Secretary of State for Health about the difficult situation which the Leicestershire health authority faces, with hospital as well as ward closures causing great concern.

Secondly, we need a statement from the Secretary of State for the Environment, and the publication of the report from the National Rivers Authority, about the disastrous state of affairs that arose at Rutland water last year as a result of toxic blue-green algae. Such a statement is long overdue.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand that the Secretary of State for Health has made his position clear in relation to the position of the Leicestershire health authority, and I have nothing to add to that. The answer to the second point raised by my hon. Friend about the case for a statement from the Secretary of State for the Environment is that I shall bring his request to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that one question per Member at business questions enables us to get on more rapidly.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Does the Leader of the House accept any responsibility for what occurred

on Tuesday, when clear Government abuse was involved in trying to answer questions after Question Time on an Opposition day? Will he make sure that that does not occur again and that there is no abuse of parliamentary procedures and the rights of the Opposition? Is he aware that the Opposition preserved parliamentary democracy and accountability on Tuesday and should be congratulated accordingly?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: There was, I think, some misunderstanding between the usual channels on Tuesday. The difficulty of getting these matters precisely right was well illustrated by the fact that, on Tuesday, the Secretary of State for Health was criticised for answering questions in the form of a statement, whereas on Wednesday the Secretary of State for Scotland was criticised for answering questions at Question Time instead of making a statement. It is not always easy to get the judgment right.

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): My right hon. and learned Friend will be aware that the Prime Minister, in her important speech at the opening of the Hadley Centre for Climate Prediction and Research, uttered the trenchant phrase that Governments and international organisations everywhere must sit up and take notice and respond, and he, like all of us, will have received in the past couple of weeks a mass of cards from constituents asking us to mobilise political will in support of that general awareness. Therefore, will my right hon. and learned Friend respond constructively and generously to the suggestion made at the meeting of some 23 Parliaments in Ottawa some weeks ago that each Parliament there represented should hold a two-day debate on the papers and the conclusions of that conference?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot offer to make such a multilateral engagement at such short notice, but I shall certainly consider the importance of the point made by my hon. Friend, which he will have seen underlined, at least in general terms, by the success of the conference presided over by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment last week.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Is the Leader of the House aware that the United States Government have just passed legislation outlawing discrimination against disabled people and providing their 43 million disabled people with new opportunities in employment, housing and access to transport? Is not it deplorable that Britain's disabled people do not have such rights? May we debate that next week, please?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The right hon. Gentleman knows that the House has always been jealous of its right and obligation to take account of the need to look after disabled people properly. Obviously, I cannot respond by endorsing the particular proposals to which he has drawn attention, but I shall draw his general point to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Will my right hon. and learned Friend consider an early debate on trade union reform in the light of the report on the internal workings of the National Union of Mineworkers during the miners' strike and the source of its donations? Has he received any requests from the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), a member of the union and sponsored by it, about what in other circumstances the hon. Gentleman would describe as a cover-up and a whitewash?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have not received any such request, although I am not always prone to encourage requests from the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). In this case, members of the union in question will be able to take advantage of the increased rights conferred by the legislation passed by this Government to investigate the conduct and misconduct of the union's officers.

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Hon. Members: Answer.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Leader of the House aware that the NUM was hammered by his Government, by the judges and by all echelons of the British establishment during its year-long strike, and that in order to save its finances we made sure that the families of its members were fed and that we took on the Government? Will he make a statement admitting that the Government spent £8,000 million of taxpayers' money in one way or another in order to try to bludgeon the NUM into defeat, but we are still here and we are still fighting?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I suspect that the hon. Gentleman is one of a dwindling minority of folk who take such a view of history. The most important judgment was that passed by those who left the NUM altogether and formed the independent Union of Democratic Mineworkers.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): May I endorse the request made by my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) for a debate on the conduct of the affairs of the House, and extend that to include the ridiculous hours that we work? I know that that is an old chestnut in this place, but it still merits debate. I am not surprised that we have short tempers in this place, when on some evenings this place is really suitable only for insomniacs. Last week, we had three very late nights, and on Tuesday morning this week some of us were wakened in the small hours of the morning in the middle of our legitimate sleep. How can we conduct the country's business in that manner? Will my right hon. and learned Friend allow time for us to debate that matter once more?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am not sure whether to congratulate or commiserate with my hon. Friend. She was in bed at the time, but some of us were still here. Many proposals have been made directly to that end. It is difficult to make changes that will ensure compliance with a timetable. There is bound to be some elasticity in the way in which different people respond to different proposals. Some measures that are expected to take a short time to get through the House end up taking a great deal longer. I shall be ready to look at any specific proposals that my hon. Friend has to make, and I am sure that the House will join me in doing so.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I welcome the right hon. and learned Gentleman's recent announcement of the setting up of a Select Committee on Social Security. Can we look forward to a similar announcement, before the end of the parliamentary Session, on setting up a Select Committee to examine the affairs of Northern Ireland? Is not 16 years without close scrutiny in this place a shame?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As I think I have told the House before, if not the hon. Gentleman, that proposal is one of a number now being studied by the Select Committee on Procedure, which has taken evidence and is still taking evidence on that matter.

Mr. Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge): Do I understand that, once again, the Government intend to introduce a guillotine on Monday on Lords amendments to the Social Security Bill that relate to housing benefit for students? Will that guillotine apply also to the Education (Student Loans) Order, the saga of which continues? Perhaps, this time, the Government may get it right.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am glad that my hon. Friend looks forward to that matter being handled correctly. The motion on the Education (Student Loans) Order will be taken as last business on Monday, and can run for up to 90 minutes. Ahead of that, there will be a supplementary timetable motion providing for the consideration of all Lords amendments to the Social Security Bill that are covered by those regulations.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, East): May we have a statement next week about the conduct of Scottish Question Time, which is being regularly hijacked by English Tory Members to such an extent that Scottish Opposition Members, who represent more than 86 per cent. of Scottish constituencies, are finding it increasingly difficult to get called? Yesterday, for example, every Scottish Tory Back Bencher in the Chamber was called more than once.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would want to ensure that all parties were represented effectively and fairly during Question Time. It has never been the case that territorial questions, whether for Scotland or for Wales, have been reserved for those hon. Members representing constituencies in those countries, and I do not think that that should be the case.

Sir Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): Following the important announcement yesterday of changes to the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill, as a result of which—if I understand it correctly—it will not be possible for house conveyancing to be undertaken by financial institutions, will my right hon. and learned Friend ensure that the Attorney-General makes an announcement to the House, at the earliest possible opportunity, confirming that the ability of such institutions in England and Wales to provide conveyancing service under the Courts and Legal Services Bill will remain unaltered?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The changes in the identity of those who can undertake conveyancing services are being made separately for England and Wales and for Scotland, according to their legislation. All the changes are directed towards increasing the scope of competition. That is the intention of those matters that were the subject of the agreement announced yesterday in relation to Scotland. Those provisions have yet to be considered by the Standing Committee. Nothing done in respect of Scotland can affect the arrangements for England and Wales.

Mr. Stan Crowther (Rotherham): Is the Leader of the House aware that the decision to allow a two-day debate next week on poll tax capping will be welcomed? Can he give the House any assurance that the Government will take notice of anything that may be said during that debate about the damaging effects of charge capping for school children, the elderly, the disabled and all those who are most in need of support from the capped authorities? In other words, will that debate have any constructive result, or will the Government adopt their usual dictatorial attitude and dismiss all arguments out of hand?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Government will continue to conduct themselves in relation to the community charge and capping orders relating to that in accordance with the provisions of the law, hearing representations to the extent that is necessary. The charge-capping orders are intended, with the approval of the House, to ensure that charges are not set at an unduly high level to the disadvantage of a large number of people in the authorities concerned.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Would not it be a good idea to have a debate on behaviour and the procedure of the House, as suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson)? That might provide the House with an opportunity to give the Select Committee on Procedure some suggestions about how to deal with what is currently the worst parliamentary racket—the bogus point of order at prime television time?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I agree with my hon. Friend, and I am sure that you, Mr. Speaker, have the same anxiety about the importance of ensuring that points of order are used properly and not abused. I agree that that may be a point for consideration by the Procedure Committee. Of course, it is open to my hon. Friend to make representations to our hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) who is the Chairman of that Committee, and any hon. Member from any part of the House is free to do so.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Returning to the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill, does the Leader of the House not understand that the concessions mentioned yesterday by the Secretary of State for Scotland may mean that, although he may have dodged the guillotine, he has certainly not saved his neck? Does he appreciate that those of us who serve on the Standing Committee are now witnessing the possibility of the right hon. and learned Gentleman touting a shopping bag of wares around the Committee and selling one item against the other? That brings into startling clarity the failure of the House to deal with Scottish law reform. Surely the most sensible thing to do would be to withdraw the Bill altogether and to bring back an appropriate Bill next Session.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It would seem a curious thing to deal with Scottish law reform by abandoning the enterprise altogether. The agreement announced by my right hon. and learned Friend yesterday was welcomed by the Law Society and by the Consumers Association in Scotland. In the light of the sittings motion that has been agreed, it should now be possible for the Standing Committee to give due consideration to all four parts of that significant Scottish measure. I am sure that that is the most sensible way to proceed.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Will my right hon. and learned Friend find time for a general debate on manufacturing industry and its importance to the British

economy before we rise for the summer recess, as an announcement has been made about that this afternoon? Unfortunately, there has been an upturn in unemployment in strategic industries in Britain—in construction, textiles and other important manufacturing industries, such as the brick industry, in which huge investment has been made. That needs to be debated before we rise for the summer recess, so that the House can express to the Government its grave disquiet about the continuing use of high interest rates as the sole weapon to contain inflation and the great damage that that is doing to British manufacturing industry.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As my hon. Friend makes the point about high interest rates, he should not overlook the extent to which fast-rising unit labour costs, which are under the control of those who manage and work in the industries and which are rising at a higher rate than those of many of our competitors, contribute far more than high interest rates to rising costs and declining competitiveness. That is a point which he needs to take home and emphasise——

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: I worked in industry—you did not.

Hon. Members: That's the stuff.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Industry would benefit from a renewed contribution by my hon. Friend to that activity.

My hon. Friend will be able to raise that subject on at least two occasions between now and the summer recess, as we shall have debates on the Consolidated Fund and on the summer Adjournment, which will give my hon. Friend the opportunity to raise the matter if he so wishes.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): Talking about rising unit costs, let me ask the Leader of the House a House of Commons question and tempt him to make a statement next week. Will he confirm that the only civil service grade not to receive a pay increase in the recent pay round negotiations is the grade to which Members of Parliament's salaries are linked, and that, in place of a pay increase, that grade has been given merit awards? Is the fact that the Leader of the House has been answering questions on behalf of the Prime Minister so often lately an attempt on his part to earn his merit award?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I should be content to proceed under that system, but I am not sure whether all our 650 colleagues would be equally enthusiastic about it. I shall look into the hon. Gentleman's point.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Will Ministers give careful thought this weekend to the wisdom of agreeing with the Lords in their amendment on housing benefit which is to be debated on Monday evening?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The matter can be debated on Monday evening. That is a more satisfactory answer than I have been able to give on some topics.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Mr. —em, Campbell-Savours.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): You will lose your merit award!

Mr. Speaker: I know, but it is difficult to deal with two things at once. Mr. Campbell-Savours.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): In the light of the very courageous decision by Lady Elspeth Howe, the wife of the Leader of the House, to camp out in a cardboard box in the City of London as a protest against the Government's policy on homelessness, does not the Leader of the House believe that we should have a debate on the matter? Would he not have a personal contribution to make to that debate?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am always grateful to be able to pass on observations of a gentle kind to my wife, even if the hon. Gentleman mislocates the city; it was Westminster, not London. Moreover, it was not by way of protest against Government policy; it was by way of support for combined Government and voluntary organisation action to raise funds for voluntary organisations to tackle homelessness—an entirely commendable cause.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): Will my right hon. and learned Friend find time for a debate in the near future on British Rail? Has he heard about the latest example of Hutber's law, which is that this week Network SouthEast has announced that, in order to improve services in my constituency, it is to cancel 43 trains a day? My constituents are somewhat aggrieved about that.

Is my right hon. and learned Friend also aware that one of the fundamental causes of the chaos is that both British Rail management and, in particular, the trade unions, supported by Opposition Members, have refused to agree to local and regional pay bargaining? That is essential if we are to have sufficient drivers to drive enough trains to ensure that my constituents prefer to travel by rail because they can get to the place that they wish to reach without having to endure the current chaos.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Speaking as one Surrey Member of Parliament to another, I am prepared to endorse my hon. Friend's anxieties about the shortcomings on certain suburban rail services. I understand that the changes that are being made are intended largely to endorse those which follow from the absence of negotiations of the kind to which my hon. Friend referred. I shall certainly bring his point to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. We should like to see a real improvement in those services. I am glad that my hon. Friend still remembers with affection the inventor of Hutber's law, the late Patrick Hutber.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): May we have a debate on the subject of early-day motion 1238?

[That this House condemns the proposals by Bradford Health Authority to close either partially or completely Westwood Hospital, dump some two hundred mentally handicapped people into the community in order to sell off the land from this tranquil, sheltered site in an insensitive, money-grabbing operation which ignores people's needs, treats the mentally handicapped like pawns, rides rough-shod over the hopes of parents, staff and the community at the whim of stoney-hearted apparatchiks; and urges them to use the site for a small, hospital-linked village which would enable those who can, to manage a more independent life in a caring and collective environment.]

That debate ought to be held in the context of a general debate on care in the community.

[Mr. Bob Cryer]

Does not the Leader of the House realise that Bradford health authority has made a proposal to close an important hospital for the mentally handicapped in my constituency and that it has sent shivers of fear through relatives, often aging relatives, who fear for the future of their loved ones in that hospital? The health authority is damaging the prospects for the mentally handicapped. They are also damaging the prospects of, and the excellent work carried out by, the staff.

Ought not the Government to encourage the Bradford health authority to use this excellent sheltered site for a village community so that those who are able to live more independent lives close to the hospital can do so? Instead, we have this wretched proposal to close yet another important hospital for the mentally handicapped.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman will know that Bradford district health authority is considering the development of community-based services for the mentally handicapped, and no doubt it will take note of his point. He will also know that any proposal to close Westwood hospital will be subject to normal consultation procedures.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): May I ask my right hon. and learned Friend for an early debate next week on competitive sport in schools, as in some areas only one in eight primary schools are teaching cricket and in others soccer is not on the curriculum? The England team could not possibly lose if every boy, and some girls, learned to play soccer and learned the discipline of playing competitive sport with a referee. Is not that highly valuable? If they also learned to take penalties properly, would we not succeed where we did not succeed last night and give proper backing to the excellence and sportsmanlike activity of Gary Lineker and his wonderful team?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As always, my hon. Friend has managed to get a mini-substitute for an entire debate in his intervention in business questions. Broadly speaking, I endorse his approach and will bring it to the attention of my hon. Friend the Minister for Sport.

Mr. Tony Banks: Did the Leader of the House see the horrific pictures in *The Sunday Correspondent* of the slaughter of pilot whales in the Faroe islands and the equally horrific pictures in today's *Daily Mirror* of dolphins being butchered in Japan? As decisions are being taken at the International Whaling Commission, will he arrange for an early debate so that we can discuss the plight of the small and great whales?

If we cannot have the opportunity to debate whether the House should adopt sanctions against Governments that so barbarously exploit whales, may we have a statement from the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on the position of the British Government and what they intend to do to make the highest level representations to Japan, Norway, Denmark and, indeed, now the Soviet Union?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The exchange between the hon. Member and myself on this topic will follow familiar lines. The position of the United Kingdom on ending the moratorium on commercial whaling is well known. The Government believe that the species should not again be placed at risk by the hasty resumption of whaling. That position is being maintained by our representatives at the International Whaling Commission meeting that is currently taking place. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to take the matter further, I dare say that he will follow his usual practice of raising it on the summer Adjournment debate or perhaps on the Consolidated Fund Bill.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): May I return briefly to the Scottish Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill and to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Sir R. McCrindle)? It appears that the Government, in the person of the Secretary of State for Scotland, have accepted a fundamental objection to the principle that the financial institutions—the lenders—should not also represent borrowers in conveyancing transactions. If they are prepared to accept that as a fundamental principle in Scotland, it is quite beyond my understanding why it should not also apply in England and Wales. Would it not be proper for the Law Officers, who are responsible for these matters, to re-examine their position? It cannot be right up there but wrong down here.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The last point made by my hon. Friend surely fails to take account of the fact that one of the reasons for having two different systems of law—one for Scotland and another for England and Wales—is that they should from time to time differ from each other. It is surely entirely sensible for people to advance arguments such as my hon. Friend's, comparing one with the other and seeking to advance change. I cannot provide for the unification of two separate legal systems.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): As we shall all be hanging around for another three weeks, largely as a result of Government incompetence on the Scottish legislation, would not it be entirely appropriate to use the time productively by having another full-scale debate on the future of the Scottish steel industry—this time, in Government time—so that the Secretary of State for Scotland can say whether he is prepared actively to seek an alternative investor for Scottish steel assets? If such an investor were to emerge, would he be prepared to make British Steel sell the productive assets that it intends to run down to someone who is prepared to run them properly?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not think that, at this stage, I can go beyond the intention expressed by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland to ask the Scottish Development Agency to carry out an analysis of the prospects for the steel industry in Scotland.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Since the case of Jarndyce *v.* Jarndyce, has there been anything to match the Select Committee on Members' Interests in relation to the case of the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates)?

Will we have a statement before the end of the Session on the recommendations of the Select Committee on Procedure, because if oral questions are to be different next Session, the matter must be dealt with pretty quickly? Will something be done about syndication and about hon. Members handing in their own questions to the Table Office? The Order Paper is littered with questions about which hon. Members of all parties do not have a clue. That is a scandal and an abuse of the House of Commons.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The way in which the Select Committee on Members' Interests conducts its affairs is a matter for that Committee under the chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith).

I am very much aware of the importance of the recommendations of the Procedure Committee on questions. I had hoped to table my proposals today. However, I hope to table in the near future proposals designed to implement those recommendations. The whole House agrees that the recommendations are sensible and that we should press ahead with them as soon as possible.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Is the Leader of the House aware that the Conservative parliamentary candidate in Colchester was so desperate to avoid defending the poll tax that he said that he could not attend a public meeting because law breakers might be there? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman make a statement to the House confirming that the Cabinet have had some papers that say that the Rover sweeteners were illegal, as that candidate might not want to attend the Conservative party conference this year?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I did not catch the last part of the hon. Gentleman's rather contrived question. However, I am glad to endorse the quality of the Conservative candidate for Colchester. He is the son of the former hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford, the right hon. Lord Jenkin of Roding, and he will be a credit to the Conservative party, just as his father was.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): Does the Leader of the House realise how wholly unsatisfactory his answer to Leicestershire Members was when they raised the case of Leicester health authority? For his information, Leicestershire Members of all parties visited the Secretary of State for Health and he behaved in a cavalier manner towards the suffering of those who will be affected by the cuts.

Has the right hon. and learned Gentleman seen early-day motion 1237?

[That this House deplores the recent proposals for ward closures at the Leicester Royal Infirmary and the redundancies of 167 workers there, including doctors and nurses, announced by the local health authority as part of its plans to implement government cuts of £6 million from its budget; is deeply concerned that cutbacks at the Leicester General Hospital will lead to complete ward closures in the future; and calls upon the Secretary of State for Health urgently to inject vital funding into the local health budget to prevent the needless suffering of thousands of local people who are waiting to have operations and treatment.]

Does he realise that doctors and nurses will be made redundant as a result of what the health authority will do? When can we have a debate with the Secretary of State for Health on that important issue?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: This is the third question from hon. Members of all parties on this matter. As I said in answer to earlier questions, the matter has been raised in debates in the House by the hon. Gentleman. There will be an opportunity of doing so again either on the Adjournment debate or on the Consolidated Fund Bill. I can add nothing to what my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health has already said.

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): May I be the fourth hon. Member to address the Leader of the House on the health service in Leicestershire? I plead with him urgently to arrange either a debate or a statement from the Secretary of State for Health. Despite the platitudinous responses of the Leader of the House and of the Secretary of State for Health, there is a real crisis in the health service in the county of Leicestershire, as evidenced by the recent decision by Leicester royal infirmary to close 10 per cent. of beds and to get rid of 5 per cent. of nursing staff. As a consequence, waiting lists in some specialties will increase threefold over the next 12 months. If that is not a crisis, when is there a crisis in the service?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman should put those figures into perspective. Leicester royal infirmary is making service reductions that will involve the loss of 167 staff posts, but 122 of those are already vacant. In addition, the royal infirmary has some of the shortest waiting lists in the county, and staff and management at the hospital intend to do their best to maintain that record.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): Will the Leader of the House arrange an early debate on early-day motion 1223, which refers to the outrageous delay in dealing with nurses' grading appeals in Wales?

[That this House deplores the delay in dealing with the clinical grading appeals of nurses, health visitors and others in Wales; notes that after 20 months 3,088 appeals have still not been dealt with; deplores the unfairness that such slow progress inflicts on thousands of dedicated and caring professionals; and calls on the Secretary of State for Wales to take a personal initiative to clear up all remaining cases by September.]

This matter is now becoming a public scandal, and should be debated in this place, especially as the delays in nurse grading appeals, taken with the appalling decision to delay the implementation of Project 2000 for nurse training in Wales, are doing enormous damage to the morale of the nursing profession on which we depend so heavily. Please may we have an opportunity to debate those two matters on the Floor of the House in the near future?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: There may be an opportunity to debate those issues on the Adjournment or during the Consolidated Fund Bill debate. It is worth noting that just over half the 6,188 appeals lodged at local level have already been processed. The agreed appeal procedures are complicated and time consuming, but when the new clinical grading structures were introduced, the nursing trade unions insisted on retaining these complex procedures. Such a large and unprecedented volume of appeals has inevitably placed great strain on management and staff sides alike. Good progress is being made and the employing authorities are doing everything possible to deal with the outstanding appeals. Consideration is being given by Welsh officials, in conjuction with management and staff sides, to ways in which the procedures may be expedited.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): Would my right hon. and learned Friend organise an urgent debate before the summer recess on the conduct of local government in London, so that the House can discuss the matter of the millions of wasted pounds which is now coming to light in

[Mr. Richard Tracey]

Ealing, the thousands of empty houses in Labour-controlled boroughs and the millions of pounds' worth of uncollected rents? During such a debate, the Labour party might discover conclusively why it did so badly in London in the May elections.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I think that the whole House would benefit from a wider discussion of the matters referred to by my hon. Friend, including the underuse and non-use of local authority housing and the number of empty council flats and houses that could be used for the homeless. The 10 authorities that have the worst record in that respect are all Labour controlled.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I was going to call the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) to ask a business question.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): May we have a debate on why it is that, day after weary day for the past 10 years, we have been told by the Labour party that the health service is running down, with cuts here and loss of money there, given that the health service is improving daily? Everyone to whom one talks who has had any experience of the health service is singing its praises and saying how well they have been treated.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend is quite right to draw attention to the massive increase in real resources devoted to the national health service—an increase of 40 per cent. since 1979. For every pound being spent on the health service then, no less than £3 is being spent today.

Mr. Speaker: That was more of a free kick than a business question.

Points of Order

4.18 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order Mr. Speaker. As you know, Back Benchers who table questions can find themselves at your door if there is any argument about the way in which they have been tabled. Since April this year, the Government have increasingly adopted the practice of hiving off employment questions to a fellow by the name of Michael Fogden, the chief executive of the Employment Service. It is bad practice for the Government not to answer questions but to send them instead to a civil servant to answer. The result is that, when the Low Pay Unit and other bodies look for the information in *Hansard*, all that they find are the words, "Mr. Michael Fogden will reply to the hon. Gentleman."

I should have thought that *Hansard*—in which you, Mr. Speaker have some interest—should be able to pass on the information, not just to Members of Parliament but to other interested people outside the House, especially the Low Pay Unit. I ask you to deplore the Government's growing practice of not answering questions but sending them to someone who is not a Minister or even a Member of Parliament. They ought to put an end to that practice.

Mr. Speaker: I think that I have the correct reference here. In answer to a question on this matter, the Prime Minister said that questions about agencies were passed to the chairman of the agency concerned.

Mr. Skinner: That is not good enough.

Mr. Speaker: Well, I think that that is the correct position.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): When agencies have been debated in this place, the Opposition have always asked who is going to answer for those agencies. In every case Ministers have asserted that there will be no diminution of responsibility to this House. They have said that Ministers remain responsible and inevitably that means that they are responsible for answering written and oral questions in this House. That is an important principle which none of us wants to see eroded, but the Government appear to be doing just that. Therefore, I invoke your support to prevent that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: It is a very important matter, and I should like to look into it to refresh my memory as to what has been said about it. I agree that questions to Ministers in the House should be answered. I am aware that some letters written to Ministers are transferred to the chairmen of agencies. That is a different matter from parliamentary questions.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I welcome your statement that you are going to look at the matter. It is important that hon. Members pursuing constituency interests and other important matters of policy have the absolute right to answers to their questions from Ministers. Otherwise, the whole purpose of this House is nullified. It is a facet of Government behaviour at the moment that, in answer to questions and to letters about constituents, the responsibility is being deflected to agencies and civil servants in a way that I want to make clear the Opposition believe is unacceptable.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): May I, by way of reply, draw the attention of the House to the fact that there have always been arrangements for questions on certain aspects of Government behaviour to be answered by the agencies concerned rather than by Ministers. That kind of balance has always been necessary to maintain a sensible distribution of the work load between Ministers and other Government agencies. The proposal for the establishment of agencies has in general been welcomed by all parties in the House. Obviously I will look, as you will, Mr. Speaker, at the point that has been raised, but it should be considered in that context.

Dr. Cunningham: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. We cannot accept that. The Leader of the House says that the point is one of balance, but the point is that the balance is being altered. Whatever the Leader of the House may say about agreement about the creation of agencies, there is no agreement about Ministers wriggling out of their responsibility for policy matters and deflecting questions to those heading the agencies. That is a matter for the House. Questions should be answered directly between Ministers and hon. Members.

BILL PRESENTED

Computers (Compensation For Damage)

Mr. Harry Cohen presented a Bill to provide entitlement to compensation, in certain circumstances, to an individual who suffers damage by reason of the unreliability or lack of security of a computer, program or data; and to extend the application of the Data Protection Act 1984: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 20 July and to be printed. [Bill 180.]

Northern Ireland (Direct Rule)

4.22 pm

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Peter Brooke): I beg to move,

That the draft Northern Ireland Act 1974 (Interim Period Extension) Order 1990, which was laid before the House on 20 June, be approved.

The draft order renews the temporary provisions in the Northern Ireland Act 1974, under which government by direct rule continues in Northern Ireland. In presenting the draft order, I owe the House both an account of the Government's stewardship in Northern Ireland over the past year and an assessment of the prospect that these temporary arrangements can be set aside in favour of more permanent arrangements for the government of Northern Ireland.

As regards the Government's stewardship, our overriding aim is to provide good government for Northern Ireland. Given the challenges it faces, that requires a combination of policies designed to bring peace, stability and prosperity. As we know only too well, peace in Northern Ireland is still threatened by terrorism. By no means all of that comes from the republican side, but the principal threat to peace comes from the provisional IRA. It is difficult to see any kind of logic in the dreadful atrocities claimed—as though there was pride in the ownership of murder—by the Provisionals. But we must presume, from statements made on their behalf, that they believe that the continuation of the policy of killing and maiming will lead the Government, or some future British Government, to withdraw, or agree to withdraw, from Northern Ireland. If they do think that, they are wholly mistaken. No British Government—and here I am sure that I speak also for the parties in opposition—will respond to terrorism in that craven way. And if, for once, I can presume to speak for the Unionist population in Northern Ireland, the Provisionals are mistaken also if they believe that bombing and shooting will change the determination of Unionist people to remain British. The Provisionals' campaign is therefore not only vicious and depraved; it is also tragic because it is futile. It will not have its intended effect.

The first priority of the Government will continue to be to eradicate terrorism in Northern Ireland—from whichever side of the community it comes. All our policies for Northern Ireland are intended to contribute to, or be consistent with, that objective, but effective action by the security forces against terrorists will continue to be the key factor. The police and the Army know that they have the wholehearted support of Government as they courageously carry out what is, every day of the week, an enormously difficult and dangerous task. The whole House will wish to join me in paying tribute to their courage and determination. We intend to ensure that the security forces have the necessary resources—both physical and legal—for their essential work. Terrorism will continue to be dealt with by firm and effective action within the law. We remain ready to strengthen this further if necessary. We shall shortly be looking at Lord Colville's review of existing anti-terrorist legislation as a preliminary to bringing forward legislation to replace the present emergency provisions Acts before they expire in 1992. When there is a demonstrable need for new powers, I shall not hesitate to ask the House to approve them.

[Mr. Peter Brooke]

Despite the efforts of the terrorists to bomb jobs away, the Northern Ireland economy has been growing strongly over the past seven or eight years and it is continuing to improve this year. Visitors to the Province will see immediately the changes in Belfast and Londonderry—the new spirit of economic optimism following the privatisation of Shorts and Harland and Wolff. We have been frank about the Northern Ireland economy's structural weaknesses in our new economic development strategy, "Competing in the 1990s". We have set out in it our belief that, if Northern Ireland is to make its way in the Europe of the single market, its industry must become more competitive, its labour force more skilled and its culture more imbued with the spirit of enterprise. That will require much effort by individuals and the private sector. Though the Government will help, the drive must come from outside.

I am happy to say that, in the past year, there have been many hopeful signs of Northern Ireland's ability to bring off such a transformation in its economy. Unemployment is at its lowest point for over six years, though at 14 per cent. it is not, in any sense, at an acceptable level. In the past year or so we have attracted new industrial investors from France, the United States, Germany, Hong Kong, Norway, Korea, Great Britain and Japan. There are about 2,500 people employed in Japanese manufacturing companies in Northern Ireland, which compares very reasonably with the 3,300 in Japanese companies in Scotland. The increase in inward investment looks set to continue. Increasing job opportunities for all and improving living standards are a crucial ingredient to restoring social harmony and self-confidence, and reducing deprivation and communal division.

In the social field our aim is, through fair and effective government, to tackle the underlying problems of division and disadvantage in Northern Ireland. We have shown through the introduction of stronger legislation, which came into force on 1 January this year, our determination to ensure fair employment. We shall be studying closely the recommendations of the recent report of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights on discrimination. We have taken a number of measures, including the "Making Belfast Work" initiative, designed to achieve real and lasting improvement in conditions in the most disadvantaged areas. The Springvale initiative provides a further example. We are addressing with renewed vigour and success the underlying community relations problems, through encouraging greater cross-community relations and co-operation, and fostering respect for the different cultural traditions.

As I said at the start, our aim is to provide the best possible government for all the people of Northern Ireland. We can, I believe, justifiably claim that we have had some success in that task, but we are governing via the artificial mechanism of direct rule, under constitutional arrangements which are avowedly temporary, and which no one would dream of inventing as a long-term way of governing any sizeable community.

Even if we are, in practice, getting most things right —and that is for others to judge—we are doing so in the knowledge that, as Ministers, we are not directly accountable to the people of Northern Ireland. It seems to me and my ministerial colleagues that we have a moral duty to seek to find ways of returning substantial responsibilities to politicians who are elected by the people of Northern Ireland and who will be accountable to them for their stewardship of Northern Ireland affairs. But before I turn to the efforts that I have been making to address that issue, I wish to deal briefly with a broader constitutional issue.

Although the constitutional question has often seemed central to matters in Northern Ireland, I turn to it now in the hope of putting it to one side. We regard the position as clear. Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom in national and international law. It is part of the United Kingdom because that is the clear wish of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland. There will be no change in the status of Northern Ireland unless and until a majority of the people there want it. That seems unlikely for the foreseeable future. I believe that most in this House, and I number myself among them, would wish to see the Union continue, but the principles of democracy and self-determination mean that the people of Northern Ireland must themselves be the final arbiters.

By virtue of its constitution, the Republic of Ireland has since 1937 also claimed sovereignty over Northern Ireland. We do not accept or recognise that claim, which has no basis in our law or, equally important, in international law. That claim is, I know, seen by some in Northern Ireland, and in other parts of this country, as a major stumbling block to the development of constructive relationships. I do not regard it as helpful. Nor, however, do I believe that it should be a major preoccupation—for this reason: the Republic of Ireland has accepted, through the Anglo-Irish Agreement, that the status of Northern Ireland could be changed only with the consent of a majority of its people. In short, through that binding international treaty it has shown that it, too, supports the right of the people of Northern Ireland to self-determination. The agreement also enshrines the Irish Government's support for our policy of establishing local institutions of government on a basis that would secure widespread acceptance throughout the community.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Is not it a fact that the status of Northern Ireland as an integral part of this United Kingdom is not spelt out in the Anglo-Irish Agreement and that it contains no definition of Northern Ireland's status?

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman makes mention of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and I was seeking to put firmly on the record what is the position.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Brooke: Meanwhile, under the direct rule system we now have, I have found the framework for Anglo-Irish relations provided by the agreement valuable. Both the agreement and its working have demonstrated the desire of the two Governments to have a close and friendly relationship, and to tackle the reality of Northern Ireland's different cultural, historical and religious traditions.

Mr. Gow: Will my right hon. Friend allow me to intervene now? He has gone past the point in his speech at which I wanted to intervene, when he was telling the House that he did not think that the continuing existence of articles 2 and 3 of the Republic's constitution is of any great significance. Will he address his thoughts to this

element of that problem? In the McGimpsey judgment, the Irish Supreme Court relied specifically on articles 2 and 3 of the constitution in order to refuse the British Government's extradition request.

Mr. Brooke: I know that my hon. Friend—who follows these matters closely—will forgive me if I say that, in this instance, I do not think that the two matters were related.

While neither Goverment are seeking a new agreement, if a better agreement—which commanded widespread support within both sides of the community in Northern Ireland—were to be arrived at, that would prove to be an important step forward. Obviously, neither Government will abandon the agreement except for something that they regard as better. By what criteria might a new agreement be judged an improvement? I am clear that a central test will be the one that I have just mentioned—that it should enjoy widespread support not only within both sides of the community in Northern Ireland, but from the people of Great Britain and the Republic.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Brooke: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman, although, given the context of my speech, it is probably not in the interests of the House for me to give way to interventions.

Mr. Trimble: I know that the Secretary of State has said that a new agreement should enjoy widespread support, but does he not accept the indisputable fact that the existing agreement does not have, never has had and never will have widespread support?

Mr. Brooke: What the hon. Gentleman has said could probably be statistically sustained by opinion polls, but it is one of the reasons why we are addressing the matter today.

The second test would be that any new arrangement should address, at one and the same time, all aspects of the matter, including arrangements for the government of Northern Ireland and relations between the various parts of these islands.

I said on 9 January that any agreement between the constitutional political parties on new arrangements for exercising political power in Northern Ireland would have substantial implications for the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and that both Governments would be bound to consider those implications seriously and sympathetically. The Taoiseach also made clear later that month that

"if. . .a new and more broadly-based agreement can be reached by direct discussions and negotiations between all the parties involved, the Irish Government would be prepared to contemplate, in agreement with the British Government, a new and better structure, agreement or arrangement, to transcend the existing one".

I can confirm that, in the context of discussions about possible future arrangements for the government of Northern Ireland, we should give serious consideration to any implications for the agreement that such arrangements might have, and we would also consider any proposal—including any proposal for an alternative to the agreement—that would advance the underlying objectives of achieving peace, stability and reconciliation.

In this debate a year ago, my predecessor—my right hon. Friend the present Secretary of State for Defence, who is here today—was less than fair to himself when he described political progress as being virtually non-existent. He made great efforts to explore the scope for political progress towards an accommodation that might be reflected in the re-establishment of local institutions of government. In my own efforts to carry that process forward, I have been conscious of building on the sound foundations that he laid down.

There are a number of reasons for continuing this work. Quite apart from the long history of devolved government in Northern Ireland, and the need to find means of recognising Northern Ireland's distinct local interests and needs, there are two important reasons of principle. First, the present arrangements—under which local government has only the most modest powers, while the regional government has been absorbed into the machinery of central Government—mean that there is no effective vehicle for local democracy in Northern Ireland. There is a gap in democratic accountability which the House cannot contemplate with equanimity.

Without a regional political forum, elected representatives in Northern Ireland are left with little opportunity to influence the decisions of the Government, or to exercise powers that are available to politicians elsewhere in the United Kingdom or, indeed, in the Republic of Ireland. It has been said that a healthy community needs as its respiratory system a healthy and well-functioning political machine. The present weakness of local political involvement in the government of Northern Ireland is not a satisfactory long-term arrangement, and it causes a local power vacuum which terrorists and their supporters attempt to exploit to their advantage.

Secondly, and most crucial to the future of Northern Ireland and for those of us who share the agonies which that community is facing, perhaps the best hope of reconciliation between the two sides of the community is to be found in the achievement and maintenance of a long-lasting local political accommodation. It is the existence in Northern Ireland of the two traditions and the two identities, one of them looking, as it is free to do, to another jurisdiction to the south, with which it feels cultural and other affinities, which, above all, distinguishes its situation from that of other parts of this country. It is that which suggests that a distinct approach is needed, whatever the constitutional arrangements made for England, Scotland or Wales. Although the constitutional position, as I have explained, is clear, the internal and external dimensions cannot be wholly separated.

I should like to report to the House that during the past year modest but, I hope, valuable progress has been made towards the goal of new, democratically accountable, political institutions. In the past few months I have had lengthy discussions with the Irish Government, with representatives of the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland, with spokesmen for other parties in the House, and, indeed, with a wide range of well-informed people in all parts of these islands. I have been greatly encouraged by the co-operative and constructive spirit I have encountered, and by the evident willingness to work to find a way through the difficulties. I have also been gratified by the discretion my interlocutors have shown and which I have sought to reciprocate, and, finally, for the patience of the House. It has been important to the building of confidence that such discussions must take place on a confidential basis.

Our discussions have been, for the most part, on preliminary issues: how talks might begin, how they might be organised, within what timetable and on what agenda.

[Mr. Brooke]

Those matters are important, because, in any talks, the participants should have a clear understanding of what is involved.

Let me briefly explain the Government's position in these matters. First, we wish to safeguard the constitutional guarantees that I have described and to ensure that the future of Northern Ireland is determined by the free will, without intimidation, of the people there. Secondly, we wish to establish arrangements for government which give full rein to the interests of all the people of Northern Ireland, and which safeguard both traditions and provide for the full expression of both identities. Our overwhelming concern is for the people of Northern Ireland, and those who think that we have some other interest mistake not only our sense of responsibility for our own citizens but our determination to ensure that their rights—the rights of all of them—are respected and preserved.

As I said, we seek institutions of government in Northern Ireland which will be directly accountable to all its people, and to which they can all give their wholehearted commitment and support. We do not prejudge the detailed form that such political arrangements should take. The local politicians who are expected to work them must help to create them. Our broad criteria for endorsing any particular system are that it should be workable and likely to prove stable and durable, and that it must command widespread support and provide an appropriate and fair role for both sides of the community.

The exploratory discussions that I have had, especially over the past six months, have confirmed and, I believe, modestly enlarged the shared appreciation of the common ground. They may, too, have strengthened the realisation that a number of those concerned share perceptions, or at least accept others' different views and the reasons for them, to a greater extent than previously.

It seems clear that, if talks are to be held, they would need to embrace all the main relationships and, accordingly, have different strands. One strand would involve the Government and the main constitutional political parties in Northern Ireland. Its objective would be to work towards agreement on new arrangements for the government of Northern Ireland, within the United Kingdom, which might provide a basis for the transfer of political power, authority and responsibility to locally elected representatives in Northern Ireland on a basis that was widely acceptable. That strand would need to deal, too, with the relationship between Westminster and any new institutions in Northern Ireland. That dimension of the issue is perhaps mentioned less often, not because it is unimportant, but because we on our side are clear about it. The Irish Government, who, as I have mentioned, are committed by virtue of the Anglo-Irish Agreement to support our policy to transfer power to locally accountable institutions in Northern Ireland, would not be directly represented in such talks, although we would certainly wish to take account of any views and proposals that they might put forward.

It is generally agreed, too, that the process of talks and negotiations should cover the relationships between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, and the implications for the relationship between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. It is also, I believe, common ground that such talks would need to lead to the simultaneous drawing together of the different strands. That is, no agreement on any one aspect would be reached unless and until all parties were finally satisfied with the whole of what might emerge from such a dialogue.

I detect also a significant measure of agreement on the structure that such talks might have, and the role that each of the potential participants might fulfil in the various stages of the process. I would not, however, wish to exaggerate the extent to which views on those matters converge.

The more immediate difficulty—although I hope that the House will join me in seeking to surmount it—is to secure agreement from all the potential participants that the conditions to start dialogue now exist. As is widely known, most, if not quite all, of the potential participants to these complex and interwoven issues have preliminary preoccupations of principle, some of which appeared at first sight to be irreconcilable. Some of the potential participants frankly acknowledge these as preconditions to talking; others do not. My task has been to explore the extent to which those important preliminary points can be overcome.

It is, of course, the privilege and responsibility of all political representatives to express their own point of view. I cannot speak for others, and I would not want it thought for a moment that I claimed to. However, I should tell the House that it is my judgment that there now exists, following the exploratory discussions that I have held, a basis for entering talks intended to cover all the relationships—a basis which I believe would meet everyone's essential interests and which would allow all participants to enter talks on a basis of mutual respect without any sacrifice of important interests or essential principles. The basis would also be consistent with our international obligations, including those under the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

I pay tribute to the flexibility, imagination and resolution of those with whom I have conducted discussions. Many have, I believe, shown readiness to accept the challenges that the long history of Northern Ireland provides, and to respond, with a combination of strength of purpose on behalf of principles and of the interests of those they represent, with a capacity to seek a constructive way forward. I will not disguise from the House the fact that I had hoped to be in a position by now to give some indication of when it might be possible to move to formal talks. I am in fact not yet in a position to do so. It would no doubt have been convenient to be able to give such a report today, but this debate is a function of the parliamentary timetable, and no mystic significance therefore attaches to it. The provision for direct rule will shortly expire unless renewed. The important thing is that we have been making progress and will continue to seek to do so. That can only be on the basis of careful and detailed preparation of the ground at each stage, as has been my practice to date.

As the House is fully aware, I have throughout this process been careful to express the prospects in cautious terms. I have said that talks are possible rather than probable. I have also emphasised that, in the end, it is a matter for the potential participants and, in particular, for the political parties within Northern Ireland, to decide if and when the conditions for carrying matters forward exist. It is, above all, a matter of individual and collective political will. For my part, I will continue to work for a

way forward, since it is clear to me that constructive dialogue, particularly between the representatives of the two sides of the community within Northern Ireland, is of the greatest importance.

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): I was present to support the Secretary of State when he launched his initiative at the beginning of this year. He deserves praise for his endeavours. I hope that, despite a hiccup—I do not think that it is more than a hiccup—the talks will progress to a successful conclusion. The Secretary of State certainly deserves congratulations on his endeavours up to the present.

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for what he said.

I firmly believe that the vast majority of people in Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and Great Britain would wish the process in which we are engaged to culminate in success. Only the terrorists resist the process, since they can have no part in it, for the views of those who use violence count for nothing while blood is their argument.

4.50 pm

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): The Secretary of State has properly covered not only the immediate political problems that he faces, but the history of his first year in office and the situation in Northern Ireland. He is right to draw attention to the fact that there is still considerable unemployment in Northern Ireland —14 per cent.—and that in some pockets, such as Ballymurphy, the Shankill and other places, unemployment far exceeds that proportion and is far worse than anywhere else in these islands. It is therefore important that we attend to and address that problem.

I do not see the economy of Northern Ireland through the same rose-tinted spectacles as the Secretary of State. However, to be fair, I must place on the record the fact that "Competing in the 1990s" seems to owe more to my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) than to the Department of Trade and Industry and the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley). In view of that departure, one must ask why the previous 10 years were so disastrous.

I note also the profits of the Northern Ireland Electricity service which have just been announced. Obviously, the turkey is being fattened for Christmas and for privatisation. That, however, will not solve the economic problems of Northern Ireland. Energy costs must concern anybody who is seeking to invest in Northern Ireland.

We get the impression that the Government have only just started to turn their attention to the problems of 1992. That problem needs to be faced throughout the whole of the island of Ireland. Indeed, 1992 should be seen in that context. There should be discussions with Ministers on both sides of the water about the important transport and communication lanes that will be necessary if the economy of Northern Ireland—and of the island of Ireland—is to be properly joined with that of Europe.

The Secretary of State will be aware that this is the first year in which the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1989 has been implemented. The right hon. Gentleman is also aware that the Opposition thought that, despite the improvements that were made in this House and elsewhere, major defects remained in the Act. However, as the Act is now on the statute book, it should be seen to be made to work. It is gratifying to know that employers in both the private and public sectors have registered in great numbers and that the monitoring returns are now coming in. However, the mere completing of those tasks does not take away the real fear of employment discrimination that still exists in Northern Ireland, as recent reports of the Fair Employment Commission have shown.

Direct rule has often been described as everyone's second-best option, but that comment epitomises the complacency with which Northern Ireland is sometimes regarded on this island. There is a clear implication that a second-rate form of government is acceptable. Indeed, direct rule itself bears a large part of the responsibility for that complacency. In this case, not only is second best not good enough; it is, in itself, an appalling state of affairs.

Direct rule is an arrangement for the containment of violence, not for its elimination. Important though it is to limit the level of violence, after all these years, we must be more ambitious and look for arrangements which will stop violence altogether. I say this because there is a high price to be paid for the present arrangements. The price is paid first and foremost by the security forces, on which we rely to hold the ring until such time as a political settlement can be found. On behalf of the Opposition—and, indeed, the House—I express our sympathy for the families of the victims of violence and pay tribute to the efforts of the security forces.

But if our concern for the security forces is genuine and not merely rhetorical, the best assistance that we, the politicians, can give them is to establish widespread and positive agreement on the way in which the Province should be governed.

The present system also exacts a toll from the peoples of Northern Ireland as a whole. People with no connection with the security forces, or the paramilitaries, continue to fall victim to violence. Sadly, young people continue to fall into the clutches of the paramilitaries and tread the path to prison or an early grave. Yet part of the Secretary of State's speech today took away any sort of excuse that the paramilitaries—certainly on the Republican side—could have. The Secretary of State said:

> "I believe that most in this House—and I number myself among them—would wish to see the Union continue, but the principles of democracy and self-determination mean that the people of Northern Ireland must themselves be the final arbiters."

Unionism is not the policy of the Labour party, but it is important to note that Her Majesty's Government are stating that, despite what the paramilitaries put out, Great Britain has no strategic, economic or political interest in Northern Ireland which overrides the wishes of the majority of the people in Northern Ireland. That is an important point. So, for the paramilitaries, there is no excuse—their weapon must be persuasion, argument and co-operation. From what the Secretary of State has said, there is no excuse for any form of violence.

The civil liberties situation in the Province continues to blacken Britain's name. None of us can or, I hope, do take comfort from the departures from normal western European standards of law and justice—derogations from the European Convention on Human Rights.

Closely related to the absence of successful political arrangements is the economic deprivation which so affects

[Mr. Kevin McNamara]

the Province. As the Northern Ireland Economic Council has pointed out, nothing could do so much for the economic future of the Province as a whole as the establishment of political stability. It is that for which we are looking.

Direct rule is also politically corrupting. There is an absence of accountability which can be filled only by giving power and responsibility to the elected representatives of Northern Ireland. With the best will in the world, Ministers alone cannot exercise the degree of control and scrutiny over Government Departments and public authorities that a democratic system would involve. Direct rule almost inevitably concentrates power in the hands of civil servants and the managers of public authorities because, of their nature, Ministers are transient beings.

In this respect, the behaviour of the Government in undermining the status of bodies where there is some elected representation is unwise. In particular, the decision to overturn the decisions of health boards on contracts even further undermines the role of elected representatives. Furthermore, the increasing tendency to rely on appointees rather than elected representatives seems to me to store up more difficulties for the future. If elected representatives are not given responsibility for these matters, the Government are failing to provide incentives for participation in the political life of the Province. That applies to all parties in the Province.

Direct rule also has a pernicious effect on the political parties in Northern Ireland. The health of a democratic political system can be assessed by the vigour of political parties. Without institutions which allow the parties to exercise power and responsibility, the incentives to take part in public life are limited. With such institutions, the position of the elected representative would be enhanced. That would stop the drift towards the consolidation of rule by a small and unelected elite. There is a clear need to reverse the trend towards the concentration of power in the hands of appointed bodies. It would be far preferable that individuals should make their contribution as elected representatives rather than as unaccountable appointees, there at the whim of the Minister.

For all those reasons, a system of government which receives positive support from the people of Northern Ireland is required. The paramilitaries will not be defeated by direct rule. They will be finished when the vast majority of the population in Northern Ireland can wholeheartedly support the system of government under which they live. The present stalemate cannot last for ever. There is a crying need for effective institutions in Northern Ireland with a significant degree of power, if the possibility of genuine political progress is to be kept open and the hope of democracy kept alive. There is, therefore, a duty on all of us, the two Governments, the parties in Northern Ireland and the House to create new arrangements for the way in which the Province is governed.

The initiative of the Secretary of State in launching his series of wide-ranging talks with various participants was and is welcomed. We pay tribute to his brave and determined efforts to find a way out of the political morass. We wish him well in the endeavours which are to come. We understand his difficulties and the fear that protracted negotiations might run the whole process into the sands. We therefore hope that, before the House rises, he will be able to announce an agreed package. But we must still be careful not to allow artificial deadlines and constitutional necessities such as today's debate to prevent progress.

Above all, we hope that the Secretary of State can bring about the comprehensive accord on the three relationships to which he referred and which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) has correctly argued, must be dealt with in any overall, workable settlement. It is significant that, even if everything were now to fail—I hope and pray that it will not—the agenda has moved on to the acceptance of tripartite discussions. That in itself is a considerable achievement. It is a tribute to the Secretary of State, but also to the parties in Northern Ireland. But we must remember that the negotiations which we hope will take place will not do so in a vacuum. They will be watched closely by those who do not wish democratic politics to prevail and we can be sure that such people will do their best to undermine the efforts of the two Governments and of the constitutional parties. Furthermore, we must accept that the negotiations do not take as their point of departure a tabula rasa. We must look at what has already been achieved, particularly in the years since 1985, what the continuing failures are and how further progress can be made. We must build on existing achievements. We cannot hope to remedy the defects by sacrificing the achievements.

In November 1985, the House adopted the Anglo-Irish Agreement by an overwhelming majority of 473 to 47. The Labour party formed part of that majority because we believed and continue to believe that the agreement is a valuable instrument for dealing with many of the problems of Northern Ireland and of Anglo-Irish relations. At the same time we have always been clear that the Anglo-Irish Agreement should not be confused with the ten commandments. It is a means to an end, not an end in itself. If a better way forward can be found, the Opposition will be only too happy to lend their support. But we must make sure that the arrangements which may supersede, transcend, replace, supplant—or whatever word is used—represent progress and not a reversion to an earlier form of stalemate.

A major achievement of the agreement is that it has established mechanisms by which the British and Irish Governments can deal with each other and which have been more successful than anything in the past. Given the importance of co-operation between the Governments, not only in terms of security but with respect to political stability and a feasible set of arrangements for Northern Ireland, the mechanisms are an asset which must be protected. Co-operaton between the Governments, not necessarily the Anglo-Irish Agreement, is an asset.

The major defect of the agreement was, of course, the exclusion of Unionism and the Unionists. Until such time as the Unionist parties play their full and constructive role in acceptable political institutions in the Province, Northern Ireland cannot enjoy political normality of any description.

We do not underestimate the difficulties which the Secretary of State will face during the next few weeks. But considerable progress has been made which could not have been imagined when he embarked upon this enterprise. Nor would it have been possible if the leaders of the major political parties in Northern Ireland had not been prepared to sit down with him and work out, equally painstakingly, a way forward which they felt might be acceptable to the other side of the argument. The leaders of the Unionist parties and of the Social Democratic and

Labour party are to be commended for their patience and commitment in advancing the talks so far, as do the minority parties in Northern Ireland which do not have places in the House.

The task of the Secretary of State is not an easy one. We wish him well in his endeavours. We hope that, in association with the leaders of the parties in Northern Ireland and the Irish Government, he will be able to present to the House an agreed package for a durable and practical solution. He has travelled a long way in the past six months. The Opposition trust that he will successfully complete the course.

5.6 pm

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): This is the 15th renewal of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1974 which, as you will know, Madam Deputy Speaker, is a temporary device for the annual renewal of the authority of the Secretary of State of the day to govern Northern Ireland. Back in the 1970s I well remember a leading London newspaper complaining that the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) and his colleague who succeeded him, Lord Mason, strutted about Northern Ireland and behaved as if they had the authority to govern Northern Ireland. I made no such complaint about the attitude of the right hon. Gentlemen. I make no similar complaint today about the right hon. Gentleman who now holds that office.

However, my colleagues and I do complain about the mechanisms available to the present Secretary of State and the mechanisms that were available, and only those which were available, to his predecessors, because I am certain that all his predecessors were far from satisfied and that he is far from satisfied with the efficiency of the mechanisms that he is forced to operate under the 1974 Act.

Since the Secretary of State received his seals of office, he has endeavoured to improve dramatically those mechanisms. Those of us who have worked closely and, I hope that he will concede, constructively with him over the past 10 months hoped that today, with 10 months of discussions behind us, he would be in a position to chart out the course for what could have been the last renewal of direct rule in its present form. Our optimism prevailed until some 12 hours ago when it became clear that an operation was under way to bring down the shutters. No purpose will be served by castigating the Government of the Irish Republic and the parties in Ireland who share their views, because the seeds of disaster were sown and are to be found in the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985 which appeared to concede to the Dublin Government—any Dublin Government—joint sovereignty over part of the United Kingdom. So the Dublin Government can hardly be blamed for refusing to relinquish that apparent—I say "apparent"—role. The pro-Union people of Ulster would in all charity ask the people and Government of the Irish Republic to accept that we have not consented, and never will consent, to interference by any external Government.

Repeated opinion polls and a recent election in Upper Bann have proved conclusively that what consent there was is steadily diminishing. So there is obviously need for a fairer, more acceptable and much wider agreement, and I hope that Her Majesty's Opposition will support us in trying to design an agreement which really will deliver that which we all wish to see—peace, stability and reconciliation—but which the present agreement has signally failed to deliver.

That should not be taken as any anti-Irish sentiment. I would expect the Dublin Government to react similarly and reject any interference by me on behalf of the large Protestant minority in the Ulster county of Donegal. So they should not take it amiss when I say to them that I am asking for no privileges and no right to interfere in their jurisdiction which I am rejecting for our part, or for the whole, of the United Kingdom.

Those, even in this House, who adhere to the idea of a united Ireland and who insist that, in the meantime, Northern Ireland must be deprived of real democracy, should heed the views of someone who can be called an impartial observer. I refer to the distinguished churchman constituent of my hon. Friend the Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis), Father Denis Faul, who has assessed the situation as meaning that only 20 per cent. of Roman Catholics would vote for a united Ireland. That suggests that only 8 per cent. of the entire electorate of Northern Ireland would wish, if given the choice, to vote for a united Ireland.

This Parliament—and, I hope, the Parliament of the Irish Republic—will come to accept that if the right to self-determination and to have a workable and fair democracy is to mean anything, the wishes of the 92 per cent. of the Northern Ireland electorate cannot be ignored year after year.

I pay tribute to the integrity of the Secretary of State. In all our lengthy discussions, we have been impressed by his honesty and fairness. Although the main avenue appears to have been blocked off, hon. Members—especially those of us who have discussed issues and negotiated with him during the last 10 months—owe it to him to build on the good will that he, more than anyone, has established. We must assist him—I hope that he will have the assistance of hon. Members in all parts of the House—in achieving success in those avenues not subject to any foreign veto.

We have a duty to salvage what we can and to set about devoting the time that remains in the lifetime of this Parliament to taking every modest step possible to ensure that the people of Northern Ireland—all of them—enjoy standards of government and administration that are in no way inferior to those enjoyed by their fellow citizens in the rest of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

5.13 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): It is greatly to be regretted that the Secretary of State was not able to make today the statement that he no doubt anticipated being able to make. We must face the fact that the hands of a foreign Government—outside the jurisdiction of the United Kingdom—were able to keep a Secretary of State, answerable to the Crown for part of the territory of the United Kingdom, from making a statement of importance to the future of Northern Ireland.

The Secretary of State is to be commended on his patience, diligence and truthfulness in approaching the members of various parties to whom he has spoken. My contact with him, along with the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), was straight and plain. We did not agree about much, but we found the Secretary

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of State prepared to listen, to take aboard views that were put to him and to measure and weigh them in making decisions. We appreciate what he has done, and I think that I can say that on behalf not only of my hon. Friends but of the leader of the SDLP, the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume), whom I believe I see nodding assent.

The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley said that what we are discussing is not a happening of a few hours back. The happening took place in this Chamber, as the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) said, when the House overwhelmingly committed itself, following an undigested consideration of the matter, to the Anglo-Irish Agreement, without realising what the implications were or what the outworking would be.

Had the House made a correct decision, we would not be having this debate. We would not have heard the official Opposition spokesman say, in effect, "If we can get something to replace it, we shall be happy to consider it and then support it." The Secretary of State would not have used the language he used today.

In no community can we afford to set aside the views of any sizeable part of that community. That is strengthened by the fact that in no community can we afford to set aside the views of the majority of the people in that community.

The Secretary of State says that it is vital to obtain widespread acceptance for what is done. The Anglo-Irish diktat did not have widespread acceptance. The Secretary of State says that neither Government is seeking a new agreement. While I do not go with his reasoning—because he was not arguing, in the language he used today, for a new agreement—the right hon. Gentleman should be looking for a new agreement. The Taoiseach of the Irish Republic should also be looking for a new agreement.

Some of us who live in Northern Ireland, on both sides of the religious and political divide, must reap the sowing of the decision on the agreement that was made in this Chamber. We reap it every day. I reaped it recently when two gallant police officers, Gary Meyer and Harry Beckett, who protected me every Friday as I stood at Belfast city hall conducting religious services, were shot through the head by two vicious assassins. As I sat with the widows and their children, I thought of the sad weeping that we have had because of decisions taken in the House of Commons. No one in the House can wash their hands, Pilate-like, of what flows from those decisions. We need to face up to the reality.

What support is there for the Anglo-Irish Agreement? The Roman Catholic community is divided on the agreement. The SDLP supports it, but a large section of the Roman Catholic community says no to it. Sinn Fein says no to it, and Sinn Fein takes a sizeable slice of the Roman Catholic community's vote. We are told by people in the House that those who vote for Sinn Fein are not really voting for murder or for the IRA but are expressing a viewpoint, and they are opposed to the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The vast majority of the Unionists are opposed to it. That has been shown not by opinion polls, but by solid votes. All the Unionists in the House resigned their seats and put it to the test, and we know the result of that test.

We know that the majority of people in Northern Ireland do not back the Anglo-Irish Agreement. If they do not, and if the Government's criterion is that we should have a form of government which they do back, should not the House be applying itself to having the agreement replaced and superseded? I would go further and say that it is our bounden duty to seek to do that. That is why I and the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley spent time with the Secretary of State and, as the Secretary of State knows, at times put ourselves to great inconvenience—willingly and gladly, as he acknowledges. Why? Because there is an urge upon us to apply ourselves to the matter.

I greatly regret the road block. I would not be so pessimistic as the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley. I hope that the road block will be cleared. I hope that the Dublin Government will see that they are standing in the way of what could be a profitable move forward in Northern Ireland for a constitutional settlement which would help every part of Northern Ireland and all its people. I trust that there will be serious thoughts in Dublin tonight about the attitude and actions that they have taken. What they have done will be deeply resented by the people of Northern Ireland. It will strike into their hearts once again what the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley has said—that they perceived that the Anglo-Irish Agreement gave sovereignty to the southern Irish Government over the internal affairs of Northern Ireland. That perception has been demonstrated today.

The Secretary of State told us:

"Although the constitutional question has often seemed central to matters in Northern Ireland, I turn to it now in the hope of putting it to one side."

It cannot really be put to one side, because the Anglo-Irish Agreement did not, as he would suggest, for all time put out of the realm of controversy the status of Northern Ireland. Article 1 says:

"The two Governments affirm that any change in the status of Northern Ireland would only come about with the consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland."

It does not say what the status of Northern Ireland is. What is the status of Northern Ireland? By a constitutional imperative, as viewed by the highest court in Dublin and approved by Mr. Haughey, it is that Northern Ireland is part of the Republic and the laws that it passes have validity if applied to the whole island of Ireland. There was a reason why that was not spelt out. If it had been spelt out, its validity would have been tested before the courts and the Government knew that they could not win on that issue. That is why there were two Sunningdale agreements. One was signed by the south and one by the north.

Mr. Trimble: The hon. Gentleman is expounding, carefully and accurately, article 1 of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Does he agree that the crucial part of it is the reference to the fact that there would be no change in the status of Northern Ireland? It says, "would", not "could". The Secretary of State misquoted that. Could is normative, whereas would is merely descriptive. Therefore, there is no undertaking on the status of Northern Ireland and what should happen in the future.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I accept that, but I come back to the Sunningdale agreement, which had a section, signed by the United Kingdom, spelling out the status of Northern Ireland. But that was omitted from the document signed by the Republic. Why? Because the Prime Minister knew that, constitutionally, he could not sign that because it would have been challenged.

There were also two Anglo-Irish Agreements each describing the Taoiseach in different terms and each describing the British Prime Minister in different terms.

That was done for the same reason. The people of Great Britain may be hoodwinked, but the people of Ulster will not be. We know what is written into the constitution of the Irish Republic. We imbibed it with our mothers' milk. We know it exactly. It came as no surprise to anybody in Ulster what the High Court intended to do. Everybody knew the situation.

I am glad that in the south of Ireland there is now a strong lobby in favour of the removal of articles 2 and 3. I am glad that Mr. Jack Lynch, a former Fianna Fail Taoiseach, now says that the time has come to get rid of articles 2 and 3. It will be a happy day for the whole of Ireland when that obnoxious claim is removed from the constitution of the Irish Republic. Then, for the first time, we shall have a normal constitutional relationship, and from that we will be able to achieve a neighbourliness which is not possible at present.

We cannot accept the Secretary of State's interpretation, and that will come as no surprise to him. But I plead with him to think carefully about the criterion. If the criterion is widespread acceptance, he does not have that for the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Therefore, he should think about setting himself to achieve a new agreement, no matter how difficult that may be. I emphasise that.

I worry about a paragraph on page 5 about enlarging the constituency, where the Secretary of State says:

"It should enjoy widespread support from Northern Ireland, Great Britain and the Republic."

If he intends to submit that to the people of Great Britain, he should remember that I was the first person in this place to say that we should ask the people of Great Britain what they wanted to do with Northern Ireland, and I was severely castigated for it. I have heard many people saying that they want to cast out Northern Ireland. They might get a rude surprise. Perhaps that is why the Government are delaying asking the people of Great Britain.

The internal affairs of Northern Ireland are no concern of the Republic, but neither are the internal affairs of the Irish Republic any concern of mine. I do not campaign against the Irish Republic. When the press pushes me to make statements, I refrain from doing so. It is no concern of mine, and the Republic is entitled to do whatever it wishes.

The Secretary of State needs to define the issue. I do not want to think that he is now suggesting that if there is to be a final package, the part relating to the internal government of Northern Ireland must be submitted to the people of the Irish Republic before it can be implemented in Northern Ireland. I hope that the Government will clarify that.

Much has been said about the majorities. The people of Northern Ireland can stay within the United Kingdom provided that there is a majority in favour of that. That does not mean widespread support; it could be a majority of one. Similarly, if they want to join the Irish Republic, they can do so, provided that they have a majority in favour of that. What if the people of Northern Ireland want to go somewhere else? Why is there no provision for that majority? All majorities should have equal status. If power is given to one, it must be given to all. Perhaps the majority of people in Yorkshire would like to go somewhere else. It is ridiculous that, every time we debate Northern Ireland, we are told that it is up to the majority to say, "Goodbye".

When I was a boy of seven, I was told that the Protestants would be bred out. Protestants also breed; they have families. It would be foolish of the House to think that a majority will come about through some form of birth control or birth explosion. There will always be a majority in Northern Ireland wishing to remain a part of the United Kingdom, and if the United Kingdom treats them in the same way that it treats those in other parts of the United Kingdom and if they give them the same benefits, that will not change.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): It used to be the standard procedure of the Northern Ireland Office to tell English Members that the Catholic population was projected to exceed the Protestant population at some future time—I note that the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) nods—and it was suggested that all wise politicians should prepare themselves for that.

Rev. Ian Paisley: That might be true. I was never briefed by the Northern Ireland Office. I had the great privilege of escaping from its falsehoods and blatant lies. I was in a happy position.

The House should remember that not all Roman Catholics are republicans. We need to wake up to that fact. Many Roman Catholics vote for Unionist candidates. Indeed, I am sure that all Unionist Members receive post from Catholics. I cannot tell how people vote in a Westminster election, but I can tell how they vote in a European election. I have stood by the election box and noted the percentages. I was amazed at how many first preference votes for "John Hume" had "Ian Paisley" as second preference, although I did not notice many first preferences for me giving John Hume as second preference. That just happens to be a fact of life. I know that a box in an entirely Roman Catholic community contained many, many votes for me. I am sure that the SDLP would also claim that Protestants vote for its candidates, and that is probably true.

When I referred to a great birth explosion, I noted that the former Secretary of State for Northern Ireland—the righ hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South—laughed. Perhaps he wants to be a party to that, or perhaps he wants to distance himself from it. He should disabuse himself of his folly, because the majority is there, and it will remain.

I am concerned at the inference in speeches in the House—it appeared in the speech of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North today—that a constitutional settlement will somehow take the IRA off the streets of Northern Ireland. That is a fallacy. A few days ago at Bowdenstown, Gerry Adams and his friends made it clear that it mattered not what initiatives were being taken, the IRA would continue to turn on the heat in Northern Ireland. If we move towards a constitutional settlement, there will be many vicious murders, and soft targets will be attacked. There can be no doubt about that. Even when such a settlement exists, the IRA will continue its campaign. No one should be so naive as to think that a constitutional settlement would end the IRA menace.

People should read the history of the Irish Republic. At its birth, it faced a similar problem with the Irregulars, headed by De Valera, who murdered their kith and kin in the Irish civil war. That has been almost forgotten. Kevin O'Higgins was the man who settled that by saying that the only way to deal with republican murderers was to take

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them out of society. He brought peace to the troubled south, but he paid the price for doing so. He was murdered by those who realised that he had won. However, because he had won, the Irregulars became respectable and De Valera went into the Dail. He became Prime Minister and his successor is Charlie Haughey. When people read that history, they will understand what Irish republicanism is all about and the way to deal with it.

Terrorism and evil murder are stalking the land in Northern Ireland. I appeal to the Government not to handcuff the security forces. They must give the police the money that they need. More money than ever before is needed by the police in Northern Ireland. They approach leading figures and say that they are under severe threat —they want to provide security, but can provide only a certain amount because of monetary considerations. The Government will have to put the sinews of war and finance into their campaign against terrorism.

Where do we go from here? The Secretary of State must dedicate himself to progress. All hon. Members should make sure that people know our intent that the talks should take place. Finally, the press should quit speculating. I read in today's newspapers what was said at the talks and what concessions were made as if they had been real negotiations. But they were talks about talks; we have not yet reached the negotiating table where all those matters will be discussed. I trust that when there is a settlement, the Secretary of State will be man enough to put it to the people of Northern Ireland, not at an election but at a referendum so that they can accept or reject it.

5.40 pm

Mr. John Hume (Foyle): I join the Secretary of State in saying that everyone in Ireland and in Britain wants his initiative to succeed. Contrary to the impression given by others who have spoken in the debate, the good will of the Irish Government in the matter is totally unquestionable.

I should place on record my own appreciation for the immense efforts that the Secretary of State has put into a difficult task, the sensitivity that he has shown to different points of view and to the integrity and dedication with which he has pursued the objective of bringing us all round the table. We all acknowledge that he has made considerable progress, and I look forward to the talks. I also pay tribute to the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) and the leader of the Alliance party, who is in the Strangers' Gallery, for the integrity and good will with which they have approached the talks. We must develop that spirit in the full knowledge that we face a difficult task because there are deep differences and divisions. The talks will be a serious beginning in dealing with the problems.

We are helped by the wider atmosphere in which we work today. The Unionists are celebrating the 300th anniversary of the battle of the Boyne. Some feared that the celebration might turn out to be divisive, but we should remember who was there in 1690. In addition to the Irish, the Danes, the Dutch, the Germans and the French fought on both sides.

Since 1690, all those countries have settled the differences between them, but Ireland has not. They have settled many deeper differences and have moved on to a wider European scene. There are lessons for us in that, as the origins of our problems are European. From a nationalist Republican point of view, the English presence in Ireland was due to Ireland being considered the back door for her European enemies. The plantation of Ulster was England's response to O'Neill's and O'Donnell's links with Spain. The Act of Union was England's response to the French invasion of Ireland in 1798.

Today we have a new Europe, and Ireland is rebuilding her links with Europe, as is Britain. That has profound implications for the traditional reasons that are given for using violence in Ireland. We rightly condemn them for that and we must continue to condemn unequivocally. One has only to look at the statistics of death in Northern Ireland to see that 55 per cent. of the people killed in the past 20 years were ordinary people going about their daily work who were blown to bits or shot in so-called mistakes or accidents or in tit-for-tat killings. That will continue in future if the terrorists continue their campaign, and they know that. What is their justification? They say that Britain is an island defending her own economic and strategic interests by force.

Can anyone seriously say today that Britain has an economic interest in Ireland, when the British taxpayer is paying £1·5 billion a year to keep our economy going? Does anyone believe that Britain has a strategic interest in Ireland in a nuclear world, and that a military presence is necessary for strategic reasons? Does anyone believe that, when everyone knows that, if the violence stopped, the troops would be off the streets in a matter of weeks?

We have the legacy of our past, but the meaning of sovereignty and independence has changed. Today we have shared sovereignty and interdependence. The issues about which we quarrelled in the past are gone, but our legacy is a deeply divided people. What does the IRA say about that? It says that we are being prevented by force from exercising the right to self-determination. Is that true? The people who live in Ireland are deeply divided about precisely how to exercise their right to self-determination. Agreement on how to exercise that right cannot be achieved by force or physical violence, but only through dialogue and peaceful means.

We might follow the example of the European peoples who contributed to the origins of our problems. Fifty years ago, when millions of people were being slaughtered across the continent and cities were being devastated, had someone stood up in the House and said that in 50 years' time the British Prime Minister would be sitting in a Council of Ministers which had planned a single Europe and was moving towards European political union, yet the Germans were still German and the French were still French, everyone would have said that that person was a dreamer or a fool.

But that has happened. We who are trying to resolve a conflict might ask why. It has happened because people have set aside the past. We are very good at dragging up the past; our respect for the past paralyses our approach to the future. It is easy to drag up the past to justify our attitudes to the present, but everyone does that and it keeps the conflict going.

Let us leave aside the past and agree to build institutions in Ireland that respect our differences, but we must do that in agreement, as agreement is at the heart of the matter. There is no way in which we can solve our problems by one section of our people countering another. It is no longer about pushing difference to the point of

division; it is about accommodation and respect for difference. Having set up in agreement those institutions which respect our differences, we can then work the common ground, which all hon. Members representing Northern Ireland would agree is substantial. Our economic interests in particular will increase as we move into the single market. By spilling our sweat rather than our blood, we can break down the differences between us and grow together at our own speed. That is the strategy that I believe we should follow.

After a terrible 20 years, there is a spirit abroad that demands political leadership and talks between the Governments involved as soon as possible. I wish the Secretary of State well, and I am confident that it will not be too long until the remaining loose ends are tied up, so that we can begin the difficult, but I hope successful, process of bringing lasting peace to our people.

5.49 pm

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): I hope that the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) will not misunderstand me when I say that I greatly admired the speech that he has just made. This is a special debate. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland opened it with a characteristically thoughtful speech. Each of the three Members of Parliament from Northern Ireland who have spoken so far in the debate, each of whom has been involved in the preliminary discussions with my right hon. Friend, has paid tribute to his personal qualities and patience. I took no part whatsoever in the talks about talks, but those who have not seen the Secretary of State in action at first hand know enough about him to realise that he has precisely those qualities that are required to bring about agreement in the Province.

My right hon. Friend referred frequently to the Anglo-Irish Agreement. May I correct what I think may have been a misunderstanding on his part? He said:

"the Republic of Ireland has accepted, through the Anglo-Irish Agreement, that the status of Northern Ireland could be changed only with the consent of a majority of its people".

The implication of my right hon. Friend's words was that, before 15 November 1985, the Irish Government believed that the status of Northern Ireland could be changed otherwise than by consent.

The Government have frequently claimed that one of the prizes of the Anglo-Irish Agreement was that the Irish Government acknowledged for the first time that there could be a change of status only with the consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland. I have with me, however, the text of the communiqué that was issued after the Sunningdale agreement was signed 17 years ago —12 years before the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The text of the Sunningdale agreement reads:

"The Irish Government fully accepted and solemnly declared that there could be no change in the status of Northern Ireland until a majority of the people of Northern Ireland desired a change in that status."

The House will note that the words of the Anglo-Irish Agreement reproduced verbatim the words that appeared in the Sunningdale communiqué in 1973.

Mr. Trimble: Will the hon. Gentleman compare article 1 of the Anglo-Irish Agreement with the Sunningdale agreement? He is right to say that, to a large extent, the Irish Government's statement in the Sunningdale agreement was on similar lines to their statement in the Hillsborough agreement of 1985. Will he, however, please check that the word "could" that was used in 1974 became "would" in 1985, which changes the meaning?

Mr. Gow: The hon. Gentleman has made that point already. I do not quarrel with it, although I think that he goes too far in asserting that there is a difference between "could" and "would".

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): Does not the hon. Gentleman agree that there is a substantial difference between that which is contained in the communiqué, which leads to no commitment by either Government in legal terms, and that which is written in a solemnly binding international agreement? Does he not agree with the suggestion that that which is contained in the solemnly binding international agreement is binding on both Governments and that anything which is stated in the communiqué does not bind either Government?

Mr. Gow: The House will remember that it was agreed that the Sunningdale agreement should be registered with the United Nations, whatever useful purpose might have been served by such registration.

Mr. Mallon: I was referring to the communiqué.

Mr. Gow: The next passage in my right hon. Friend's speech was very startling. It seemed to me that my right hon. Friend was calling for a new Anglo-Irish Agreement. The words that led me to that conclusion were these:

"There is no reason why the present agreement should be the last word. While neither Government are seeking a new agreement, if a better agreement—which commanded widespread support within both sides of the community in Northern Ireland—were to be arrived at, that would prove to be an important step forward."

What is so striking about my right hon. Friend's choice of words is that he asserts that a precondition for a successful agreement is that it should command widespread support within both sides of the community.

Before the Cabinet gave its final approval to the agreement, the question that was asked in the Cabinet, and that one would expect to be asked, was, "What about the Unionists?" The architects of the 1985 agreement—the Foreign Office, the present Foreign Secretary and to a very small extent indeed my right hon. Friend the present Secretary of State for Defence—were obviously asked by the Cabinet what the reaction of the Unionists would be. The Foreign Office and the Northern Ireland Office said that, if signed, the agreement would be welcomed in Dublin, the Vatican, Roman Catholic Europe and, above all, the United States.

The question that was then put was, "You've told us how pleased all these people will be, but what will be the reaction of the Unionists?" It was not a bad question. The answer that was given to the Cabinet was, "Paisley will huff and puff, but most Unionists will be well satisfied with the agreement." With that assurance, the Cabinet gave its approval to the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

My right hon. Friend the Minister of State is in his place. He answered a debate in April when I reminded him of this truth. However, his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was not in the House that day. I do not rebuke him, but my right hon. Friend the Minister of State knows that the Prime Minister was misled. Five weeks after the agreement was signed, the Prime Minister gave an

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interview to the *Belfast Telegraph*. She was asked about the reaction of the Unionists during those five weeks. In that interview, the Prime Minister said:

"The reaction has been much worse than I expected. One is trying to find out why."

Mr. Trimble: Is she still trying?

Mr. Gow: No. I am saying that we have made progress.

Mr. David Porter (Waveney): Are we not falling into the Irish trap of fighting old battles time and again? We won the argument about the Anglo-Irish Agreement. My hon. Friend knows full well that I voted with him against it. We won the argument, but we lost the vote. There is only one thing that I know today: that three constitutional parties want to make progress. I do not know whether the talks about talks have run into quicksands. I hope not. Until and unless the Secretary of State comes to the House and says that they have run into quicksands, I am willing —indeed, eager—for him to continue his negotiations. Please let us not say things in this House today that will make that less likely. Please let us get on with this debate, which is about direct rule. There is no alternative to it. Let us try to make progress.

Mr. Gow: I am praising my right hon. Friend, who said something this afternoon that none of his predecessors said. He told the House, in this most important debate, which has been conducted with intense good will on both sides of the House—which I want to continue—that any agreement made with the Government of the Irish Republic must command

"widespread support within both sides of the community".

He knows very well, as does every hon. Member, that the Anglo-Irish Agreement does not command widespread support in the Province. I am praising my right hon. Friend for acknowledging the defect in the agreement. Northern Ireland cannot be governed differently from the rest of the kingdom, save with the consent of a majority of the people who will be governed differently. We do not have that consent, or the consent for the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

I have sent my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State an alternative to the agreement. He specifically said that, if a better agreement were to be arrived at, that would prove to be an important step forward. I think that it would.

My right hon. Friend has been engaged for several months in the talks about talks. His conduct has been praised by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) and those participating in the talks. He had hoped to be able to tell the House this afternoon that agreement had been reached and that talks would begin in the autumn. He regrets that he has not been able to secure that agreement. I understand fully his wish, which is declared in the agreement, that we should try to establish a form of assembly in Northern Ireland that would be supported by all the political parties, whose powers and power-sharing arrangements would be agreed. We have tried this before, and we were committed by the agreement to try again.

That policy has the support of the Irish and British Governments. I doubt whether the arrangement that my right hon. Friend envisages—a power-sharing assembly with legislative powers—will provide a stable structure of government for the Province. On the contrary, such an assembly, which by definition would mean that it did not enjoy the confidence of any of the political parties, would be built not on past success but on past failure.

Is there a different and better way forward in Northern Ireland than that proposed by my right hon. Friend? I believe that there is—the policy fashioned by Airey Neave when he was shadow Secretary of State, a post that he held from February 1975 until his assassination on 30 March 1979. The Conservative manifesto of 1979 said that, in the absence of devolved government, we would seek to set up regional councils with widely devolved powers over local councils.

There is not such a gulf between my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and myself. I want administrative devolution; he prefers, apparently, legislative devolution. That is certainly the implication of article 4 of the agreement. There is no permanent resting home between the fact of the Union, to which he referred in his speech, and the claim in articles 2 and 3 of the constitution of the Republic.

The trouble is that the Anglo-Irish Agreement and the idea of an assembly with legislative powers were an attempt to split the difference between the fact of the Union and the claim of the Republic to a place of special privilege in relation to Northern Ireland. Instability will continue, even if we can cobble together a power-sharing executive and assembly.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will reconsider—he has wisely said that he will consider all proposals presented to him in good faith—Airey Neave's proposals, because Airey had studied this for about four years. We should confer modest additional powers on the 26 district councils. That proposal is not anathema to my right hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench. Even the hon. Member for Foyle would be quite happy to see modest additional powers conferred on the 26 district councils.

Mr. Mallon: I am reluctant to interrupt again, but in the absence of my hon. Friend the Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) may I assure the hon. Gentleman that my hon. Friend would take no satisfaction from his proposal. To avoid any misunderstanding, I feel it necessary to inform him of that.

Mr. Gow: I am grateful to the representative of the Social Democratic and Labour party for saying that it is opposed to modest additional powers being conferred on district councils. I am grateful for that elucidation, but I say that we should confer modest additional powers on them. Further, we should set up a regional council with powers analogous to those enjoyed by county councils in England and by regional councils in Scotland. We could proceed slowly, but administrative and not legislative devolution is required.

We should cease to legislate for Northern Ireland by unamendable Order in Council. The policy that I have outlined could and should guarantee to Roman Catholic and nationalist fair treatment under a just law, which is of the first importance in Northern Ireland.

I wish my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State well in the task that he has set himself, but if the talks are not able to reach agreement I hope that he will reflect again on the policy that was fashioned in 1979, which died with the assassination of Airey Neave.

6.8 pm

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I apologise to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and to all hon. Members for the fact that I shall have to leave this debate before long.

I place on record the fact that I have not heard or seen reported for the past two or three decades a debate that has carried as much hope as today's debate. It is a privilege to be here at a moment of tremendous hope, although that hope has not yet come to flower, as some of us had hoped it might, but is still in the bud. That hope is carried not only in the words of the Secretary of State—we can all understand his position—but in the important and perhaps almost historic speeches that we have heard from the leaders of all the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland, with the exception of the leader of the Alliance party, who is not in the Chamber. However, he is here in the Gallery, if I am permitted to say so. [HON. MEMBERS: "You are not."] I am reminded that I am not. We have heard many important statements and we all understand why people are covering ground for themselves in the difficult position in Northern Ireland. But we can all take a great deal of hope from the tone of the speeches.

History is important, but it is the curse of Ireland, and timing is often important as well. Once again, this debate comes at a most wretched time. The Secretary of State has been involved in delicate negotiations. It would be fair to say, to coin a phrase of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), that deadlines should not be part of that process. However, the Secretary of State, for reasons that we all understand, has had a deadline imposed on him by this debate. It would have been impossible for him to come here and not to make a statement about the progress of the talks which we all know have been going on. It is clear to us all that he has had to make that statement before—perhaps only shortly before—he would have liked to. That is a shame.

I join other hon. Members in congratulating the Secretary of State on a remarkable achievement. He has, without doubt, united efforts where most of us thought that it was impossible. He has laid foundations where none of us believed that it was possible to do so and he has created hope in Northern Ireland where many of us expected to see only despair for a long time to come. The House, the people of Northern Ireland and the cause of peace are greatly in his debt. It is right at this time to add my appreciation—and, I suspect, the appreciation of all hon. Members—for the leaders of the constitutional parties who have taken part in the process. All of them have displayed a great courage and have shown that they put the peace of Ireland before their own sectional interests. The fact that we have not been able to bring events to the conclusion that we might have liked now is a cruel blow, but a blow that can be understood.

I wish to change the tone of what has been said so far. We are now left in a dangerous position. We all know that some of what the Secretary of State and others have been trying to achieve has been exposed today. They have been travelling across no man's land and at the moment when the searchlight has come up, they are not quite on safe territory. There will be a delay until the Secretary of State can announce the finishing touches to the process. The delay is deeply dangerous because it may undermine the positions that people have been taking in private, if not necessarily in secret. The fact that the delay may incorporate 12 July makes the matter even more delicate.

Mr. Trimble: Why? That is a silly remark.

Mr. Ashdown: I speak as a Northern Irishman myself. The hon. Gentleman will know that the period around 12 July is one of some natural tension in Northern Ireland. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."]

Mr. Trimble: It is one of the quietest periods of the year.

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Gentleman and I have a different perception of the matter; perhaps we had better leave it at that.

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): Like the right hon. Gentleman, I am not a Member of the Orange Order, but I hope that I can put him right about the period around 12 July. Traditionally, it is a peaceful period. There was a time a few years ago when people who were ignorant about the meaning of 12 July did their best to build it into a period when there would be a flashpoint and trouble. For a year or two, especially when people felt angry about the advent of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, there was trouble. But that has not happened traditionally and it has not happened in recent years. It behoves all of us, including the right hon. Gentleman, not to suggest that we might expect trouble around 12 July. We in Northern Ireland know that there is such a thing as a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Gentleman makes a fair point and I concede it to him. We all recognise that there have not been great disturbances around 12 July. When I was a child in Northern Ireland, I was very involved with 12 July. However, it is a period during which what is said rather than what is done may contribute to tension.

Mr. Trimble: No.

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Gentleman and I will have to disagree on that.

It is bound to be the case that those who seek to proceed in Northern Ireland by terrorism and by violence will see the next period as crucial. They believe that by the extended use of terrorism and violence they can undermine the climate that the Secretary of State has been creating so carefully. That is why I want to make three appeals. First, this is a moment at which we must not let acts of violence undermine what is now in prospect. It is essential that we hold with determination to our current positions. There is no doubt that those who wish to wreck peace in Ireland will use this period to attempt to do so.

Secondly, I hope that those who have been courageous in participating in discussions with the Secretary of State will hold their ground. Their courage and determination now will be a considerable ingredient in the success that I hope that the Secretary of State will achieve.

Thirdly, I appeal to those who now delay—and I do not seek to point the finger. Those who are causing a delay in putting the finishing touches to what the Secretary of State wants should realise that delay is profoundly dangerous. If the brave attempts of the Secretary of State and others now fail, the cause of peace in Northern Ireland may be set back considerably—perhaps by as much as a decade. That would be a disaster and a tragedy. Every day's delay, every week's delay and every month's delay put this delicate and

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precarious position at more risk. I appeal to those who are contributing to the process to ensure that delay is kept to the absolute minimum. As they delay, the chances of success, the chances of peace and lives are greatly put at risk.

6.18 pm

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): This afternoon, the Secretary of State introduced for a further year direct rule in Northern Ireland. He rightly questioned it as a long-term solution to the system of government in Northern Ireland, and Unionist Members share that view. He mentioned that this was a temporary provision. For the past 16 years, Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland have described it as a "temporary provision." The House will recall that income tax was originally introduced as a temporary provision.

Our parties are totally opposed to the present system of direct rule in Northern Ireland and share with the Secretary of State the aspiration that there will soon come a time when we shall have a system of government that is answerable to the people who live in Northern Ireland. We despise and reject the system which, for the past 16 years, has denied the elected representatives of Northern Ireland in this our national Parliament the right to full parliamentary debates on our legislation and the right to table amendments to it. The hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) referred to eastern Europe. It is ironic that the people of eastern Europe should have greater parliamentary rights than the people of Northern Ireland, but those countries' representatives have the right to table amendments to new legislation. As a British Member of Parliament, I can table amendments to English, Scottish and Welsh legislation but not to the legislation of Northern Ireland. That system must be brought to an end.

The Secretary of State referred to the Northern Ireland economy and to security. I join him in expressing great appreciation at the improvement in the economic life of Northern Ireland. In the past 20 years, the terrorists and those who support them have done great damage to our economy. It must be remembered that Roman Catholics as well as Protestants have lost jobs as a result of the IRA terrorist campaign. On security, we join the Secretary of State in placing our full confidence and support in the Royal Ulster Constabulary, in the British Army and in its largest regiment, the Ulster Defence Regiment, for the work that they are doing for the citizens of Northern Ireland—Roman Catholic and Protestant alike.

Roman Catholics and Protestants also share in the great misery caused by the IRA. Several thousand lives have been lost, not all of them Protestant; many Roman Catholics, too, have suffered as a result of the terrorist campaign. Thousands of us, including myself, have been injured during that campaign—both Roman Catholics and Protestants once again. Many Roman Catholics and Protestants have had their businesses destroyed. In considering the economy and the security situation, we must remember that, during the past 20 years, Roman Catholics and Protestants alike have suffered as a result of terrorism.

There has been an air of disappointment about this debate. The Secretary of State said quite openly that he could not go as far as he had hoped to, and his remarks confirmed much of the speculation in the press. It seems that, even until yesterday, he had hoped to be able to go further. There used to be a slogan in Northern Ireland, which the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) will remember well: "Ulster says no." It seems to me that today that slogan has been replaced by another: "Dublin says no." It appears that some form of veto has been exercised at the last minute to stall what many of us had hoped would be political progress in the totality of relationships in these islands.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland took the initiative in January this year, and during the past six or seven months the leaders of the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland and, indeed, the Dublin Government have been in consultation with him. That is what politics is all about—dialogue, participation and an examination of the problems. I think that the Secretary of State will agree that there was a positive response from all the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland, and we pay tribute to the leadership given by the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) and the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley), who have jointly presented the Unionist position to the Secretary of State.

There has been some despondency today, but I am not despondent. Unbelievably, in November I will have been a Member of Parliament for 25 years. I have spent 10 years at the European Parliament as well as serving here and —more interestingly—eight years in the Northern Ireland Parliament and time in two Northern Ireland assemblies and at the constitutional convention in Stormont. All those various institutions created by different political initiatives have collapsed one by one, for reasons that we need not go into this evening. But with all my experience, I am not despondent.

I may be disappointed, but I say to the Secretary of State, "Carry on," because many of us in both sections of the community in Northern Ireland admire the leadership that he has given to the people of Northern Ireland in 1990. We want him to carry on the work that he has been doing and we will respond positively, as has been evident from the contributions made by the two Unionist leaders in recent months.

The first and most important question that needs to be addressed is Northern Ireland's position within the United Kingdom, and we warmly welcome the confirmation by the Secretary of State today of the Government's position on Northern Ireland. Our rights here in the national Parliament must also be addressed quickly.

We agree that there should be some devolution of power back to the people of Northern Ireland, although the exact form of that devolution has yet to be considered. It is tremendously important that Catholics and Protestants, Unionists and Nationalists should become involved in the administration of the state, so that they gain trust and confidence in each other and so that younger politicians become involved in the political life of Northern Ireland. We hold out the hand of friendship to the Nationalist minority—which will remain a minority for some time if the birth statistics given by the hon. Member for Antrim, North are anything to go by—and offer its members a shared responsibility in the administration of the state.

Then there is the question of the relationship with Dublin—a major problem. Dublin may today have exercised the veto given to it by a Conservative Government whose representatives flew in by helicopter

unbeknown to the Ulster people, signed the Anglo-Irish Agreement and flew out again before we heard on the 1 o'clock news that they had for the first time given a say to a foreign Government in the internal affairs of part of the United Kingdom. That decision was taken without reference to the two pillars of democracy, consultation and consent. There was no consultation with the people of Northern Ireland and no consent was sought. The Anglo-Irish Agreement was imposed upon us. As the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) implied, it was thought that, in time, the Ulster people's opposition would be worn down, but that has not happened.

There is now greater realism in London and Dublin, both of which realise that the opposition of the people of Northern Ireland to the Anglo-Irish Agreement is much stronger now, in 1990, than it was four and a half years ago and that the agreement has become the major obstacle to political progress in the Province. That obstacle must be removed. London and Dublin recognise that today—unfortunately, four and a half years too late. We in Ulster—Roman Catholics and Protestants alike—have had to suffer the results of the stalemate during that period.

We must address the relationship of Dublin to Northern Ireland. The hon. Member for Foyle said that history had implications for the internal affairs of Northern Ireland. He referred to the role of Ireland and of the United Kingdom in Europe. For 10 years, he and I served together in Strasbourg in the European Parliament and very often we co-operated in the interests of Northern Ireland. However, he missed one point in trying to draw a comparison between the situation in Ireland and that in France, Germany and elsewhere in Europe. Barriers are disappearing in Europe and borders are becoming more free. France and Germany are co-operating. However, they all recognise each other. France does not claim jurisdiction over part of Germany. It recognises Germany. Recognition is the main problem in the island of Ireland today as we look forward to co-operation.

Of course, in the European context today there are more reasons for co-operation between Belfast and Dublin than at any time since the Republic of Ireland left the United Kingdom in 1921. We have common policies now in fisheries, agriculture, the environment and in many other aspects of public life. It would be good for all the people in the island of Ireland if we could have some means of co-operating together on some of those issues. There is an openness on the Unionist side if the obstacles to co-operation can be removed.

The obstacles must be spelt out from the Unionist Benches. I disagree with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland that the constitutional claim by the Republic over Northern Ireland could more or less be forgotten or ignored. That is not so. As the recent judgment confirmed, in any negotiations with Northern Ireland, the Republic is under a constitutional imperative to use co-operation with Northern Ireland to try to gain a united Ireland. So long as the Republic does not come to us as a partner who respects us, I am afraid that we cannot have real co-operation within the island.

As Unionists, we are anxious to bring about more co-operation within our island. However, first of all Dublin must reconsider articles 2 and 3 of its constitution. They must be amended by a referendum within the Republic of Ireland. If we see that kind of progress, we can certainly get real co-operation within the island of Ireland between the people of Northern Ireland and the people of the Republic. That would be good for the totality of relationships within the whole of the British Isles.

I look forward to the day when we will have a settlement in Northern Ireland which involves both sections of the community and the Administration; which will bring about co-operation between Belfast and Dublin; which will guarantee Northern Ireland's position within the United Kingdom; and which will bring to an end the perennial squabbling between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland on the issue of Northern Ireland.

Should progress not be made—we remain hopeful that it will be made—should Dublin continue to say no, there must come a time, sooner rather than later, when the order that we are renewing tonight will cease to be the law of this land. We must move quickly to a situation in which the people of Northern Ireland, irrespective of those who are now saying no, are given their full rights in this our national Parliament.

6.33 pm

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): As I listened to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, I could not help but feel that I was listening to and watching someone who was sad because his expectation for today could not and would not be realised—or at least realised within the time scale that he had set himself. From various meetings with the Secretary of State since he first came to Northern Ireland, I have found him to have attributes which, dare I say it, some of his predecessors did not possess. He has the ability to listen and then to respond to the points that one has made instead of trying to lead one down an alley or divert one's attention to a different issue. This evening, the Secretary of State has, despite the setback, endeavoured not to lead us down a different alley or on to a different issue.

The Secretary of State spelt out clearly that the impediment to progress that we had all expected derives from the attitude of the Government in Dublin. If the Secretary of State has not been too harsh in dealing with that Government's attitude, perhaps that is because he recognises, as we all do, that a Government sitting in the Dail have an imperative enshrined within articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution to do nothing—I use the term in the constitution—before it achieves the

"reintegration of the national territory."

However, we all know that the island of Ireland has never been a single political entity except under the Administration based in Westminster. For the past 70 years the people of Northern Ireland have had a political identity. We cannot sweep away 70 years of history.

The hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) referred to the changes in eastern Europe. If we look at the map of Europe, it is clear that many countries honoured today achieved their boundaries after the establishment of Northern Ireland as a political entity in the early 1920s.

The Secretary of State made one mistake this evening. He said:

> "Although the constitutional question has often seemed central to matters in Northern Ireland, I turn to it now in the hope of putting it to one side. We regard the position as clear."

Irrespective of how the Secretary of State meant it—I think that I know what he meant when he said

> "We regard the position as clear"—

the first part of his statement will be misunderstood. In the Irish Republic it will be interpreted as meaning: "Quite

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honestly, if nobody raises the matter, if nobody concentrates our minds on the issue or draws articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution to our attention, we here in the House of Commons do not particularly care about it." I want the Secretary of State or whoever replies on his behalf to emphasise that the second part of his statement is more important than the first. That will reassure us greatly in Northern Ireland. At this moment of some disappointment, we need that reassurance.

Will the Secretary of State reconsider the implications of the McGimpsey court case? It has become increasingly clear, not just in respect of what has happened regarding the proposals that the right hon. Gentleman had hoped to bring here today, but since 1 March, that when the McGimpseys went to the Supreme Court they managed unequivocally to bring out what the present Taoiseach said he has always recognised—that there is a constitutional imperative to unite the island of Ireland, and that the territorial claim is a real legal claim in Irish terms, not merely a political aspiration.

The extradition cases brought in the past few months have proved that there is a serious restriction on any Irish Government—whether a Fianna Fáil Government, or one made up of an amalgam of parties or of any other single party—as they are not permitted by their constitution to enter into any agreement that may respect the position of Northern Ireland or of Unionists in Northern Ireland. I challenge the Secretary of State to consider that issue, and to decide—if I am right, and if the courts have proved me right—whether it is the responsibility of the Government not merely to assert that they and the House do not recognise the Irish Republic's territorial claim, or to assert that that territorial claim is not recognised internationally, but to go a step further and take the issue to the international courts. The Government have taken other issues involving the Irish Republic to the international courts—successfully, in one or two recent cases—to have them resolved.

If the Government shirk their responsibility in this respect, some of us are prepared to take the case to be judged in the European Court. In the light of the strong statement that the Secretary of State made this evening, it is the Government's responsibility to take the issue to an international court, and to have his opinion and that of the House endorsed once and for all.

If hon. Members are serious about trying to bring peace, stability, understanding and co-operation to Northern Ireland—all Unionist Members are committed to that—we must establish the basis upon which we can do so. That basis does not exist now, as there is a fundamental difference of opinion between the British Government and the Government of the Irish Republic about the status of Northern Ireland.

I remind the House of the exact degree of scepticism voiced by the advocate of the Irish Government during the McGimpsey court case when he talked about article 1 of the Anglo-Irish Agreement and the status of Northern Ireland. He referred to the McGimpseys' counsel thus:

> "Now, Mr. O'Flaherty referred to Article 1, my Lord, headed 'The Status of Northern Ireland'. When one reads that Article, one looks at the status of Northern Ireland, it is not defined at all. It is carefully not defined, my Lord, carefully not defined."

I have quoted those words in the House before, and I make no apology for doing so again. As long as we try to build progress on a lie or on a deceit we are bound to fail. I ask the Secretary of State to seek the truth, and let us build upon that.

6.45 pm

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): I join in the general approval that has been given to the activities of the Secretary of State, and I hope that that will not cause him any problems. I cannot think of a more difficult job, and I was immediately impressed, early in his tenure of office, when he gave the press a review of his first 100 days in office. Not everyone shares my enthusiasm for that interview, but it was refreshingly honest after the best part of two decades of deceit, humbug and a lot of false promise and hope. If the House is realistic, it will realise that the right hon. Gentleman was merely relaying to the public information from Army intelligence sources and military strategists about the real balance of forces and potentials in the north of Ireland.

Equally, I hope that no one will be particularly surprised if I say that I hope that something will grow out of this initiative. It would be wonderful if it did. I agree with other hon. Members that there have been a lot of initiatives, about which much was said at the time, but over the two decades they have all run into the ground.

I would not want to do or say anything to damage the initiative if it can bring together the communities in the north of Ireland, provide a lasting solution to the problems that beset the island of Ireland and lead to the establishment of normal relationships within the two communities and between Ireland as a whole and mainland Britain.

The House knows that I should like to see a united Ireland. I suspect that, if it were united, people would, within a very short time, look back on these events with amazement. The horrors of the past few hundred years, and especially of the past 20 years, would rapidly recede into history.

I do not apologise for returning to a subject that I have raised before and I am not trying to undermine the Secretary of State's work, but for Britain to carry the enthusiasm of both communities in the north of Ireland they must be certain that there is a degree of justice and openness about what Britain does in Ireland. Those of us who have pursued the issue of some of the abuses that have taken place in the north of Ireland in recent years will help to create a lasting and peaceful solution. While abuses remain covered up there will be continuing suspicion and reluctance to trust that the British Government are genuinely even handed.

I shall again dwell on the events surrounding the Kincora boys home. We have been told again and again that that matter has been investigated and closed. We have been told again and again when we have raised the issue of what happened in Kincora that if hon. Members have any evidence they should submit it to the appropriate authorities and it will be fully investigated. Yet, with every month that passes, more and more damning information comes to light, showing that those who have genuinely tried to investigate what happened in Kincora—the RUC—have been blocked in their investigations.

I want to draw particular attention to what I thought was an excellent programme on BBC television on 2 June

—"Public Eye"—which once again brought major new evidence to light by identifying a senior intelligence source who was able to point out that he had notified MI5 at the most senior level of the events in the Kincora boys home.

I shall recount the events at Kincora for the benefit of any right hon. or hon. Member who has not followed the story. Certainly anyone who has had to rely on the British press for that information will be very uninformed. Three men who were subsequently sentenced for their acts at Kincora—Joe Mains, Raymond Sempel and William McGrath—presided over the Kincora boys home for the best part of two decades and had a record of systematic, year-by-year child abuse of the most violent kind. They were guilty of acts that are deeply shocking. It is impossible to read the testaments of the boys concerned without being shaken—they are horrifying. That abuse continued for perhaps even longer than two decades.

It is worrying that disquiet at that state of affairs was expressed first not by someone on the left or even in the Labour party. When those three evil men were finally sentenced to prison for their long campaign of child abuse, the then Lord Chief Justice of Northern Ireland, Sir Robert Lowry, said——

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Perhaps I may interrupt my hon. Friend to make this observation. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is usually the most courteous of men, but I note that he is leaving the Chamber. It may well be that he has urgent business elsewhere, but some of us are of the opinion—and the Parliamentary Private Secretary, the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind), may laugh—that the issue that my hon. Friend raises will not go away. It will be raised again and again because it is a disgrace to the British state.

Mr. Livingstone: I agree with my hon. Friend. It is a pity that we do not have a further response from the Government to the points that have been raised. I also agree with my hon. Friend that the issue will not go away and that we will continue to raise it. There are other guilty men who should be in prison for what they did, or for what they did not do, but who remain free.

Sir Robert Lowry said when sentencing Mains, Sempel and McGrath:

> "It is not my custom, nor is it wise, to allocate blame to people who are not before the court. But many people will be surprised to learn that such a state of affairs as prevailed in this boys home was able to go on for so many years."

Ten years have elapsed, and there have been six inquiries, but still no satisfactory answer has been produced to Sir Robert's point.

It is a matter of widespread public concern in Northern Ireland in particular that, although the authorities knew since at least the early 1970s what was happening at Kincora, there was no intervention. The suffering and abuse inflicted on those boys continued. The word "abuse" cannot fully describe what was done. There were two decades of systematic, continuous, violent anal rape of the most appalling kind. I commend right hon. and hon. Members to read the boys' accounts. Many of them have grown into men whose lives can never be put back together. They live with the consequences of the treatment that they suffered. If there is any evidence that the state knew what was happening as early as 1974 but decided to take no action, that is a crime as grave as that of the sodomisers themselves.

Mr. Dalyell: I ought to place on record that the Secretary of State has returned to the Chamber. Perhaps he had to leave his place for the same reason that we all do from time to time, but I am glad that he has returned to hear my hon. Friend's remarks.

Mr. Livingstone: I often find that people tend to hurry off when I am talking. It is a continuing problem that I have. It may be that people do not like to hear what I have to say.

This year, there has been a series of dramatic developments, and I refer not just to the findings of the investigation by "Public Eye". Earlier this year, after years of our hearing Colin Wallace being dismissed as a crank, a Walter Mitty figure, and someone who was to be ridiculed, the Secretary of State for Defence came to the House and admitted that there was evidence to support Colin Wallace's allegations. Although most press attention focused on Clockwork Orange and on whether there had been a campaign to destabilise the Labour Government in 1974, that was not the biggest crime. The vital point is that Colin Wallace was aware of events at Kincora and made his senior officers aware of them. He also drafted press briefing material that drew attention to the role of McGrath, who was running a paramilitary organisation called TARA. That material was forensically tested to provide evidence for Paul Foot's book, and it was proved that those documents were written at the time claimed by Colin Wallace and not after the event. The documents made it clear beyond doubt that senior Army intelligence officers and MI5 knew as early as 1974, and certainly by 1975, that systematic child abuse was occurring at Kincora—which was allowed to continue until 1980, until exposed not by the authorities but by the press.

We have a right to say that if the Government had devoted one tenth of the effort directed at denigrating Colin Wallace to investigating with an open mind the events at Kincora, the problem might by now be resolved, and all the guilty brought to justice.

We know that there is to be an investigation by Mr. Calcutt, but I regret that the Government have not made its terms wide enough to allow Mr. Calcutt to investigate Kincora. In the past, the terms of reference of those charged with investigating Kincora were so narrowly drawn that it was virtually impossible for them to investigate the claims that Army intelligence and MI5 knew what was happening. That has fed the strong suspicion that there was a reason for MI5 allowing that child abuse to continue. That is the most disturbing allegation that can be made.

Mr. Dalyell: If my hon. Friend will allow me to intervene once more while the Secretary of State is present, I emphasise the sheer anger that is felt by some of us. On 10 June, Colin Wallace wrote to the Prime Minister, mentioning certain persons by name:

> "I enclose with this letter a selection of pages from a document which was typed during the period for the Information Policy unit by Mr. C. T. T. Whitehead, until recently Deputy Chief Press Officer at the MOD and currently with the Home Office".

At least a fortnight later, Mr. Whitehead had not been contacted and knew nothing of the matter. No one had bothered to do anything about Mr. Wallace's letter. There

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was a complete reluctance on the part of some individuals to get up off their backsides and find out more. That is why we are so angry.

Mr. Livingstone: I share my hon. Friend's anger. This issue should stand apart and not be subject to the usual restrictions on the length of time available for the Secretary of State to reply. It is not unusual when one writes to a Minister about detailed points of concern relating to Kincora that six months elapse before one receives a full reply. Instead, one is sent holding reply after holding reply. That suggests that someone is deeply worried.

The television programme "Public Eye" on 2 June brought new information to the attention of the public. It definitely identified that by 1975 the state knew about the abuse of young boys at Kincora. Roy Garland, who had been number two in the paramilitary organisation TARA, as effectively its deputy commanding officer, approached the police. He had been frustrated by not being able to get some movement by the RUC on the allegations that he had heard, so he conveyed his concern to two intelligence officers based at Army headquarters in Lisburn. A meeting was arranged by one of Roy Garland's Christian contacts who had introduced him to an Army intelligence officer. Interviewed on "Public Eye", Garland said:

"I must say I had the impression they knew a lot already —that like most of these situations, there was nothing terribly radically new that I had to tell them. One of these officers appeared to be really concerned about the situation. Now, when I say concerned, he seemed concerned about McGrath's job and the political involvements as well, and he seemed really and genuinely concerned about it. He said he was a Christian, an evangelical Christian like myself."

Roy Garland never knew what had happened to the information that he gave the two Army intelligence officers, and assumed that nothing further had been done. We owe a debt of gratitude to the "Public Eye" programme, which managed to find out what did happen to that information. Thanks to Roy Garland—not someone with whom I agree politically—by 1975 both the Royal Ulster Constabulary and Army intelligence knew that systematic child abuse was going on; yet for a further five years lives were destroyed and devastated because of the abuse of young boys.

We need to know what happened to Roy Garland's information. The "Public Eye" programme managed to find the senior of the two Army intelligence officers who met Roy Garland. He was given the alias "James" in the programme; for obvious reasons he does not wish to be named or identified, as certain people might want to take action against him, and I have no intention of naming him today. The officer was prepared to appear on television and to make very disturbing allegations. He claimed that the information that he had obtained from Roy Garland had been passed on to MI5. "James" continued to work in Northern Ireland for another year or two on various military intelligence operations, but was blocked from doing anything about the information from Roy Garland concerning child abuse.

The senior officer's job was targeting loyalist organisations to gather intelligence. Many people in Army intelligence at that time thought that there was a danger of UDI in Northern Ireland, and of some sort of coup d'etat. While the public believed that the main target was the IRA, a vast amount of Army intelligence work was devoted to the activities of some people who have managed to get themselves elected to the House of Commons. In retrospect, it will probably be found that Army intelligence got a bit excited and carried away; I do not think that there was ever any realistic prospect of an independent Northern Ireland state, but often Army intelligence does get carried away, to say nothing of what happens in MI5.

Watching the programme, we waited with bated breath to see what happened to Roy Garland's information. It was clear that he had filed his report, which went to a senior MI5 officer—who had been identified by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) as Ian Cameron. In a letter to my hon. Friend on 26 June, Colin Wallace identified the officer concerned——

Mr. Dalyell: I have the letter here. It says:

"For example, the BBC 'Public Eye' programme demonstrated very clearly that:

(a) both Army Intelligence and MI5 were aware of the Kincora situation in the mid 1970s;

(b) MI5 refused to allow one of its senior officers, Ian Cameron, to be interviewed by the police about the scandal".

Ministers should not take it that we are necessarily against the intelligence services. I do not want to be too personal, but it so happens that next Thursday—along with the right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery)—I shall be attending a memorial service for George Young, formerly of MI6. To put it bluntly, people are not asked to do that if they are automatically against the intelligence services. Some of us are very concerned about this matter.

Mr. Livingstone: The MI5 officer who received the information indirectly was Ian Cameron. The Army intelligence officer wrote a report of his meeting with Garland, and sent it to his Army superiors as a matter of routine. He said that it was then passed to MI5—which shared the same building at Army headquarters—and that he was summoned to see the senior MI5 officer. On the "Public Eye" programme, he said of that meeting:

"I can't honestly say that I was expecting three gold stars but I went up feeling pretty positive, expecting a normal meeting. Instead I got blown out of his office. He's rude to me, he tells me that the kind of information that I have submitted is not proper intelligence, that we have nothing—we, as intelligence officers, don't dabble in homosexual affairs, that these moral matters are nothing to do with us. He vilifies my report, he tells me to cut off the contact. I can remember him saying to me words to the effect 'get rid of him, break the contact, just get rid'. I'm surprised because we had had a pretty good relationship going up until then. He blows me out of the office."

That, surely, is a remarkable position for one of the most senior MI5 officers on operational duty in the north of Ireland: having been told of systematic child abuse by a leading militant Protestant paramilitary, MI5 decided to do nothing about it.

We were told in the programme about other information made public by "James", the unidentified Army intelligence officer. We were told that he was involved in discussions about trying to blackmail another Unionist paramilitary leader, of suggestions that MI5 had film of that Unionist leader involved in homosexual activity, and of how that information was to be used to make him more amenable. It seems likely that, when MI5 arrived in the north of Ireland as the troubles blew up at the end of the 1960s and found—as we now know from all

the published accounts of intelligence sources there—that there was virtually no effective intelligence-gathering network, it would have found a nest of vipers burrowed away inside Kincora, and tremendous opportunities. One could either expose that abuse and stop it, or use it to entrap people that one wished to control—people who were perceived as a threat to the integrity of the United Kingdom. I think that that is what happened—that MI5 was aware of what was going on at Kincora, but considered it more important to continue to gather intelligence that could be used to blackmail those Unionist politicians who were not part of the establishment network.

I have not the slightest doubt that the prime target of much of that activity was the Democratic Unionist party. All kinds of rumours began to float around. The leader of the DUP—the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley)—has raised in the House other attempts to smear leading members of his party, involving forged bank accounts and a network of rumour and suspicion. Senior officers in MI5 made a calculated decision that it was better, on balance, to allow the child abuse to continue, because the intelligece being gathered gave them a hold over some of the more eccentric figures inside the Unionist paramilitary organisations.

Mr. Dalyell: It should go on record that some of us think that the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) and his colleagues suffered far more, and far more outrageously, at that time than did Harold Wilson or Ted Short.

Mr. Livingstone: I agree with my hon. Friend. The vast amount of time that I have put into this matter has led me to the conclusion that the British state sought to destroy the hon. Member for Antrim North, but has been unable to do so. He was the prime target, not the IRA or the Irish National Liberation Army. For all our disagreements, he is a democratic politician who puts his views to the ballot box. Elements within the British security services decided to destroy him and his party by any means possible. Kincora was part of that. After three years of examining the matter, I have not found a shred of evidence to link that party with the events at Kincora, although I have had many interesting titbits dropped in my direction to try to lead me to make such a suggestion in a public speech.

In the past 10 years there have been six inquiries into Kincora, and a vast amount of work has been done. However, all the public disquiet remains.

In 1980, the first of the three RUC inquiries led to the conviction of McGrath, Mains and Sempel. A month after those convictions—December 1981—the then Northern Ireland Secretary, James Prior, announced the establishment of a committee of inquiry to be headed by Stephen McGonagle, the former ombudsman for Northern Ireland. It sat for one day, three members resigned, and that was the end of that. McGonagle, who was interviewed on the "Public Eye" programme, made it quite clear that he thought that all the inquiries that had been conducted so far were unsatisfactory and had not indentified what had been going on, and that there needed to be a full, frank and open inquiry.

Two new investigations were set up after that. One involving possible criminal matters was headed by the chief constable of Sussex, Sir George Terry. Sir George was asked to oversee a new RUC inquiry into allegations that Kincora was part of a homosexual vice ring involving civil servants and other prominent figures. That was conducted by the same RUC team under Superintendent George Caskey, who had brought McGrath and the others to justice. Sir George completed his report in October 1983. The following year, the public inquiry got under way with a retired English judge, William Hughes, as its chairman.

Whenever I have raised the matter in the House, I have been told again and again by leading members of the Government that it has been investigated by Hughes. The first page of the Hughes inquiry report states that under its terms of reference it was not investigating anything to do with the intelligence services or public figures. That is right at the beginning of the report—we do not need to read the rest of it. I ploughed through it—it is not the lightest or most entertaining reading. It is quite a horrifying story. It is nonsense to suggest that that is the answer to the allegations that many hon. Members have raised.

The RUC team, led by Superintendent George Caskey, under the supervision of George Terry, tried to probe the activities of the Security Service, however. That came to light in the "Public Eye" programme; most hon. Members had not been aware of it before. The programme makers tried to put key questions to the senior officer in MI5 but they were denied access to him by the Ministry of Defence. There we have the RUC charged with investigating this matter and being blocked, not by some criminal or by some sleazy character in the shadows, but by the Government—barred from interviewing the MI5 officer about why he had not acted on the information that was passed to him by Roy Garland. It is absolute nonsense.

Mr. Dalyell: Has my hon. Friend heard that Sir John Hermon was absolutely livid when he found out, albeit in retirement, exactly how he was treated and how his colleagues were treated? Sir John Hermon, whom I do not know, has every right to be extremely angry.

Mr. Livingstone: It will be obvious by now that my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow and I are not defending people with whom we find ourselves broadly in political agreement. None of the people whom I have been defending so far would throw a vote my way this side of hell, but they were right. They were sought to be targeted and destroyed by the British state. Few people have been more critical than I of abuses by the RUC, but it is not the fault of the RUC that this matter has not been brought to a conclusion. It tried but it was blocked by the Ministry of Defence, which denied it access to the MI5 officer who refused to take action on the information that was passed to him from Roy Garland via the Army intelligence officer.

Roy Garland told the RUC team about his meetings with the Army intelligence officer who was given the name James in the programme. The RUC then spoke to that Army intelligence officer, and he gave his account of the way in which he had been treated by the senior MI5 officer who refused to take action. It was obvious that the RUC would need to interview that MI5 officer.

Its attempt to gain access to MI5 began at Stormont, at a meeting with a deputy secretary at the Northern Ireland Office, who had recently been attached to the Ministry of Defence. Arrangements were made for detectives from the RUC team to visit Ministry of Defence offices in London. Over two months, several meetings took place between the RUC and an official representing the Ministry of Defence,

[Mr. Livingstone]

but, despite repeated requests, the MI5 officer was never made available for interview. No explanation was ever given. Further approaches were made through the Northern Ireland Office and, eventually, a compromise was reached. The RUC would submit a series of questions in writing. The list of questions included why no action was taken to investigate the allegations Army intelligence had passed on, why the Army intelligence officer concerned was told to drop Kincora, why he was told to set up contact with the source, and whether MI5 knew what was going on in the home and, if MI5 did know, whether it was prepared to let it continue for another purpose. No answers to those questions were ever received.

We are not talking about a bunch of criminals using a slick, expensive barrister to avoid justice; we are talking about the British Government, some of the most senior officers answerable to the British Government, and this Government—not a previous Government—blocking the RUC's attempt to bring the guilty to justice.

The avenue of inquiry came to a halt, not surprisingly, when the Director of Public Prosecutions directed that there would be no further criminal prosecutions with regard to Kincora. As far as the RUC was concerned, the case had been closed—over its objections at the squashing of its investigation. The RUC investigation was completed without the evidence of the senior MI5 figures and, as late as 1982, the Security Service had managed to obstruct a top-level police investigation overseen by a senior English chief constable. I find that breathtaking. This really is the time to hear members of the Government explain why the Government took that action. Would there have been a threat to the security of the British state if the matter had come out into the open? That would be so only if something absolutely horrendous was being done.

I am prepared to give way if any hon. Member wants to volunteer some information on why this Government stopped their own loyal officers in the RUC investigating the Government's own Security Service's involvement in the matter. I notice that no Conservative Member is rushing to intervene to enlighten me or the House on what has been going on.

When Sir George Terry completed his report, he made one conclusion, which he worded carefully. He thanked the military authorities with fulsome praise and said:

"the military sources have been very frank with me and perfectly open during the ongoing inquiry under Detective Superintendent Caskey."

That clearly does not include MI5. There is no reference to the co-operation of the intelligence services.

Frankly, I do not think that the Government can continue to stonewall any longer. I have raised this matter in the House for three years. Members of other parties have been doing so for over a decade. There has been waffle and bluster. Clearly, one does not blame the present Secretary of State, who has inherited an explosive mess. It is not his fault. Most of those who are responsible for the decisions have long since retired, but that does not mean that they should be able to retire with honour.

Mr. Dalyell: There has been bluster, but there has also been abuse. I happen to think that the present Ministers are courteous and helpful. However, I remember that awful night—I have never been angrier in the Chamber—when my hon. Friend and I were given by a Minister a load of abuse such as I have not had in 27 years. It was from the then junior Minister at the Home Office, the right hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten). I thought that he was a disgrace to that university town that night. The right hon. Gentleman has never apologised or withdrawn his remarks. He said things that were subsequently proved wrong by a Government statement; if they were not wrong, the Calcutt inquiry would not have been set up.

Mr. Livingstone: I thank my hon. Friend for reminding me of some of the unkind things that have been said. As someone who has spent 20 years in the London Labour party, it did not seem too bad to me at the time—I have heard worse.

The Army intelligence officer, who interviewed Garland and passed on information to his seniors and to MI5, said:

"We are not talking here about great national secrets, we are talking about covering up a matter concerning a moral issue of the gravest importance: the abuse of young men and officials knowing about it and officialdom apparently, for some reason, doing nothing. That's something that not only shocks and horrifies me, that's something that will shock and horrify in every part of our society and I believe that this issue . . . has to be brought out into the open and we have to say these three most difficult words in the English language: 'we were wrong'—either because it was bungled or because there is some more sinister, conspiratorial reason for covering it up. And I don't know what the reason is but I do know that it was covered up because I put the information in and nobody did anything about it."

Surely someone on the Government Benches can explain what went on to justify that decision not to take action when MI5 was told about the child abuse, and to allow it to continue for another five years. I do not believe that that was a mistake. I do not believe that someone simply filed it away. The abusive way in which the Army intelligence officer was treated by the senior MI5 officer makes it clear that it was not a mistake; it was an MI5 operation which it did not want blown and wound up.

I do not blame Conservative Members for this, because it all happened years ago, but the cover-up must stop because the people who decided to take no action are guilty of the most appalling crime. They are complicit in the destruction of the lives of young boys, many of whom will never by able to recover or lead normal lives. The sums that are now being handed out in the courts as compensation are irrelevant to the damage that those young men suffered. Elements in MI5 decided to allow what was happening to continue because they felt that it was in the national interest to be able to blackmail Unionist politicians who were involved in the abuse.

I could have made a speech about who might or might not be involved in the abuse. Any hon. Member who travels to Ireland and picks up a copy of a magazine such as *Now* will read a list of names of the great and the good. I am not prepared to repeat those names in the House because I am not certain that the lists are accurate. We know that several people were involved, but only three men have gone to prison for the continual violent anal rape of young boys at Kincora. I believe that many more leading figures were involved. We know—I wrote about this outside the House last year—that four people who were suspected of abusing those boys died in mysterious circumstances while the RUC was investigating them. Even in terms of the violence that exists in Northern Ireland, it is a remarkable coincidence that people were killed between one interview with the RUC and another.

I believe that something absolutely rotten at the heart of the British intelligence services is festering away. As long as I am a Member of the House—or even outside it—I shall continue to keep on about this, because the people who took the decision to allow that abuse to continue are guilty of an appalling crime and they should be exposed for it—not just the three scapegoats. They sought not only to destroy the lives of those boys, but to use what was going on to try to destroy the reputations of Members of this House and of legitimate political organisations. I do not agree with those organisations but they have every right to exist and function in a democratic society. There is no justification for those people continuing to be employed by the British Government in any form whatsoever. It is time that they were exposed.

It is time that the Government stopped waffling and admitted what went on, punished the guilty people and made damn certain that we make changes in the way in which our intelligence services operate so that something like this can never happen again.

7.22 pm

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I follow the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone), not wishing to travel down the road that he has detailed, but certainly expressing some concern about it. My greatest concern is why the present Administration seem to be continuing to cover up the past. One could perhaps have understood the cover-up if they were responsible but, as they were not, I find it very difficult to understand. I recognise that one difficulty with popular journalism is that there are many false trails and that people were smeared by innuendo and suggestion. The sooner it is cleared up, the better for all.

The right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) did not give us one of the finest commando raids when he concluded his speech with some absolutely irrelevant statements and departed, although he apologised for doing so. I believe that it is still one of the conventions of the House that an hon. Member remains in the Chamber until the hon. Member who succeeds him on the Floor concludes his or her speech, and does not simply leave. We all have pressures upon us, and it seems wrong that an hon. Member should pull rank to catch Mr. Deputy Speaker's eye and then depart, leaving the rest of us to carry on the business.

I categorically refute the right hon. Gentleman's innuendoes about the institution of which, for 18 years, I have been privileged to be the Grand Master in Ireland and, for 10 of those years, in the world at large. The right hon. Gentleman alluded to the speeches on 12 July. I should like him to provide the evidence. For someone who grew up in the sheltered area of Comber in North Down, the right hon. Gentleman does not seem to know much about the community and the bonds that have bound people over the years, whether they were Orange or Green. It is fascinating that, on the 300th anniversary of the battle of the Boyne, there are still those who differentiate between the Orange and the Green. It shows their bad understanding of history. The Williamite forces wore green to distinguish themselves at the Boyne. Thereafter, they stood for the principles of civil and religious liberty.

That is one reason why I am speaking in this debate. Although Ministers may not be happy to acknowledge it, I happen to believe that in Northern Ireland today we are suffering from as much arbitrary power and tyranny as James I sought to impose upon this nation and upon Ireland at that time.

We in this land have the privilege of parliamentary constitutional government. As it comprises human beings—male and female—it is not necessarily perfect, but until we get a better system, it is the one that I favour.

I stand here with a sense of regret in two respects. Perhaps events have proved me right and we have not had the detailed statement that some people thought we would have—the press certainly speculated that that was what we would have today. You will remember, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and colleagues who have read *Hansard* will know, that at business questions last Thursday I urged that a detailed statement should not be made and that, because of the sensitivity of the discussions, it would be better if a document were circulated among the party leaders concerned so that there might be a considered response.

I am happy that the response in this debate has, to a large extent, been balanced and sober. My fears of last week have not been realised, but there is a road block. As I understand the vibrations and the drums that beat throughout the land, it appears that the breach came from Dublin. When I heard about it, I was reminded of something that happened some years ago in Dublin when the then Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. Ryan, said to me, " I have always said to the Government here that if they were serious about Irish unity, they would build a better road towards Belfast". It appears that today they have joined the IRA in putting a road block between Dublin and Belfast. That is their responsibility, and history will judge them on it. I hope that the Secretary of State, who has gone down that road of negotiation, and paid tribute to those who have been engaged on it, will continue to move down that road.

I should like to put the record straight. It seems to me that, because we in Ulster have clearly said no to the Anglo-Irish diktat, some people say that we are absolutely negative. Since 1987 and the general election, the leaders of the Unionist people have been in regular touch with the Secretary of State. Indeed, the previous Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Bridgewater (Mr. King), who is currently Secretary of State for Defence, received a document, but it was obvious either that somebody in the Northern Ireland Office was unable to read or that the Northern Ireland Office has developed the secrecy of MI5 or MI6. It was suggested at one stage that it did not have the document. There was much good-humoured discussion about whether we should have literacy classes to help them to read it. If it had been written in my handwriting, I could have understood the difficulty, but that could not have been the problem because the document came from others.

Subsequently, the current Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has had conversations and discussions with the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) and the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley), seeking to be positive and to restore a form of democratic rule to Northern Ireland, as part of the United Kingdom, but holding out the hand of friendship, which we have done more than once to those who seceded from us.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) is missing. I understand why he had to leave and I knew that he was leaving. He treated us to the concept of

[Rev. Martin Smyth]

Europe. We are prepared to play our part in Europe. Some of us are not terribly keen on certain movements that are taking place in Europe, but we have sought to play our part in various ways. However, our neighbours have not been prepared to play in the spirit of neighbourliness. As a result they have again put road blocks on the intermixing of people from the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

We are told that one of the poorest areas of Northern Ireland is Newry, and the House has been berated regularly for not putting industry and so on into Newry. However, when people from Dundalk, Drogheda and even Dublin travelled across to Newry to shop we were told that it drained the Exchequer of the Republic. Against European regulations the Republic pulled down the shutters. Even when the courts in Europe said that it was wrong, it continued to filibuster in an attempt to look after its self-interest. That is fair enough, if it is open about it But when we look after our self-interest we are told that we are bad boys and we should not do it.

In 1921 in the island of Ireland, in keeping with the pattern that was prevalent at the time, the people were given a choice. The people of Northern Ireland said that they wanted to remain within the United Kingdom, but the people of the Republic said that they wanted to leave. A council of Ireland was set up. The Unionists of Northern Ireland appointed delegates, but the people of the Republic of Ireland refused to appoint delegates. Ever since, we have been maligned for various reasons.

I appreciate why the hon. Member for Brent, North——

Mr. Livingstone: East.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Yes. Brent, North is across the way. I appreciate why the hon. Gentleman paid tribute to the RUC. Even in the worst days of 1969, with less than its establishment of staff because it had played fair by the laws of the land and reserved places for members of the Catholic community, the RUC acted impartially. Whoever broke the law was on the receiving end of the RUC's actions. The RUC sought to investigate the case to which the hon. Member for Brent, East drew our attention. They exercised their rights within the law in other cases. As the RUC is made up of human beings, I do not doubt that some of its members acted amiss. When we achieve a perfect society we shall have joined the Prime Minister in her expectation of twanging the harp. I do not expect to achieve a perfect society this side of eternity but, with the imperfect circumstances that pertain, we must consider other matters.

I am glad that it has been clearly demonstrated that obstructions were not created by Ulster Unionist leaders. Suggestions have been made in the media that my right hon. Friend the Member for Lagan Valley has constantly changed the goalposts. Our election manifesto and every statement that we have made show that we have not changed an iota of our pattern of policy. We sought to negotiate. The London and Dublin Governments said that there could be no change to the agreement. We sought to persuade them to change it. They said that to do so it would be necessary to suspend the workings of the Anglo-Irish Conference. There are those in Northern Ireland who say, "Hang the whole bunch; we should not have them near the place." The reasonable request of Ulster Unionist leaders was that the working of the conference be suspended. It would have been an absolute abomination—Ministers will confirm this—to have men and women sitting round a table discussing the future of Northern Ireland when the helicopter was coming in or, what is even worse, when they left the conference a well-known journalist would stick his microphone in their faces to find out what their reaction was to Mr. Collins's or Mr. Haughey's visit to Northern Ireland. It would be nonsensical and the atmosphere would be wrong. We have maintained that position.

The House has been lectured for 10 years on the market economy and value for money. Ulster Scots would say that if the job of the secretariat was to staff the working of the conference and the conference did not work, the secretariat should be dismissed because it did not give value for money. Those are the three things for which we have asked and we have not changed those requests. We have not changed the goalposts.

Northern Ireland has had 16 years of direct rule. As a Unionist, I would not mind if it were direct rule. People say that it is a second-best solution. None of us wants second best; I want the best. There is something wrong with a Parliament that allows civil servants in Northern Ireland to escape the scrutiny that we demand of civil servants in the rest of the Kingdom. Whether they are Northern Ireland bred and based civil servants or those who are seconded for a period, like Ministers, they should be under the scrutiny of the House.

There is no reason why there should not be a Northern Ireland Select Committee. Let us get away from the nonsense that if there were devolved government in the Province we would not need a Select Committee. There will always be issues which affect the House and which require the scrutiny of the House. There is no reason for any further delay. I should like the Secretary of State to read over some of the answers that the Lord President has given me on the matter. He said that I should speak to the Secretary of State. My hon. Friends are speaking to him. As I understand the working of the House, it is not the job of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to create a Select Committee. It is for the Lord President to move a motion on behalf of the Procedure Committee. That will be done in due course to establish a Select Committee on Social Security. I plead that we should stop drifting in so-called direct rule. Let us have a Select Committee of hon. Members to monitor what is going on with greater scrutiny.

The hon. Member for Foyle dreamed dreams and saw visions. I could do the same. Our neighbours have a view of history that is debatable. Yorkshire miners and other people were abused by the landlords in Yorkshire at the same time as my family and others were abused by landlords in Ireland. It is far too simplistic a view of history to say that the bad English were oppressing the Irish. Thousands upon thousands of people from the Republic of Ireland are voting with their feet and coming back into the Kingdom. I suggest that the Labour Front-Bench spokesmen's support for devolved administration for the regions would be a way forward. The Labour party may not yet have my vision of a federal solution for the islands, but ultimately that will be the way

forward. Few people in the Republic of Ireland will argue against that when they have already crowned Jack Charlton an honorary Irishman.

7.40 pm

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): Hon. Members on both sides, including the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone), have raised important issues which need investigating. I hope that, in view of the representations that have been made, the Government will carry out the fullest possible in-depth inquiry so that the full facts and the truth may be revealed.

As we debate this extension measure dating from 1974, it is clear that the way in which we legislate for the people of Northern Ireland is disgraceful. Vital issues affecting the lives of the people there do not receive sufficient consideration. Having said that, I must admit, as I look round the Benches on both sides of the House, that we have adequate debating time today for Northern Ireland affairs. That is happening only because so few hon. Members want to take part in the debate.

That will not be the case on future occasions—for example, at Northern Ireland Question Time, which is prime television time. On those occasions, hon. Members will crowd into the Chamber, trying to remove the fire from the remarks of hon. Members who represent Northern Ireland constituencies. It is to be hoped that there will be fewer planted questions, even from Conservative Members.

I note, as I speak of planted questions in those terms, that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland shakes his head in dissent. Does he really believe that the Government have never even thought of using that tactic? I assure him that I have seen pieces of paper with questions written on them being handed by certain hon. Members to other hon. Members, the former asking, "Will you please sign this, and it can go in for Question Time?"

Rev. Ian Paisley: My hon. Friend will be aware that, even though hon. Members representing constituencies in Northern Ireland may hand in their questions first, they never appear first on the Order Paper for Question Time. Indeed, some of them never even appear among the listed questions. Of all questions that are asked, the House should be interested in hearing from hon. Members who represent constituencies in Northern Ireland. I am not suggesting that other hon. Members should not have an opportunity to ask questions, but Northern Ireland hon. Members should have their questions called if those questions are handed in on time.

Rev. William McCrea: I am obliged to my hon. Friend for that intervention. He will agree, however, that hon. Members who represent Northern Ireland constituencies would be delighted to know that other hon. Members in all parts of the House were deeply interested in the internal affairs of all parts of Her Majesty's domain, including Northern Ireland. Irrespective of prime television time, it is a shame that, for this debate, the Benches are so unoccupied. The public who see the television screening of the debate will appreciate that for themselves. They will also realise that many hon. Members do not care about the problems of the people of Northern Ireland.

The Secretary of State said that he owed the House an account of the Government's stewardship in Northern Ireland over the past year. The facts of that stewardship should be drawn to everyone's attention, and that is why we need full debates regularly on matters affecting the people of Northern Ireland. In that connection, we should have the same privilege as other hon. Members of tabling amendments to legislation affecting the people of Northern Ireland.

That is why I agree with the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) that there should be a Northern Ireland Select Committee, in which we could scrutinise in depth what is happening in the various Departments. After all, it is time that questions were put to civil servants about what is going on. Although we have the front men—the Ministers—we should be able to question civil servants on issues affecting the Province, for they are beavering away in the background. May we have an assurance tonight that such a Select Committee will be established and that instead of the Order in Council procedure, which is a despicable and deplorable way of legislating for the people of part of the United Kingdom, we will have a proper forum in which to discuss all relevant issues in depth?

I join other hon. Members in commending the Secretary of State for the way in which he has endeavoured to make progress in Northern Ireland. I listened with interest to my hon. Friend the Member for Antrim North (Rev. Ian Paisley) and the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) commend the efforts of the Secretary of State. Although I have no doubt that the right hon. Gentleman has acted, and will continue to act, with courtesy and refreshing honesty, members of the Northern Ireland Office have been beavering away with private press releases, press conferences and interviews with members of the press, seeking to undermine the elected leaders of Ulster Unionism. That has been a despicable action on the part of members of the press corps in the Northern Ireland Office. They would be better employed putting out propaganda to benefit the Province, rather than seeking to undermine the leadership of Ulster Unionism.

The elected leaders of the Unionist parties in the House have the backing of the members of their parties for the stand that they have made for Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom. All the underhand efforts of those little, despicable men and women in the Northern Ireland Office will not destroy the character and integrity of the leaders of Ulster Unionism.

I urge the Government to tell certain people in that press corps to get on with the business of projecting a bright future for Northern Ireland across the world, instead of adopting a negative attitude, trying to backstab those who are in the front line and who, through the ballot box, represent the will and wishes of the vast majority of the people of Northern Ireland.

When the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) spoke about unemployment, he referred to the situation in Ballymurphy. I am not suggesting that that area does not have an unemployment problem. I want all the people in our Province, and throughout the United Kingdom, to enjoy productive employment. But I remind the hon. Gentleman that not only Ballymurphy suffers from high unemployment. We in Mid-Ulster have massive unemployment—the second-highest in the United Kingdom.

I urge Her Majesty's Opposition to look wider than particular Nationalist areas. Let us consider not whether a person is a Nationalist or a Unionist when we debate

[Rev. William McCrea]

unemployment. Let us ensure that the people of Mid-Ulster, be they Protestants or Roman Catholics, have jobs. I am sure that the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) will agree that everyone in the Province has a right to a job.

The Secretary of State spoke about encouraging employment, and to that end we have had visitors from Japan, France and the rest. But if he studies the figures carefully he will find that not much employment has been brought to Mid-Ulster or west of the Bann. It is essential that the Government encourage employment in those areas west of the Bann which are suffering massive unemployment, for example, Castlederg. It has also suffered more from terrorism than any other area of equivalent size in the United Kingdom. The people there are terrorised by merciless IRA attacks from over the border. That is fact, not rhetoric. The IRA terrorists come from over the border, carry out their terrible acts and then return to their safe haven in the Irish Republic until they desire to move again.

Once again, I beg the Government to look afresh at the needs of my constituents. That is what stewardship in Northern Ireland is all about. People have an urgent need for a job, but it does not follow, as some would maintain, that because they have no job they turn to terrorism. That is an excuse for terrorism. In my constituency of Mid-Ulster, neither Protestants nor Roman Catholics turn to terrorism because they lack employment. However, it would be a major benefit for my constituents to have a job to go to in the morning. There is nothing more refreshing than to rise in the morning, go out and do a good day's work and, one hopes, receive respectable payment for it at the end of the week. That would benefit not only my constituents but the community as a whole.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North spoke about the Fair Employment Act. The impression given today and in previous debates is that discrimination is endured by only one section of the community. It is interesting that Newry and Mourne council has been accused of discriminating against its Protestant community, yet the SDLP is the major group on that council. It is also interesting to note that not one SDLP Member is present for this important Northern Ireland debate. I accept that the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) has had to leave to attend to other business, but others could have been present to deal with this important matter.

The SDLP and the Nationalists were in control of Strabane council for many years, and Protestants were discriminated against by that council. It is easy for people to identify a particular religious group and claim that it is being discriminated against. I do not agree with discrimination against a person. A person should not get a job because of his religion, nor should he be denied a job because of his religion.

The head of the Fair Employment Agency, Mr. Bob Cooper, came to Magherafelt district council, on which I had the honour to serve for some 17 years, during which time the SDLP was in control for 12 years and the Unionists for four years. A report on that council accused Magherafelt council, under the control of the SDLP, of discriminating against Roman Catholics. We have not yet had Mr. Cooper's final report, but it has emerged from his inquiries that for 16 years, 12 of them under the SDLP, the only years during which there was fair employment were —wait for it—the four years when I was chairman and the Unionists were in control. I make it abundantly clear that I and my party believe that every person has a right to a job, irrespective of who that person is and from what community he comes. I am delighted that scrutiny showed that when the Unionist family was in control of Magherafelt council there was fair employment for all. There will be no praise from the Government for Magherafelt council for those years under Unionist control, and Mr. Cooper will also be strangely silent on that.

I could deal with many aspects of the Government's future, but I must deal with an important matter which has affected my constituents since November 1985 and which was dealt with by the Secretary of State in the second part of his address—the Anglo-Irish Agreement and what is to happen now.

Most of us, on coming to the House today, expected that the Secretary of State would tell us that we were moving forward and that things were progressing. But that is not the case. We are told that optimism has turned to pessimism or, to use other words that we have heard today, that the optimism has been blighted. The reality is that the southern Government have once again vetoed a statement from the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State did not make the statement that he intended to make today because of the veto of a foreign Government.

I have been a Member of the House for eight years and during that time I have heard many boasts about Parliament's sovereignty. It is strange that, despite all the boasting, the Secretary of State could not make the speech to the House of Commons that he intended to make because of the desire of the leader of a foreign country to veto progress in Northern Ireland. People in Northern Ireland are sickened by the interference from Dublin in the affairs of our part of the United Kingdom. Let it be abundantly clear that Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom. That is the stance of the people of Northern Ireland. By entering into an alliance with a foreign Government through the Anglo-Irish Agreement, the Government have changed that. I do not have the same rights as every other citizen within the United Kingdom. What is happening in my part of the United Kingdom is not happening in every other part.

The Secretary of State told us today that the Anglo-Irish Agreement confirms the fact that Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom. That is not true. Article 1 states:

> "Any change in the status of Northern Ireland would only come about with the consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland."

As my hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, North said, that status is one thing in Dublin but quite another in this House and in the United Kingdom. If the Government believe that we are misinterpreting the agreement, why not test it in the European Court, in the light of all that has happened such as the McGimpsey case in Dublin?

If the Government believe that they are right, surely they would be delighted to prove it. Nothing would please them better than proving that our interpretation was wrong. I genuinely believe that the Government do not believe what they are saying, so they are misleading the House by declaring that the Anglo-Irish Agreement

secures Northern Ireland's position in the United Kingdom. It does nothing of the sort; it allows a foreign Government to meddle in the affairs of Northern Ireland.

I listened carefully to the considered speech of the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow). He asked whether a new agreement would need the widespread support of both sides of the community in Northern Ireland. Why did not the Government seek that widespread support for the Anglo-Irish Agreement? Why did not the Government want to find out whether the people of Northern Ireland oppose the Anglo-Irish Agreement? Why not put it to the people? They must accept that I and other Unionist Members were elected on a platform of opposition to the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

We were told that the agreement would be judged on three criteria—peace, stability and reconciliation. That was not how we said it would be judged; that was the stance of Mr. Garret FitzGerald, who entered into the agreement with our Prime Minister. He is from the south of Ireland. We must judge it on peace, stability and reconciliation. The Government know well that there is no widespread support for the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

In his statement, the Secretary of State said that there was no reason why the present agreement should be the last word. The Government know that it is opposed by the people of Northern Ireland. They say that if a better agreement which commanded widespread support from both sides of the community in Northern Ireland were to be reached, it would be an important step forward. Therefore, any alternative to the agreement must command widespread support. If the current agreement is to stand, should not it also command widespread support from both sides of the community in Northern Ireland?

The reason why the Unionist view was not sought at the time the agreement was entered into was that the Government had bought the SDLP line—to face down the Unionists. The leader of the SDLP said that. Reconciliation was not a consideration, only facing down the Unionist population. No matter how long the agreement stands, the Government must realise that it will never be accepted, and anyone who suggests that it will be is deceiving both himself and the House.

Mr. Dalyell: Some of us care deeply about what happens in the north of Ireland. To the dismay—indeed, minor annoyance—of our colleagues, we voted against the agreement. I have no regrets. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman did not mean it, but he appeared to label everyone generically as having voted in favour of it. That is not fact: I voted against it.

Rev. William McCrea: I accept what the hon. Gentleman says. A small number of hon. Members—47 out of 650—voted against the Anglo-Irish Agreement. However, it was forced upon the people of Northern Ireland by the vast majority of hon. Members. Many hon. Members came to the House when the vote was called, not having listened to the arguments or the debate. They were the usual Lobby fodder and they forced through the agreement. Both the Government and the Opposition believed that they could force it upon the people of Northern Ireland, who they thought would huff and puff, but whose resistance would disappear. If those hon. Members wish to be honourable before this House, they must admit that they were mistaken, first, about the opposition to the agreement and, secondly, in thinking that it could be forced upon the people of Ulster under the disguise of democracy. Some 600 hon. Members voted to force it upon the people of Northern Ireland, against their will, and that is called democracy.

The people of Northern Ireland oppose the agreement. I am delighted that the Government, at this late stage, appear to recognise that fact. The Secretary of State now accepts that the agreement is not working and cannot work and that an alternative must be sought. The Unionist population are willing earnestly to consider that. They are willing to play their part, as the Government acknowledge. After the agreement was signed, the Prime Minister stated that it could be devolved away. There were people in the Northern Ireland Office who sold to the Prime Minister something that was not reality because it cannot be devolved away. The people of Northern Ireland have a democratic right to oppose that obnoxious agreement and to seek something that is durable, practical and constructive.

Yesterday evening I watched the television hoping that the English football team would win and today I read in the papers about the disappointment and the tears of despair on the faces of the players. I honestly believe that Members of Parliament do not fully understand the tears of despair that have been shed by the innocent people of Northern Ireland who have suffered a terrible campaign of destruction and murder.

My constituents have suffered as much as if not more than most. The other day, I walked behind the coffins of two policemen. I spoke to their widows and sought to bring them some comfort and succour in their hour of need. I stood there having suffered the ravages of the IRA within my own family. I ask hon. Members, whenever they think about despair, to think about the way forward and to remember that all the settlements and constitutional talks one could ever conceive of will never talk away the Provisional IRA. Its members are roaming at will in my constituency. They are blowing up businesses and have been blasting and scattering bodies across my constituency for the past 20 years.

Few hon. Members have visited the homes of widows, met their children and experienced the tragedy for themselves. Although I do not doubt the sincerity of those who sympathise, widows are sick to the teeth of sympathy from people who have the power to allow a campaign of military might against the IRA and to bring about the defeat of those who are terrorising the community.

The Prime Minister said that it was her desire to eradicate terrorism. Twenty years on I ask the Minister, without beating about the bush, to tell me and my constituents, the widows and the intended widows, when the nightmare of terrorism will end. With all respect to the leaders of my party, the Official Unionist party, the SDLP and Ministers, if anyone in the House thinks that a constitutional settlement tomorrow will wipe out the IRA, he has been fooled. The IRA is embedded in the community and the only way to defeat terrorism is to root it out of the community and to allow every decent citizen, Protestant and Roman Catholic, to live in peace, enjoy stability and to have lasting and real reconciliation.

8.14 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): First, I should like to comment on the speech by the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea). Some may think it

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

strange that one who has spoken as often as I have should be called at 8.14 pm on a subject that is so important to the United Kingdom. In response to the hon. Gentleman, I register a personal sadness that so many on this side of the water for one reason or another have not taken more interest in the affairs of Northern Ireland. I am guilty of that as, like my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone), I want to refer to a particular matter, but I hope that it will not be interpreted as meaning that I do not care about the wider and general issues involved in the agony experienced in Northern Ireland.

I address my parliamentary colleagues of all parties. Anyone who has been a Member of Parliament for as long as I have, or anyone who sits in the House of Commons, almost by definition is not easily shocked. We become ever more resigned to the ways of the world. However, I should like to raise two issues that greatly shock me, and I shall start with the one that shocks me least.

In an appendix to his evidence to the Royal Commission on the press in 1977, the former Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson revealed that

"seven burglaries of the homes of members of my staff took place in the three months before I announced my resignation".

He continued:

"Within a week of the announcement of my forthcoming series of interviews with David Frost on Yorkshire Television, the contracts section of Yorkshire Television was burgled and papers examined".

He went on:

"My political secretary has had two burglaries from her home . . . Shortly before Easter 1977, a break-in took place in my study in my home in Buckinghamshire."

I make that 19 burglaries. In most of them nothing was taken, although in all of them papers had been rifled through. One can match all those incidents with what Peter Wright says rather sooner than one would think.

I shall not go on about Harold Wilson's disquiet about those matters, but I stress that it is an all-party affair. I was as deeply shocked when I saw with my own eyes an extremely nasty document referring to the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) in a personal capacity. It was marked with the stamp of the Army headquarters at Lisburn.

I do not believe that Labour or Conservative Prime Ministers should be smeared in that way. I repeat that if Wilson and Heath suffered, as did Ted Short and William van Straubenzee, certain politicians from Northern Ireland suffered much more. I admit that what happened on this side of the water was less than what happened to the colleagues of some of those in the Chamber. But politicians can look after themselves, and that brings me to the second matter which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East said, will not go away.

Generically it must be called Kincora and the Wallace affair. I am utterly shocked by what has emerged about Kincora and the knowledge that vulnerable boys in the care and guardianship of the British state were repeatedly abused over a period of time. My hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East was right to say that it took place over a considerable time. That knowledge was in the hands of the intelligence services of the state but was withheld for a considerable time from the proper police services of the state. I repeat that, were I in the shoes of Sir John Hermon, whom I do not know, and the RUC, I should be simply livid at what happened.

I refer to an answer that I received on 21 June 1990 from the Minister of State. I make no complaint about the fact that temporarily he is not in his place. In an oral question I asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

"what information his Department received concerning obstruction into the process of inquiry into alleged sexual abuse of boys and the Kincora boys home."

In his reply the Minister of State said:

"I do not believe that any relevant information was withheld from successive inquiries."

Well may my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East smile. I then asked:

"What evidence does the Minister have for that opinion? Does he share the disgust of many of us that for some reason the interests of the security forces apparently took precedence over the interests of vulnerable boys in care in a real sense and under the guardianship of the nation?"

The Minister replied:

"My opinion comes from my study of the papers on the matter. I would share the concern that the hon. Gentleman expressed if I thought that the facts were as he described them. I do not believe that they were; the RUC had information, but as Sir George Terry's report explained, that information was acted on not immediately but some years later."—[*Official Report*, 21 June 1990; Vol. 174, c. 1105.]

Naturally, I sent a copy of the *Hansard* report to Colin Wallace. In all the dealings that I have had with him he has not yet brought information to me that proved in any way to be false. He has impressed, under scrutiny, some of my right hon. and learned Friends, including my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer). They made very careful inquiries. I intend, therefore, to put on the record Mr. Wallace's reply to the Minister. He said:

"I have just read Mr. Cope's disgraceful reply of 21 June to your question about MI5 withholding information about the Kincora scandal from police officers engaged in the Terry inquiry. Quite frankly, I think Government Ministers now treat Parliamentary questions with utter contempt and make no attempt whatsoever to provide proper answers to any queries raised by Members."

I have always been treated with courtesy by the Minister of State. He is a great improvement on some of his predecessors. Mr. Wallace continued:

"For example, the BBC's 'Public Eye' programme demonstrated very clearly that:

(a) Both Army Intelligence and MI5 were aware of the Kincora situation in the mid 1970s;

(b) MI5 refused to allow one of its senior officers, Ian Cameron, to be interviewed by the police about the scandal."

I believe that to be true. Colin Wallace continued:

"(c) Although an Army Intelligence officer informed detectives on the Terry inquiry team about his knowledge of the matter in 1982, no reference to his evidence was made in the official report written by Sir George Terry, the conclusions of which were given to Parliament. Indeed, Sir George Terry even claimed that military sources had been very frank and he was satisfied that military intelligence knew nothing about the scandal."

However, Colin Wallace added:

"You will recall that on 7 June, in reply to a question from you about the 'Public Eye' programme, Mr. Cope"—

the Minister of State—

"confirmed to Parliament that 'James', the Army Intelligence officer who appeared on the BBC programme, had indeed been interviewed by the police in 1982, but that the programme contained 'no material about Kincora not available at the time to Sir George Terry's inquiry'."

I am satisfied about the credentials of James. He is no particular friend of Colin Wallace—in fact, not a friend at all. He is a very Christian man; I use the word "Christian" in the sincerest sense, a sense which I believe that I share with Northern Ireland Members of Parliament. Mr. Wallace continued:

"The issues which Mr. Cope refuses to address, therefore, are:

(1) Did MI5 refuse to allow Ian Cameron to be interviewed by detectives from the Terry inquiry?

(2) If so, what were the grounds for refusal and how can he justify his reply to you"—

that is, to me—

"on 21 June?

(3) Why did Sir George Terry fail to record in his Report MI5's refusal to co-operate with his investigation?

(4) why was no reference made in Sir George Terry's report to the information provided to his officers by 'James', the former Army Intelligence officer?"

Those questions have to be addressed. Colin Wallace continued:

"I think you will agree that had Parliament known of MI5's refusal to co-operate with the police on this issue there would have been a very justifiable outcry from many Members."

If any hon. Member thinks that I am taking up the time of the House, I ought to point out that I sent to some Northern Ireland Members—who, I believe, gave it to their colleagues—a copy of the letter because they have, as they have said, a genuine interest in the matter. Colin Wallace continued:

"The Government's behaviour on the Kincora issue is utterly deplorable."

That is his judgment. The subject will not go away. If Ministers believe that this is being dragged up just by the bloody-minded Members who represent Brent, East and Linlithgow, they should realise that a good deal more than that is at stake. Collin Wallace continued:

"There have been widespread cries of indignation in Parliament and the media over child abuse scandals such as that in Cleveland, but almost total silence over Kincora which went on for almost 20 years with the full knowledge and 'approval' of Government agencies. The Government should be hunted from office by every decent person in the country because of its cover-up of this disgraceful episode."

This is not a party political matter. I must say that bluntly both to Colin Wallace and to anyone else who thinks so, though I do not believe that he is motivated by party political issues. I believe that this is a moral issue. I had a great deal of sympathy for the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster when he asked why we make such a fuss about things on this side of the water, yet when the same occurs in the north of Ireland there is a cut off. That attitude may have led to the displacement of Robin Chichester-Clark, Stratton Mills, Rafton Pounder and several hon. Members who represented Northern Ireland when I first came to the House. I can see that they came to political grief because of the collective attitude of the House of Commons.

Colin Wallace made available to me his rather important letter from Mr. Miller of the Ministry of Defence. I refer to one paragraph:

"You attached to your letter of 23 April seven documents which you suggested support your allegation of a smear campaign by Crown servants against Members of Parliament. As to the document which you identify as a draft of the synopsis of part 1 of Clockwork Orange, you have provided no information to indicate that its references to Harold Wilson were the work of anyone but yourself. I am aware of no substantive evidence that such drafting received any official sanction, nor that the use of such material was ever authorised. As to the remaining documents, it is not evident from them that any was written by a Crown servant with intent to smear Members of Parliament or that they were ever used by Mr. Mooney or any other Crown servant for that purpose. In the letter that you addressed to the Prime Minister on 12 May, you sought to justify a number of allegations by quoting from the transcript of a telephone conversation between General Leng and Mr. Penrose. In fact, General Leng has given a firm assurance to government officials that he has no knowledge of any capaign, under any codename, by Crown servants to smear Members of Parliament."

I put that on the record because it is important to the remainder of my remarks. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East, I doubted whether any of those sources had been cross-checked. I realise that it is a heck of a sweat delving back into the past, but the issue and the background are such that we as a nation cannot afford to be lazy. The letter continues:

"As regards Mr. Calcutt's inquiry, contrary to the allegations in your letters of 12 and 18 May, there is no question of the Government or officials attempting to influence individuals in the way you suggest or of putting pressure on them not to give evidence to Mr. Calcutt. I have nothing to add to the conclusions of the Report made available on 14 May, to which your letter of 18 May also referred. Finally, I understand that the Home Office is currently considering the representations made on your behalf concerning your conviction, and will be replying shortly on the matters raised."

I am unaware of any substantial activity by the Home Office. My hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East and I know that, before the Calcutt inquiry was established, the attitude of the Home Office Minister was absolutely disgraceful.

How is the Master of Magdalene, Mr. Calcutt, getting on, because he seems to have much to do? I should have thought that there was some urgency about this matter.

On 10 June, Mr. Wallace wrote to the Prime Minister. It is important that the House understands exactly what he told the right hon. Lady, especially as she tells me that someone is replying on her behalf. Normally, I am absolutely reasonable about these matters. Prime Ministers cannot be expected to do everything, but the Prime Minister is in charge of the security services—I do not know who else is—and the buck stops there. I see the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) nodding. Prime Ministers have some responsibility for these matters. I am dismayed by the developments that are taking place in the modern prime ministerial role, because the awful open questions that are asked mean that a Prime Minister has to delve in and be prepared and briefed for the yah-boo of Question Time on everything that affects every Department. That may undermine Cabinet Government, but it also means that Prime Ministers may not have the time to concentrate on matters that they should be concentrating on, such as responsibility for the security services.

I remember that Mr. Macmillan, my first Prime Minister, would transfer anything that did not affect him or relate to the work of No. 10 Downing street. That is how the system should work, and that is why this afternoon I asked the Leader of the House when we shall debate the report of the Select Committee on Procedure and the scandal of oral questions and the syndication of questions.

The letter to the Prime Minister says:

"I refer to my letters of 23 April and 12 May to you and to my letter of 18 May to the Secretary of State for Defence. I have now received a response dated 4 June from Mr. J A Miller, Private Secretary to the Minister of State for the Armed Forces."

That is the letter to which I referred:

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

"Even by the abysmal standard of past MOD answers, Mr. Miller's latest letter is perhaps the most misleading and dishonestly evasive reply I have received to date. Bearing in mind that his reply will almost certainly have been approved by your office and that of the Defence Secretary, the contents of his letter can best be described as a grotesque insult to Parliament. My letter of 23 April had attached to it two documents which contained examples of blatant smears about a number of Members of Parliament, including Harold Wilson, Tony Benn"—

and the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume).

"Those documents also bore what is almost certainly the handwritten editing comments of Mr. Hugh Mooney, a former Information Research Department officer who was until December 1973 Information Adviser to the General Officer Commanding Northern Ireland. You will have noted that Mr. Mooney's editing marks on the documents do not delete any of the smear material about either the Parliamentary Labour Party in general or the named politicians in particular."

I do not make a great party issue of this, because the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup suffered as much as anyone. The letter continues:

"Referring to those documents, Mr. Miller says: 'It is not evident from them that any was written by a Crown servant with the intent to smear Members of Parliament or that they were ever used by Mr. Mooney or any other Crown servant for that purpose.' Bearing in mind that the above reply has been sent to me on your behalf, are you seriously suggesting that the documents bearing Mr. Mooney's handwriting were produced by some unidentified person who has no connection with any Government department or agency? Is it your view that the documents were edited by Mr. Mooney knowing full well that they were never going to be disseminated to anyone either inside or outside the Security Forces?"

I propose, when *Hansard* is printed, to write to Downing street asking for a reply to that question. Mr. Wallace continues:

"In the light of Mr. Miller's reply and the 'thorough inquiries'"

—that is gobbledegook; they were not thorough—

"which you assured Parliament have been carried out into my allegations, I would be grateful if you would explain

(a) How those documents originated:

(b) How the Information Adviser to the GOC Northern Ireland came to be in possession of such documents;

(c) Why his job required him to edit documents containing political disinformation;

(d) What was the purpose of those edited documents;

(e) How part of them came to be reproduced in a Conservative Party pamphlet in 1976."

Time goes on. However, as one who was here at the time and who thinks that those who are either dead or ill, as Harold Wilson now is, have rights, I care about the reputation, controversial though it may be, of a former Labour Prime Minister, and some of his friends also care. I used to talk a lot to Harold Wilson. Like the rest of us, he had his faults, but on this matter, I believe that his sustained anger was justified.We should get to the bottom of this matter because when Harold Wilson wrote his submission to the Royal Commission on the press, his remarkable mind was still fully there. I care what happened 14 long years ago and I think that I am entitled to care.

Mr. Wallace continues:

"Mr. Miller makes no reference to the forged Sinn Fein documents bearing what appears also to be Mr. Mooney's handwriting and which contain information indicating that the Parliamentary Labour Party leadership is not only Communist, but also working in partnership with Sinn Fein against Britain's membership of the Common Market."

I do not take that kind of thing very seriously; we all have our own views on the Common Market and the allegation was not going to alter very much. However, the taxpayer should not be expected to finance such nonsense against any democratically elected Government.

Mr. Wallace continues:

"Perhaps even more outrageously misleading is Mr. Miller's reference to my letter to you"—

that is, the present Prime Minister—

"of 12 May, with which I enclosed extracts from the transcripts of the tape-recorded telephone conversations between Barrie Penrose of the Sunday Times and General Sir Peter Leng, former Commander Land Forces Northern Ireland. In his letter, Mr. Miller claims:

'In the letter which you addressed to the Prime Minister on 12 May, you sought to justify a number of allegations by quoting from the transcript of a telephone conversation between General Leng and Mr. Penrose. In fact, General Leng has given a firm assurance to government officials that he has no knowledge of any campaign, under any codename, by Crown servants to smear Members of Parliament'."

Mr. Wallace says:

"Mr. Miller's comment is typical of the disinformation disseminated by Government sources about my allegations. As you know very well, my letter of 12 May did not claim that General Leng had any knowledge of any campaign by Crown servants to smear Members of Parliament. My letter said"—

I have checked this and it is true—

"I attach for your information extracts from the tape recordings of the exchanges between General Leng and the Sunday Times. I think you will agree that they show:

1. Senior Army officers at HQ Northern Ireland were aware in the mid 1970s of allegations of homosexual abuse at the Kincora boys home.

2. That the 'Clockwork Orange' project originated at the Northern Ireland Office and involved members of MI5.

3. Setting aside the first paragraph of the story which I think is much too strong, the tape recordings do support the Sunday Times account of what the General allegedly said".

I have talked to Andrew Neil, the editor of *The Sunday Times*, about this and it is a complex story. I suggest that Ministers also talk to the editor of *The Sunday Times* and get his version of events at first hand. Although I cannot speak for Andrew Neil, I am sure that he will talk frankly to them as he talked frankly to me.

Colin Wallace continues:

"You will also recall the following extracts from my letter and the tape recordings."

The document says:

"The first telephone call begins with Barrie Penrose reading to the General an extract from page 28 of Paul Foot's book, 'Who framed Colin Wallace' in which Paul Foot refers to General Leng and the 'Clockwork Orange' project.

PENROSE: . . . So, I don't know whether you recall this 'Clockwork Orange'?

LENG: Well, I hardly recall it and certainly I had no part at all in anything to do with politicians and nor would I. I mean my policy at that particular stage was that we had to play the game straight. We had to find out, we obviously had to do some research into terrorists but there was to be no dirty tricks at all as far as I was concerned, and one or two people, and I don't recall who, came up to me and said to me we'd like to do this, and my answer was always no. The Army has got to be played clean because these things get found out in time."

Page 4 of 27 of the document, which is in my possession, says:

"PENROSE: . . . And how many people would have known about Clockwork Orange? Would it . . . I am just wondering . . .

LENG: Well, I think the senior Intelligence officer would have known. Broderick [Chief Information Officer] would have known. Mike [Len] Garrett [Chief of Staff HQ Northern Ireland] . . .

PENROSE: And on Kincora you come out absolutely as one would expect, saying there has got to be action on Kincora. Do you recall that?

LENG: No . . .

Page 7 says:

"PENROSE: . . .You said in the memo according to [Mike] Taylor that the RUC and the social services I think ought to be brought in here because the file named men and boys who were obviously part of this abuse which we all know about since."

Ministers should talk directly to Mike Taylor and I shall ask them whether they have done so. The document continues:

"LENG: Yes, I recall that.
PENROSE: Do you? And you said take action. They waited because obviously there had been other members suggesting this from junior officers, but it was yours that finally convinced Taylor that this was going to happen, but of course it went on for another six or seven years, but again that wasn't your fault."

Page 8 of 27 says:

"PENROSE: It was just to remind you that there were homosexual abuses taking place, namely by the housefather named McGrath.
LENG: Yes.
PENROSE . . . who was also the leader of TARA, and of course eventually that was all proven in court some years afterwards, and also a man named McKeague, but I mean this is obviously outside . . .
LENG: Yes I do remember the homosexual insinuations and I do remember saying this is a police business, not ours."

I may be naive but it seems to me that if a Commander-in-Chief, Land Forces says, "This is a police business," someone somewhere should be doing something about it. Commanders-in-Chief, Land Forces are not exactly ignored—at least, I think it would be very strange if they were.

Page 16 of 27 reads as follows:

"PENROSE: The actual operation, I mean Clockwork Orange, when it was first mooted was in fact Denis Payne —several people have mentioned that—who was at NIO."

That must be in the records of the Northern Ireland Office. I confess that I do not know whether the Secretary of State has access to those records, because there is a difficulty with past records. Perhaps the Secretary of State wants to intervene——

Mr. Brooke: No, I am having a drink.

Mr. Dalyell: I must make it clear for the record that the Secretary of State is drinking water.

Page 16 continues:

"LENG: That's right. There was of course that branch as well. NIO would come in and cross fertilise if they wanted to keep something from the RUC—dont't quote me again.
PENROSE: No, No. No."

Page 18 of 27 reads:

"PENROSE: No, of course. It's just to see how, if you would forgive me, how the bureaucracy works. So, Clockwork Orange in this case comes from Denis Payne's office, so it's Intelligence to Intelligence, and then you're shown it . . .
LENG: I'm not always shown it. Only if they need to involve someone at a higher level.
PENROSE: Right . . .
PENROSE: . . . Clockwork Orange was Policy. This sounds like a statement rather than a question, but a statement asking for confirmation.
LENG: And Clockwork Orange was Policy.
PENROSE: Yes. And so . . . Denis Payne sends the file over and this is Policy from NIO.
LENG: I wouldn't have thought he would even send a file over if I may say so because the less that was committed to paper the better."

I am not convinced that that is in the honourable tradition of the Grenadier Guards. People do not say that things should not be committed to paper unless there is some reason for that.

Page 19 of 27 reads:

"PENROSE: Oh, of course, I'm sorry, of course.
LENG: And I think there would be discussions because certainly Intelligence and Intelligence are meeting continually.
PENROSE: Yes. So . . . fine, so it comes from there. Your job is of course . . . you have to OK Peter Goss, the senior Intelligence officer, and Tony Holman and others, to release information to the unit, to the Information Policy unit."

I see that my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) is getting restive. I do not want to annoy him but the debate can go on until 11.30 pm, so we have time.

Page 19 continues:

"LENG: Yes, to the Information Policy unit or down to the units of the Army.
PENROSE: Yes.
LENG: As the case may be.
PENROSE: So, you knew obviously there was a five [MI5] involvement in Clockwork Orange, but you obviously wouldn't have known . . .
LENG: The detail.
PENROSE: The detail.
LENG: Correct."

I do not want to start criticising individual officers, but it seems to me that General Officers Commanding should not pass by on the other side of a very awkward road. If such things happen, it is up to commanding officers to get themselves involved.

Page 19 continues:

"PENROSE: Right, and the other thing is that—which is obviously very important—is that as you didn't see the file that was kept at Lisburn, you wouldn't have known obviously its contents because there would have been no need for you to know.
LENG: Right."

The principle of the need to know is all very well but General Officers Commanding in Northern Ireland should be a bit inquisitive about what goes on in the north of Ireland.

Wallace then said to the Prime Minister:

"I think even you will agree from the above extracts that General Leng does not deny:

(a) He was aware of the allegations of homosexuality at the Kincora Boys Home;
(b) He was aware of a project known as 'Clockwork Orange', albeit not the full content of it.
(c) There was MI5 involvement in the project.

Not surprisingly, Mr. Miller totally ignores virtually all of the other documents which I sent to you"—

the numerous documents that had been sent to the Prime Minister at No. 10 Downing street—

"He makes no comment on the forged bank account purporting to belong to the Rev. Ian Paisley, nor does he attempt to explain why the Security Forces should have been collecting documents such as the one containing the homosexual smear about Edward Heath."

As an Opposition Member, I am outraged by the document that I have seen carrying the imprimatur of the headquarters in Northern Ireland in which allegations are made about the Prime Minister of this country. Years later, that is still quite unacceptable. Wallace continued:

"The key question which the Government refuses to address is: 'Did those documents exist at Army Headquarters Northern Ireland during the mid 1970s, and if so for what purpose were they created or collected?' Given the many false assurances provided by Ministers in the past, the Government has a duty to tell Parliament the truth about these issues. For example, I enclose with this letter a selection of pages from a document which was typed during that period for the Information Policy unit by Mr. C. T. T. Whitehead, until recently Deputy Chief Press Officer at the MOD and currently with the Home Office, and which contains information designed to smear Irish Prime Minister, Charles Haughey. It should be a very simple task for your advisers to check if this is correct or not."

[Mr. Dalyell]

The Minister may recall that the matter was referred to last Friday on page 3 of *The Independent*. I mention that in passing; I do not wish to go over the whole of Mr. Anthony Bevins's contribution. But if Ministers think that I am talking about something in the distant past of purely academic interest I would point out to them that it is strange that the political editor of *The Independent* should decide to deal with the matter on page 3. Heaven knows, there was enough news. The article referred to the fact that Mr. C. T. T. Whitehead, who apparently had no information about those matters or that they were going to be raised, now holds the very important and sensitive post of press officer to the prisons department of the Home Office. Is it true that he typed all that stuff? The Prime Minister has copies of all that. What have the Government done to check with various other people to whom the documents were sent to discover whether they are false? There is a good deal of potential corroborative evidence around. Or have the Government simply, as my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East and I suspect, pulled the shutters down and adopted an attitude like Henry to Thomas a'Becket—"Who will rid us of these people?"—and done nothing about it?

To be blunt, we are going to use every parliamentary stratagem to stop that happening. This matter refers to Parliament as a whole. Parliament has a right to be inquisitive about such matters. That is why I have spoken at great length and have read out the letter to the Prime Minister. It is clear that she had no intention of answering it. What can we do about that other than to put everything on the parliamentary record and badger her day after day until she produces some kind of an answer?

In his letter Mr. Miller refers to the draft of the first part of Clockwork Orange which was sent to the Prime Minister. He claims:

"I am aware of no substantive evidence that such drafting received any official sanction."

If that is the Prime Minister's view, Colin Wallace says that he would be grateful if she would explain who authorised and instructed a member of MI5 to type that draft. What was Mr. Whitbread, Penny Sadler or anyone else doing drafting those documents? They did not draft them simply because they wanted to. Those things do not happen out of thin air like alchemy. Someone, somewhere issues instructions that they should happen. They do not happen by chance.

Many serious people are interested in this matter. I will quote from an unprompted letter from Laura Grimond, the granddaughter of former Prime Minister Asquith. She wrote to me on 12 June from Orkney:

"Just a line to thank you for sending me the most interesting correspondence re Colin Wallace, and also the Hansard of your extremely effective speech in the Army Debate 5 June."

Laura Grimond may think it was effective, but I have not had much of an answer from the Minister of State for the Armed Forces. He did not say anything. Speeches are effective only if they achieve something. Therefore, I do not think that my speech was particularly effective. She continued:

"The fact that predictably it was ignored by the Government . . . says much and simply underlines the continuing cover-up on as much as can be covered up in matters relating to Colin Wallace and the conduct of the Security Forces in Northern Ireland. Apart from Inspector Byford's letter in the Times of 8 June 1990 I haven't seen any come back from the Yorkshire TV Film, but don't see the full coverage of the National Press up here. If no replies to the questions you put are provided there must be further reactions."

She then says that she is sending copies of the correspondence to a number of people with personal contacts. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Staffordshire, East (Mr. Lightbown) should not be dismissive about this matter because the Lord Chancellor is not. The Lord Chancellor has offered me an interview. I have known him for many years and I regard him as a most serious and honest man. I hope that all these matters will be brought before him before he is prepared to grant me an interview.

Wallace says:

"My comments about the Calcutt Inquiry are equally valid. If, as has been shown above, the Ministry of Defence is determined to continue providing false and deliberately misleading information about my case then it is clear it will do so to the Calcutt Inquiry. Furthermore, given the obviously evasive nature of Mr. Miller's letter to me and the fact that you allowed such an inadequate reply to be issued in your name, the Calcutt Inquiry seems utterly pointless."

That is not my view, because David Calcutt has his own reputation to safeguard. Some people, including some of his fellow academic lawyers, will be intensely interested in the rigour of Calcutt's inquiry. I hope that he will uphold his considerable reputation—I do not know how he has time to do all this—by going in detail into what he was asked to do. I was pretty unhappy when I heard him describe his narrow terms of reference on the radio.

For reasons that the Secretary of State knows, I shall not refer to another inquiry tonight, but everything depends on the terms of reference of inquiries. If Calcutt comes up with a narrow report, the Secretary of State should not think that that will shut up the growing number of hon. Members who are concerned about the case of Colin Wallace.

Wallace says:

"Although the Inquiry was set up more than three months ago, my legal advisers and I still do not know what official documents we will be allowed to have access to; what witnesses, if any, we will be able to interview or cross-examine; or whether or not we will be able to see any of the evidence submitted by other witnesses. Even worse, although the Ministry of Defence has unlimited access to legal advice, I have still been refused counsel's opinion unless I pay for such advice myself."

That is one of the reasons why some of us have gone on and on about Colin Wallace's case. The set-up in this country means that the very rich can afford some defence, but people who cannot pour out a great deal of money in legal fees encounter great difficulty. Of course Colin Wallace will not get legal aid. He says:

"It would appear, therefore, that half of the inquiry will be able to have unlimited funds and assistance from the taxpayer, but any help I receive will be strictly limited."

I will send a copy of this speech to the Master of Magdalene and I hope that he will take it into account, because it is a serious problem for him.

I ought also to refer to one or two extracts that bother me and some of my colleagues from Northern Ireland, if I may call them that.

Mr. Molyneaux: Yes, the hon. Gentleman may.

Mr. Dalyell: The leader of the Ulster Unionists says that I may, and I thank him. He, too, has seen the documents, and he wonders where they came from. We wonder whether the Government know where they came from.

The document says:

"In Belfast, the need was for arms immediately. The commander had been interned the previous week but the acting commander became the established representative of the IRA in Belfast. In response to his cry, an assortment of arms of varying antiquity and condition from a variety of sources started to materialise. A Mr. Naughton, an executive of the GEC factory in Dunleer claimed to represent a body that could supply £150,000 with no trouble, although he personally would not be a supplier. He also made it clear that the money would not be handed out freely as Haughey had done. He asked questions as to the IRA's socialist policies and political involvement in the South and to what use the guns bought with this money would be put. The IRA man recognised the situation and gave the correct answers, answers that pleased Naughton as well as Padraic Faulkner who was behind Naughton. Faulkner had been appointed to the Committee on the previous day and £100,000 had been allocated for the relief of victims. Mr. Naughton offered £3,000 to the IRA leadership through Paddy Devlin and Paddy Kennedy. He handed over £1,000 and promised a further £2,000 which never came. His Committee appeared to think that the rebels cause was a better investment."

Who on earth typed that? I should like to know whether it was paid for by the British taxpayer. Who gave authority for it to be typed? Those documents are in the hands of Downing street, and it had better reply. It goes without saying that Mr. Haughey is only the Taoiseach. What exactly happened ought to be established, because those matters are widely known.

The document goes on:

"The same people except for Blaney met on September 18 at Charles Haughey's home. The IRA officer said that there would be no problem in obtaining arms provided £50,000 was forthcoming. It was suggested that he open a bank account so that the money could be paid in. This he did in Dundalk the following morning with a £5 deposit. No further money was paid in. The Dublin Cabinet was realising that it would not be so easy to take the IRA over. A new IRA could be quicker and cheaper.

Meanwhile, the Director of Army Intelligence had met Haughey to talk about intelligence moves in the North again. They decided to use the relief centre at Monaghan as a clearing house for information from the North—Army I.O. John Duggan and Finbarr Drohan had already advised on its suitability. It was agreed that the £100 a week should cover running expenses and the cost of producing a weekly newssheet which would help establish contacts in the North.

Seamus Brady had produced a booklet called 'Terror in Northern Ireland'—an account of the August fighting in Belfast—for the Central Citizens Defence Committee in Belfast. The Government Information Bureau paid for the book, and over a thousand copies were given to Paddy Devlin to distribute at the Brighton Labour Party Conference. Two thousand copies were kept for distribution overseas, and the rest went to the CCDC to sell at 2/6d a copy. Hugh Kennedy became the PRO CCDC for CCDC and began to build the image of Tom Conaty, a wholesale fruit importer whom it was planned to make Chairman of the CCDC in place of Jim O'Sullivan."

I would like to know where all that sort of stuff came from. I believe that the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) has views to express on that subject, so I shall give way if he wants to intervene.

Mr. Trimble: The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) showed those typescript pages to me earlier. I wondered whether they were extracts from a document that was published in Dublin round about 1975, by members of the Official IRA, as it was called then, giving its account of the formation of the Provisional IRA. It was subsequently declared a subversive document under the Republic's emergency legislation and is now extremely difficult to get hold of.

It is certainly consistent with accounts that appeared elsewhere, notably at the arms trial in which Blaney, Haughey and others were defendants. A short version of the thesis that lies behind it is to be found in Connor Cruise O'Brien's introduction to Martin Dillon's recent book.

Mr. Dalyell: It raises serious questions which deserve an answer. I am not in a position to begin answering them. However, it is high time that we had the truth. Ministers can find out, though I admit that there may be difficulties. I am to some extent a little embarrassed because all that happened a long time ago, but there should be records.

If Ministers really wanted to find out the truth, they could ask Mr. Whitehead certain questions. He is a very senior official. I will tell the House what he was reported as saying in *The Independent* on 29 June this year:

"The Prime Minister was urged yesterday to reply to an allegation that a civil servant was involved in a 1970s attempt to smear Charles Haughey, the Irish Taoiseach, with an IRA connection. The allegation was made in a letter to Margaret Thatcher from Colin Wallace, a former Army press officer in Northern Ireland, on 10 June.

But in the Commons yesterday, Tam Dalyell, Labour MP for Linlithgow, asked Sir Geoffrey Howe, Leader of the Commons, for a full response to the letter, 'containing a document, which may well have been a smear, typed by Mr. Christopher Whitehead, currently head of public relations of the prison service, linking Charles Haughey with the IRA'."

All that does not—or should not—come out of the blue, because the deputy Prime Minister said that he would draw the attention of the Northern Ireland Office to the fact that if I was called I would hope to raise those matters.

The Leader of the House said that my

"intervention would no doubt be taken into account when ministers replied to a Northern Ireland debate next Thursday.

Mr. Wallace said yesterday that the document, an extract from a 100-page original in his possession, was one of eight that he has submitted to Mrs. Thatcher. He said the documents substantiated his allegation that officials had carried out a disinformation campaign in Ulster in the mid-1970s. Mr. Whitehead, a Home Office chief press officer"—

this is why I say to the hon. Member for Upper Bann that we must know whether or not the allegation is false—

"said last night"—

28 June, that is—

"that he had no response"

to the allegation that I had made. If he had said that he knew nothing about it, and that he did not do it, that is one thing, but to have no response to an allegation such as that —well, hon. Members must draw their own conclusions.

The article continued:

"The official, who was on detachment to the Army press service in Northern Ireland towards the end of 1973, said he had not been asked whether he had typed the document. I was not aware this had happened at all, he said."

This is why I am so angry, as I said when I intervened in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East. The Prime Minister has had the letter for 14 long days. No one has bothered to ask a man in a senior position in the Government service—in a key Department such as the Home Office—whether or not he had typed the document. It is a simple question.

The article went on:

"*The Independent* passed a copy of the document to an Irish official last night. There was no reaction, but the allegation is bound to worsen Mr. Haughey's already delicate relationship with the United Kingdom."

Things are now out in the open. I suspect that the matter was not exactly news to the Irish Government, who, I know, want the matter cleared up. The article added:

[Mr. Dalyell]

"Mr. Wallace's letter was prompted by a Ministry of Defence official who told him earlier this month:"—

I refer to Mr. Miller's letter—

"You attached to your letter of 23 April seven documents which you suggested support your allegation of a smear campaign by Crown servants against Members of Parliament."

Have the Government bothered to try to find out about any of the other seven documents? If I am going on at inordinate length, it is because I want to suggest that I will do it again if I am given an opportunity, unless the Government bestir themselves.

Mr. Livingstone: May I help to put this in context? Many people will be surprised that we have not had a reply from the Prime Minister. She received a detailed file of all the most serious allegations from Colin Wallace at the beginning of the last decade, and nothing was done about it. For nearly 10 years those serious allegations have been in the Prime Minister's possession, and in all that time there has been not one serious response: they have been laughed off, brushed aside and denied.

Mr. Dalyell: My hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East and I have had the experience of being repeatedly laughed off. In 1986 I started off pretty sceptical, as I was told by Lord Mason not to touch this subject. However, other people said that I should examine the matter.

I was asked to start on this matter by a friend of the late Sir Maurice Oldfield, who was a mutual friend. I did not start with an attitude of destruction or of wanting to cause embarrassment. Frankly, I do not want to play party games in this matter. I am not sure whether I have pleased many of my colleagues—in fact, I am jolly sure that I have not. The article goes on:

"'As to the remaining documents, it is not evident from them that any was written by a Crown servant with intent to smear Members of Parliament or that they were ever used . . . for that purpose.' Mr. Wallace said that response ignored identifiable handwriting on the documents."

The question about the handwriting must be gone into. Again, that matter can be easily checked. Hon. Members from Northern Ireland are saying, "Yes," because they know the whole background.

I do not want to go on endlessly, but, on 4 June, there was a very direct letter. If the Minister's Parliamentary Private Secretary, the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind), would like to help—his Minister is taking the matter very seriously—he could persuade his colleagues that they and my colleagues too will save themselves much time and bother by taking the letters seriously. What reply will the Secretary of State send to a letter dated 4 June? It states:

"Dear Secretary of State,

I am writing to you once more about the Kincora affair in the light of the reported broadcast by the BBC2 Public Eye programme on 1st June 1990.

You will no doubt be aware that the contents of the programme cast into doubt previous claims that the issue has been fully investigated.

The programme alleged that the Security Service refused to co-operate with the enquiry conducted by Chief Superintendent George Caskey on behalf of Sir George Terry. In particular, it claimed that the following questions were put to the Security Services"—

we are back on the same matter that my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East mentioned—

"1. Why was no action taken to investigate the allegations the witness described as 'James' had passed on?"—

I have a clear idea about James, and I believe him to be a credible witness—

"2. Why was this witness told to drop the Kincora case?"

If the matter had all been part of the past, do hon. Members think that television, with all else that goes on, would still devote a long programme to it? Television does not do these things unless someone is interested, and we are interested in that question. The letter asked:

"3. Why was he told to sever contact with his source?

4. Did MI5 know what was going on in the home?

5. If MI5 did know, was it prepared to let it continue for another purpose?"

I am very concerned about "another purpose", but I shall not get into difficulty tonight by surmising what those purposes may be. Some of us have certain thoughts, and I just leave it at this: I am very curious about what the purpose could conceivably have been. The letter went on:

"No reply . . . was ever received. In the circumstances, I would appeal to you to provide an explanation for this failure to co-operate with the RUC. There are obvious implications for the primacy of the police and the respect for the rule of law by all security agencies. The whole issue should now be subject to the full and thorough investigation which it is obvious has not yet taken place.

Furthermore, the testimony of 'James' validates the evidence of Mr. Roy Garland. This fact alone indicates that the security forces were aware that there was cause for concern in connection with Kincora. As a result, the key question is no longer whether or not the security forces were aware of the concern, but why they did not act upon this awareness. Once again I appeal to you to recognise that the Government has a responsibility to the innocent victims of Kincora, whose lives have been devastated, to establish finally for once and for all the truth about this squalid business."

The Secretary of State knows that he received a letter of 12 May. He also knows about the personal letter to the Secretary of State for Defence on 18 May. He further knows that some of us are bothered about the passing of the buck. On Thursday 24 May, I tabled a question:

"To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Calcutt inquiry announced on 30 January, *Official Report*, column 112, will be taking evidence from *(a)* Len Garrett, *(b)* Sir Peter Leng, *(c)* Denis Payne, *(d)* Jeremy Railton, *(e)*"—

this is most important—

"Penny Sadler, *(f)* Bernard Sheldon"—

who was the legal adviser for many years—

"or *(g)* John Waterfield; and whether it would be open to representatives of Colin Wallace to cross-examine witnesses."

I should have thought that that was an important matter of public policy, but the Minister of State for the Armed Forces stated:

"These matters are for Mr. Calcutt."—[*Official Report*, 24 May 1990; Vol. 173, c. *379*.]

I do not know how David Calcutt will decide, but I should like it on the record in *Hansard* that some of us will be very disappointed if he does not see every one of those named individuals. It is all very well to say that there should be a quick conclusion, but seeing witnesses takes time and Mr. Calcutt may have to see them more than once. What sort of an inquiry is David Calcutt supposed to be undertaking? No inquiry could be full without seeing those witnesses.

In conclusion, there is a whole history of letters to the Prime Minister. There was a very important letter on 12 May which was not properly answered. The answer that I

received to my speech in the Army debate on 20 June—D/Min(AF)/1/3—was no response whatsoever to my detailed speech.

I do not apologise for speaking at such length. I thank my parliamentary colleagues for having been so patient and, by their demeanour, not signalling impatience, but concern.

Several Hon. Members *indicated assent.*

Mr. Dalyell: When I say that they are signalling concern, they are nodding. I do not know whether any of them would like to confirm that——

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): I am pleased to state that by nodding I was assenting to what the hon. Gentleman is saying, and supporting him in his efforts to establish the truth and, through that truth, to establish justice and proper treatment for those who have been guilty of offences that bring into disrepute this House and the entire establishment that is responsible for this nation's affairs.

Mr. Dalyell: I cannot put it more eloquently than that. On that note, I sit down.

9.28 pm

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): I trust that the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) will forgive me if I do not take up any of the concerns that he expressed because I wish to return to the Secretary of State's speech. However, I shall make just one comment on the matter to which he referred, which is more relevant to the speech of the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone).

I was glad to hear the hon. Gentleman pay tribute to the work of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and to make it clear that, in the investigation into that very sorry affair, the RUC was not party to any cover-up, and pursued matters as far as it could. The same is also true in respect of another issue that also appears to be becoming a cause célèbre—the so-called Stalker matter. If people are fair when they look into that matter, they will see that the RUC investigated it carefully and thoroughly. If there were obstructions and cover-ups, they tended to come from the same source about which the hon. Gentleman complained.

However, that is to go off at a slight tangent. I wish to come back to the speech made by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he opened the debate. Together with my colleagues who spoke earlier, I express our appreciation of the Secretary of State's efforts over the past few months to find a way forward from the present impasse and to get round the obstacles concerning the administration of Northern Ireland. We appreciate what he has done. We particularly appreciate the integrity with which he has pursued the matter. It gives us some confidence for the future. I hope that he will not allow the road block that he has run into to bring him to a complete stop but that he will consider ways in which he can surmount or avoid it.

I welcome some aspects of the Secretary of State's statement. When discussing the administration of Northern Ireland there is a tendency to talk about three aspects. The hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) referred to a tripartite arrangement, and other hon. Members have used that phrase. They referred to the circumstances within Northern Ireland, the relationship between Belfast and Dublin—the so-called north-south axis—and the relationship between Dublin and London—the so-called east-west axis. I was glad that the Secretary of State made it clear that there are not only three parts.

There is a fourth part—or one could regard the fourth as implicit in the first. It is impossible to discuss representative institutions in Northern Ireland without addressing their relationship with this House and with London and their position within the kingdom. When one talks about arrangements within Northern Ireland, one does not talk solely on a Northern Ireland basis but on a United Kingdom basis. That must be underlined, and the Secretary of State did so.

We are glad that the Secretary of State made it clear that, in any discussions about arrangements for Northern Ireland and its place within the United Kingdom, the Government of the Republic of Ireland would not be directly represented. Unfortunately, he went on to mention ways in which the Republic might have an input. We would not welcome that. We hope that that will be one of the changes that will result from the developments that will certainly take place—whether today, this month, this year or whenever.

I do not want to speak at length about the Anglo-Irish Agreement, but it has had its day. It is on the way out. It was a bad mistake. We are sad that it has taken the Government so long to appreciate that a mistake was made. The Secretary of State used the ritual phrases that the Government are not considering an alternative agreement, that the current agreement is a valuable instrument and so forth. The logic of his position on replacing the agreement, however, is fatal to the agreement. He referred to the need for institutions to have widespread acceptance and support within the community. He knows—indeed his reply to my intervention showed it—that the agreement does not have widespread support in Northern Ireland. It never did and never will. He referred to the opinion polls that underline that fact. We can refer not only to opinion polls but to election results, which show that opposition to the Anglo-Irish Agreement has not diminished. If anything, the opinion is becoming firmer. The sorry shambles that we have seen today and yesterday will only reinforce that.

The Secretary of State and others who may speak at the end of the debate will not want to describe too bluntly the nature of the problems that they encountered during the past day or two but the press and the public are aware of it. They also know that the Government of the Irish Republic have put down their interdict and that the Government appear to have stopped as a result. That itself will give rise to renewed anger over the agreement. So one can confidently predict that opposition to the agreement will not diminish but will, if anything, get stronger.

Having praised part of the Secretary of State's speech, I fear that I must express disappointment—my hon. Friend the Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) dealt with this at length—over the fact that he did not deal with the constitutional position, and particularly with articles 2 and 3 of the constitution of the Irish Republic. The right hon. Gentleman seemed to treat that as a matter of no great import and suggested that it would not provide an obstacle.

The hon. Member for Foyle encouraged us to look at European parallels. One parallel that springs immediately to mind provides an instructive contrast. I refer to one aspect of the unification of Germany which is now taking

[Mr. David Trimble]

place. Hon. Members will recall how, a few months ago, intense pressure was brought to bear on Chancellor Kohl over the recognition or otherwise of the Oder-Neisse line, which demarcates the border between what is still technically the Democratic Republic of Germany and Poland. That line was produced as a result of Stalin's expulsion of millions of Germans from Pomerania and Silesia. Those people, or their forebears, had lived in that area for eight to 10 centuries. They were expelled violently with massive bloodshed in the months after May 1945.

One understands why, in the past, German leaders were reluctant to give unequivocal recognition to the Oder-Neisse line. But nobody suggested a few months ago that Chancellor Kohl—if he achieved a united Germany and was still its Chancellor—would launch a European war to recover Pomerania and Silesia. He was reluctant finally to disappoint the dispossessed Germans whose homes were in the lost territories. Because of that reluctance, tremendous pressure was brought to bear on him, by our Prime Minister among others.

The recognition of that frontier—the withdrawal of any possibility of a territorial claim, bearing in mind that Germany does not have a territorial claim over Poland; there was just the possibility that there would be a claim in future—was regarded as a matter of massive concern, yet the border existed, with peace on both sides. Nobody was conducting a war, or even a proxy war, by encouraging or supporting terrorism, directly or indirectly, in other territories.

Move to the frontier of the United Kingdom, for it has a frontier, and one finds that it is disputed. There is disturbance there. Something close to a form of proxy war is being waged, indirectly, by the Republic of Ireland against the United Kingdom. The Secretary of State says that that is not an obstacle. Of course it is an obstacle.

Consider what has happened in Europe in the last 20 to 40 years. A number of states with minority and boundary problems are beginning to evolve a relationship together —we need not go into the vexed question of what the nature of that relationship will be in future—on the basis of forswearing territorial claims over the territory of each other and on the basis of the recognition of existing frontiers. That recognition is achieved not in a qualified but in an unqualified manner which does not recognise any possibility of change.

Consider the situation in the Sud Tyrol, an area which is 75 per cent. German-speaking. It was always part of a Germanic state up to about 1922. Austria, by the treaty of Vienna in the 1950s, forswore any territorial claim to recover those territories which had been part of Austria. On that basis, it is proving possible to construct a legitimate regime within the Alto Adige and to have some local administration that is functioning, admittedly with difficulty. That is an example of what should be done.

When one looks at other societies in Europe that have had such problems, one sees again and again that the key to the solution is the recognition of existing frontiers and a recognition that they will not change. That is embodied in the Helsinki and the Vienna agreements. To say that the matter will not be raised with the Irish Republic and that its territorial claim will be ignored is not good enough.

I should add that the so-called guarantee in article 1 of the Anglo-Irish Agreement is, as we all know, worthless. It might be more fruitful to take up with the Irish Government the fact that their constitution is in breach of the Helsinki and Vienna agreements, which the Irish Republic has signed. The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs might occasionally refer to that matter. I am sure that the other countries of Europe would be interested in taking up that matter.

I emphasise that the recognition of existing frontiers is important if they are regarded as immutable. To hold out the possibility of change is to encourage terrorism. The so-called guarantee of Northern Ireland's position that has been repeated here again tonight by the Secretary of State —that Northern Ireland will remain part of the United Kingdom so long as the majority of the population wish—is in itself a cause of instablility because it recognises the possibility of change.

If by some strange chance it should happen that at some future referendum a majority in Northern Ireland voted in favour of unity with the Irish Republic and that was carried into effect, creating an all-Ireland state, does anyone think that the next day the Taoiseach of the Irish Republic would turn round and say that the six counties that were previously Northern Ireland would be part of the Irish Republic so long as the majority so wished? No. The national unit would be regarded as settled, in just the same way as people in England regard the English national unit as settled. They would be amazed if a Minister said that Kent would remain part of England so long as the majority of its people so desired.

To refer to change is to hold out the possibility of change. Here again, the institution of direct rule reinforces the possibility of change. The fact that since 1974 the House has not been prepared to handle Northern Ireland affairs properly gives terrorists the message that the Government do not really want Northern Ireland to be part of the United Kingdom; that they would get rid of it if they could.

The Secretary of State said that the Government would not bow to terrorism, would not want to see change, and so on. He also said, I think wrongly, that all the policies and actions of his Administration are consistent with the eradication of violence. They are not. The maintenance of direct rule is inconsistent with policies designed to eliminate terrorism. Eliminating direct rule, treating Northern Ireland as if it is part of the kingdom, and dropping the reference to the possibility of change would help to reinforce policies to eradicate terrorism.

If it is thought that dropping the so-called guarantee presently enshrined in section 1 of the Northern Ireland Consitution Act 1973 would create some uncertainty, I can say that it would not. The position of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom was created not by the 1973 Act, but by article 1 of the treaty and section 1 of the Acts of Union, which all stated the union to be for ever and to be immutable. That is the correct position to which one should return.

That issue should be addressed and if, as a result of any future progress, one wants to see stability in the affairs of Northern Ireland, that is the way to achieve it. I note that it was said that stability was one of the aims of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and now we have shown how it can be achieved.

I commend other aspects of the Secretary of State's speech. He recognised the disadvantage of the present system of direct rule to the political health of Northern Ireland. I hope that he will deal with that problem

urgently, not only through promoting schemes for devolution—although that would be good—but through tackling the position of local government.

It is not healthy that the present 26 district councils have no effective powers. At the last local government elections, we and other political parties encountered considerable difficulty in persuading people to become candidates. Indeed, there was an average of only 1·7 candidates per seat—a remarkably low figure. There is a real danger that the district council system will collapse at the next elections unless something is done to make local authorities more attractive, especially against the background of the Government's policy of contracting out such services as are left to them.

Those problems should be dealt with urgently. If local government is to be attractive and if people are to be encouraged to serve in it, legislative changes must be made well in advance of the next elections. We all know how difficult it is to fit legislation into the parliamentary programme and to get it enacted.

I am talking about legislative programmes because I do not envisage any such change being made by Order in Council. It is generally acknowledged that that procedure is indefensible. I am only amazed that it has taken so long for the necessary changes to be made. No legislation is required to end the Order in Council procedure. It could be ended tonight or tomorrow simply by the Minister deciding to make no more such orders and to take through the House, under the proper Bill procedure, all those measures that it is currently intended should be made by Order in Council.

There is no obstacle in the way of the other major change that is required to remedy the defects of direct rule, namely, the introduction of a Select Committee. That point was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth). It can and should be done, and there is no reason why it should not be done urgently. We must consider whether we are sending out the wrong signals. Failure to handle Northern Ireland business in a proper, democratic, accountable way is sending out a message that Northern Ireland's position in this House and in the United Kingdom is temporary and contingent. If we want stability, and if we want to discourage those who seek change by violent means, we must make it clear that Northern Ireland's position is neither temporary nor contingent, and that its affairs are treated with real concern by this House.

I wish to deal with those parts of the Secretary of State's speech that outlined forms of devolution, and to comment briefly on the concept of widespread acceptance. That is usually regarded as being a synonym for power sharing. It means that one party is guaranteed a position in the Administration, whatever the circumstances. The right hon. Gentleman used the phrase "democratic accountability". I hope that he recognises the incompatibility between democratic accountability and power sharing.

Under power sharing, one or more parties is guaranteed a position in power, irrespective of the election. Therefore, by definition there cannot be accountability. Democratic accountability must mean that it is possible for the people to vote a Government out of office. Power sharing means that certain parties cannot be voted out of office.

The Secretary of State referred to widespread acceptance. I shall draw a parallel that relates directly not to Northern Ireland, but to the House and the Government. Do the present Government have widespread acceptance throughout the community?

Mr. John D. Taylor: No. They have 38 per cent. support.

Mr. Trimble: But does the present system of government have widespread acceptance? of course it does, because the system springs from the operation of the House, in which Governments are formed. The system has widespread acceptance, although any particular Administration may or may not have widespread acceptance or support, depending on their popularity. One would not automatically decide that the system of government cannot operate if, for example, the Government's standing should fall below 40 per cent. in the opinion polls, which I believe happens occasionally.

Mr. Taylor: It has fallen to 34 per cent.

Mr. Trimble: In that case, should one say that the House should be abolished and closed down because the Government no longer have widespread support? Of course not; what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. The principles and standards of democracy must remain, and so long as the institution has widespread support, Governments may come and go. If that holds true here, it must hold true across the few short miles of water that separate Northern Ireland from Great Britain.

In that light, we are sometimes puzzled by the concept of widespread support and acceptance, and we wonder whether the matter has been properly thought through. In the past, proposals for power sharing have tended to give a certain party a guaranteed position in Government. As a consequence, that party has a veto on the Government, so a minority group is given a veto over the operation of an Administration. Obviously that creates an impossible situation, just as the veto exercised by the Dublin Government over the proposals that the Secretary of State was about to introduce to the House creates a difficult if not impossible situation.

In one sense, we were rather amused, because we remember that a number of years ago the hon. Member for Foyle went around lecturing people saying that the problem was the existence of a veto and that, if the Unionist veto were removed, everything would be sweetness and light. But now we discover other vetos that he does not recognise as vetos and does not wish to remove. We hope that the rather salutary lessons of the past few days will encourage the Government to remove those vetos. They should be removed, as they are obstacles to progress.

We do not regard what the Secretary of State has done or the talks that have taken place as anything new. Immediately after the 1987 general election, the leaders of the Ulster Unionist party and the Democratic Unionist party initiated a series of talks with the then Secretary of State. Those talks about talks went on for some time, until in 1988 the Unionist leaders put before the Secretary of State an outline of proposals for an alternative to and replacement for the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The then Secretary of State let them gather dust and did nothing about them. Following the appointment of the current Secretary of State, the Unionist leaders brought the matter before him and the recent series of discussions emerged from that.

[Mr. Trimble]

From our point of view, what is happening is a response to the initiative which the Unionist leaders launched two years ago. It has taken a long time to reach this stage, but we appreciate the fact that the present Secretary of State has at least made an effort which has always eluded his predecessor, and we are glad that some progress has been achieved.

We are also glad that the sequence of events outlined by the Secretary of State corresponds with the sequence of events often outlined by the Unionist leadership—that there will be statements by the Governments of the Irish Republic and the United Kingdom about their willingness to replace the Anglo-Irish Agreement, to be followed by suspension of the meetings of the Intergovernmental Conference and of the working of the secretariat, followed by bilateral talks to establish whether there is a basis on which people can proceed. They would have to be followed by inter-party talks, aimed at trying to achieve an acceptable solution with regard to the Northern Ireland dimension, which includes the United Kingdom dimension. Consideration would then have to be given to the consequences of that for the north-south axis and the east-west axis.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) outlined that sequence of events some time ago. We are therefore surprised that, within the last week, the Dublin Government have found difficulty with a sequence of events that was made clear to them months ago.

Mr. Molyneaux: In August of last year.

Mr. Trimble: Yes, in August of last year. Presumably they were aware of them. They intimated a number of months ago that they were willing to proceed along those lines, so they must have known what they were doing. One wonders, therefore, why those difficulties have emerged during the last few days and what caused the Irish Government to change their mind. Was it because they thought that some kind of manoeuvre would extract last-minute concessions from us? If so, they are wasting their time.

As for the issue that concerns the Irish Government—the circumstances in which any Unionist might find himself holding discussions with the Dublin Administration—it is remarkable to us that it does not seem to have occurred to them that, in the last analysis, the only people who will decide when Unionists will speak to the Dublin Government are Unionists. We shall not speak to the Dublin Government unless we are satisfied that the circumstances are right. One wonders, therefore, why they approach the matter indirectly. Is it yet another example of their inability to treat the Unionists who live in Ulster with the respect with which they insist that other people should be treated?

9.57 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): My role once more seems to be to sweep up before the speeches from the Front Bench. The issue is direct rule and, therefore, the lack of democracy in Northern Ireland.

Democracy is partly about people having the vote. Northern Ireland is ahead of England, Scotland and Wales, in that its electoral register is in a very healthy state. The effects of the poll tax mean that 600,000 people in England, Scotland and Wales are missing from the electoral register. That is not the case in Northern Ireland. The number of those who could vote for the first time last year in Northern Ireland increased by 18 per cent. During the past three years there has been a fall in the number of people who could vote for the first time in England, Scotland and Wales.

Although Northern Ireland's electoral register is healthy, unfortunately the electors have little opportunity to vote. They can cast their votes in general elections, European Community elections and local government elections of limited importance, but they cannot vote on matters that affect Northern Ireland. Democracy is not just about having the vote. The minorities in Northern Ireland feel that majority rule is oppressive.

The spirit of democracy and the civil liberties arrangements in the system are of great importance. The speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) was relevant to the matters that we need to discuss—the health of the democratic system generally in this country and in Northern Ireland in particular. The civil liberties and rights of minorities and individuals are of overwhelming importance, but the rights of the majority must be fully considered, responded to and reflected on in that spirit.

We often forget how much people from the island of Ireland and Northern Ireland, especially working-class people, be they Protestant or Catholic, have in common. Their interest in having jobs with decent wages, in seeing that the prices that they pay for goods in the shops are correct and in having proper and decent health service and social security provision is the stuff of politics. They are matters of common concern. Hon. Members from Northern Ireland advance those common interests, especially in appropriation debates and in debates on the economic and social welfare of Northern Ireland.

That is not to deny the fact that strong issues divide people in Northern Ireland. We are only too well aware of them because Northern Ireland affairs sometimes bring the House to life. Yet sometimes we forget the issues of common interest.

The cultural divisions—with religion as their symbol—and the divisions in loyalty among people of the two communities are powerful, but surely in looking for solutions to Northern Ireland's problems we should be building on their common concerns and interests. At last, the Government and the Secretary of State seem to be searching for a democratic framework for Northern Ireland that will allow their differences to be expressed without destroying the political framework. I welcome the noises that have been made in that regard.

There is a fracture in the position that the Secretary of State outlined in his speech. At one point he said, correctly, that we should be considering

"increasing job opportunities for all and improving living standards."

He sees that as crucial

"to restoring social harmony and self-confidence, and reducing deprivation and communal divisions."

Earlier in his speech, he said:

"Industry must become more competitive, its labour force more skilled and its culture more imbued with the spirit of enterprise."

There might be nothing wrong with that last quotation, but the problem is that we know that it is coded language for other values and ideas. Crude free enterprise,

devil-take-the-hindmost Thatcherism is pushed as the economic and social framework for Northern Ireland, as it is for England, Scotland and Wales.

There is a difficulty. It may be possible for the Secretary of State, by sleight of hand, to advance some of the principles in his speech, to consult the oracle and to draw the various forces together so that moves can be made towards greater democracy and unity in Northern Ireland, but unless the economic and social elements of a democracy are involved, that will be achieved only by clever politics, rather than by more deep-rooted factors which could begin to draw people together.

We have fair employment legislation in Northern Ireland which sometimes assists both sections of the community, but full employment is even more important and would allow the principles on which fair employment is based to function more readily. I hope that the democratic principles of voting, of civil liberties, of rights for the individual and of concern for the different sections of the community will be considered as principles that can be drawn together, both in the devolution measures that Northern Ireland needs so that it can have its own Parliament making its own decisions, and in allaying the fears of individuals among the minority and the majority. A Bill of Rights is especially important for Northern Ireland.

We are not discussing whether a Bill of Rights is relevant to England, Scotland and Wales. The position in Northern Ireland is different from that in England, Scotland and Wales, but we might learn from a Bill of Rights being established there. The question of what is in a Bill of Rights is beginning to be important. Civil liberties, rights of access to education and jobs, and other provisions that need to be built in are beginning to be important considerations for the Northern Ireland community.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point about the contents of a Bill of Rights. However, as far back as the Northern Ireland constitutional convention, which produced a report that the House did not bother to read or to debate properly because an element of the convention would not vote for anything unless it was given a guarantee that it would be in government, we gave a commitment that failing a Bill of Rights for the United Kingdom, an assembly in Northern Ireland would introduce a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Barnes: As part of the discussions leading up to the establishment of devolved government for Northern Ireland, a Bill of Rights may begin to be worked out, whether it is instituted through the House or in Northern Ireland. It may be an essential element in helping to knit those areas together.

In Northern Ireland, we have policies, for example, on education for mutual understanding. That development is to be welcomed, but we also need participation and democratic procedures through which mutual understanding can begin to develop and grow throughout the community. If we are not prepared to work solidly in that area and if the politicians from the different parties are not prepared to be pulled together in working for this, there will be considerable shortcomings. That is a contrast with the developments in eastern Europe and the developments, which many of us support vigorously, in South Africa. The principles that we believe are to be exported from the United Kingdom sometimes need to be imported into areas such as Northern Ireland. I remind the House of my initial point about the extension of the franchise and the defence of the franchise for England, Scotland and Wales.

Unfortunately, many of our debates on Northern Ireland take place on Orders in Council and are crammed into one and a half hours late at night. Our debate on an education measure that was as significant as the Education Reform Act 1988 lasted three hours—about one minute for each clause and 10 minutes for some 13 schedules. That measure did not merely duplicate the Education Reform Act; it contained many provisions that were special to Northern Ireland.

Those hon. Members who do not attend our appropriation debates—and my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone), who made a very interesting speech—would be most welcome to come and debate the bread-and-butter issues with us. Democratic Socialists may have differing views about the solutions to Northern Ireland's problems and to constitutional matters, as well as to the major and more dramatic issue of terrorism, but we have a view of the way forward, and it will be a long haul. We believe that the answer lies in democratic arrangements for which we Socialists believe there is a social context. Where markets lead to monopoly and exploitation, collective action must come in. Collective action is open to bureaucratic abuse, which can be contained only by democratic and participatory forces. The solution for Northern Ireland is very different from that which has been peddled in England, Scotland and Wales in the past 10 years.

10.13 pm

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): The task of the House today has been to consider the extension for a further year of direct rule in Northern Ireland, although I note that the column listing parliamentary business in this morning's edition of *The Independent* said that we would be debating home rule. I do not know whether that was a Freudian slip. Since I came to the House in 1979 it has been something of a ritual to come along every year to renew direct rule. There never appeared to be much prospect that we could look forward to anything other than the previous years' arrangements.

As we are considering the renewal of direct rule, it seems to me appropriate to look at what direct rule means to Northern Ireland and how it works in Northern Ireland. First, let us consider how direct rule works in relation to legislation that comes before the House and how Northern Ireland is treated. I am a Northern Ireland Member, but, in dealing with the mass of Northern Ireland legislation, I do not have the opportunity to do what I can do when the House considers legislation for England and other parts of the United Kingdom. We take Bills through their various readings, and in Committee we can table amendments. On each of those occasions, we can speak for as long as we like or for as long as Mr. Speaker or the Chairman will tolerate us. We can have dozens—in some cases even hundreds—of hours of debate in Committee and on the Floor of the House. That appears to me to be a reasonable way of dealing with legislation. Lest this House should allow anything to slip through its fingers, the other place goes through exactly the same process. That is how the arrangements work for England, Scotland and Wales.

[Mr. Peter Robinson]

As a Northern Ireland Member, I can table amendments to legislation affecting other parts of the United Kingdom and I can speak on it until I am blue in the face—by and large, in prime time on the Floor of the House.

When it comes to Northern Ireland business, we are treated in the most shabby way possible. We have what is called an Order in Council which first sees the light of day by way of a draft order that arrives on our desks. It also goes to various organisations that might have an interest in the legislation and they are permitted to comment on it by a certain date and to offer their views and suggestions. When that draft order comes to the House and is considered, we do not have the various stages and we cannot table amendments even if we see something that is blatantly inaccurate in the proposed legislation. We cannot amend it: it is on a take-it-or-leave-it basis and, with the Government's majority, it is usually a take-it basis.

That is the way in which our laws are made for Northern Ireland. They pass through the House in 90 minutes flat. The Government Front-Bench spokesman will expect at least 15 or 20 minutes in which to open the debate and the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman will expect the same time. What time does that leave for Northern Ireland Members out of that one and a half hours? In the face of that, we are supposed to be happy that the United Kingdom is treating Northern Ireland in that way.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Are not we getting extra time tonight only because this is an Order in Council and we have an hour and a half after 10 pm?

Mr. Robinson: As always, my hon. Friend is right.

We should consider the attendance in the Chamber during this debate. We have been dealing with an important Northern Ireland issue, but the attendance is different when we deal with issues that affect the rest of the United Kingdom. Northern Ireland is treated badly by the House in the way in which its laws are made.

The Secretary of State said:

"We are governing via the artificial mechanism of direct rule under constitutional arrangements which are avowedly temporary"—

they are "temporary" but we are extending a 1974 order—

"and which no one would dream of inventing as a long-term way of governing any sizeable community."

That is inadequate in relation to the way in which the laws are made for Northern Ireland in the House, and it is just as bad when we consider the way in which Northern Ireland is administered. While hon. Members from other parts of the United Kingdom have local government which is responsible—no matter how much the Government would like to control it—for health, housing and important issues relating to the environment, in Northern Ireland we have none of those powers. In our local government we are allowed to be responsible for recreation and community centres, for parks, for emptying the bins and for burying the dead. That is the beginning and the end of it.

The people who take the local decisions in Northern Ireland are people from England, Scotland and Wales who come over as Northern Ireland Office Ministers. Occasionally someone who has left our shores returns to take over some of the administration of our Province.

With the best will in the world, and no matter how dedicated to the task those people may be, they are not elected in Northern Ireland. They are not accountable to the people of Northern Ireland and very often, although I do not blame them for it, they do not know the nuances of what is happening in Northern Ireland. I have known occasions in Northern Ireland when members of the SDLP and the two Unionist parties and representatives of all sorts of other varieties of constitutional parties in Northern Ireland have agreed on an issue, but the Government have taken another view. They know better than we do, so they just jolly away and do what they intended to do in the first place in spite of the wish of the elected representatives of Northern Ireland.

That is not the way to rule Northern Ireland. That is not a satisfactory way in which to deal with the situation. However, the Government admit that that cannot continue and that there must be more accountability and a greater role for the elected representatives in Northern Ireland. However, when the situation changed in November 1985, instead of giving control and responsibility to elected representatives in Northern Ireland, the Government gave a role and responsibility to the Government of the Irish Republic, still leaving the elected representatives in Northern Ireland without any real responsibility for their own affairs.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed. Tonight we were expecting to debate a speech somewhat different from the one delivered by the Secretary of State. I must express my disappointment—and I know it is also a disappointment to many other hon. Members—that the speech that we are debating is somewhat limited in its scope. We believe that it is limited because the Government of the Irish Republic were not prepared to give their consent to the delivery of the original speech, because they wanted to have an input at an earlier stage in the dialogue.

If I were unkind, I might tell the Government that the thorn that pierces their flesh comes from the tree that they planted. Through the Anglo-Irish Agreement they led the Government of the Irish Republic to believe that they have a control and responsibility in Northern Ireland which they now seek to exercise. If the Government of the Irish Republic are reticent to agree to this sort of process because they believe that Unionists are insincere, that Government are wrong.

I pay tribute to two Unionist leaders—I fully support the steps that they have taken—who have entered into this arrangement genuinely and sincerely. They are not interested in a process that only deals with one aspect of our problem, as they want to deal with all its aspects. If they merely dealt with the internal relationship in Northern Ireland, and with the problems of creating structures there, they would still have the Anglo-Irish Agreement around them, and that is not satisfactory to Unionists.

I am as bitter and angry about the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement today—I am no more likely to accept it today or tomorrow—as I was on 15 November 1985. It is not an acceptable way to govern Northern Ireland and it does not have the consent of the community there. That has been proved in elections and signalled in opinion polls. The Government should be in no doubt that the agreement is not an acceptable way forward.

Behind the Secretary of State's speech and the trend in policy that he has been pursuing capably has been a recognition that the best structure for Northern Ireland is one which will have the consent of both sections of our community. The Secretary of State has recognised that the Anglo-Irish Agreement does not enjoy that consent, and a better agreement is possible.

Unionist parties have put proposals to the Secretary of State to demonstrate that we are sincere and genuine. Let no one inside or outside the House doubt that the Unionist parties have entered into this process in good faith, that they now stand ready to take part in a dialogue, that they want to be a part of that process and that no responsibility for delay should be left at their doorstep.

The Secretary of State is to be thanked by the community in Northern Ireland for the efforts that he has made. He need not expect that divisions which have lasted for decades—indeed, centuries—in Northern Ireland can so easily be removed. If that had been an easy task, someone would have been able to perform it before. The Secretary of State should not be so downhearted as to lay down the task. I urge him to persevere with it, because it is in the interests of the community in Northern Ireland that we have stable political processes. That very stability will cause a reaction from the men of violence, who will not want the creation of stable structures.

The vacuum that will exist in the absence of political stability in Northern Ireland would create the atmosphere in which terrorism thrives. Terrorists will always find it easier to do mischief when a country has no political stability. I urge the Government not to give up the task, because we need firm and stable political structures. The people of Northern Ireland deserve them. I urge the Government not to give up the task, because we need to defeat terrorism. The best way of doing that is to place responsibility for law and order in the hands of an elected representative assembly of the people of Northern Ireland. They will then be in a stronger position to take on the IRA than any British Government could be.

I wish the Secretary of State well with that process. He should not give up. I trust that, before long, he will be able to report to the House that he has produced an agreement between the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland and all the others concerned on the basis of which a dialogue can begin.

10.25 pm

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): This is the first time for years that I have sat through a debate on Northern Ireland that has given me personal hope for its future. I believe that the debate has also given the people of Northern Ireland grounds for hope. I am impressed by the fact that the right hon. and hon. Members representing the constitutional parties of Northern Ireland all expressed cautious optimism this evening, which is something on which the Secretary of State can start to build political structures in the Province.

It is impossible for me to respond to all the points that have been raised, but I hope to do so where most appropriate. Before doing so, I recall that my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) accused me, about halfway through his speech, of being disgruntled with him. I do not know whether that was the correct choice of word, but I have no complaint at all with the content of my hon. Friend's speech. If I was disgruntled, it was at the length of his speech—it was not a question of personal dissatisfaction with him. I recall that in a debate on 20 April my hon. Friend drew attention to a fairly long speech of 77 minutes made by the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown).

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) also accused me of not listening to my hon. Friend the Minister.

Mr. Marshall: Perhaps that is not unusual in the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes. In any event, I was only drawing attention to the ambiguous nature of my hon. Friend's remarks, in complaining about the length of speeches made by other hon. Members but making an extra-long contribution himself.

Turning to the speech of the Secretary of State, I am sure that he must be pleased both personally and politically that the leaders of all the Northern Ireland parties have praised him this evening. He is probably also aware that this afternoon, in the Dail, the Taoiseach commented on the task that the right hon. Gentleman has undertaken and gave further support to the Secretary of State's personal position. The Taoiseach said:

"The Irish Government have consistently supported the Secretary of State's initiative. We have been as helpful and as positive as possible. We have engaged in an intensive programme of discussions and at least eight meetings have been held at Ministerial level with the British in recent months."

The penultimate paragraph of the speech is particularly welcome and important. It reads:

"Further consultations with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland are necessary at this stage but we are confident that a satisfactory formula and basis for meaningful discussions can be found."

I think that we can all say amen to that.

At the beginning of his speech, the Secretary of State again gave us an overview of the Government's economic and social policies in Northern Ireland. He was, I think, proud to draw attention to the progress that the Government claim to have made, especially in the economic sphere. No objective individual would deny that great strides have been made in that regard; nevertheless —as I have told the House and the Government before —there is no room for complacency. Unemployment is still far too high, and productivity rates are still intolerably low compared not just with those in Britain, but with those of our main European competitors. Much still needs to be done.

Referring to the emergency provisions Acts, the Secretary of State said:

"When there is a demonstrable need for new powers, I shall not hesitate to ask the House to approve them."

I have no idea what he has in mind, but, if he will not hesitate to ask for approval for new powers, will he at the same time show a similar initiative and energy in removing from the statute book powers that are no longer required or used, such as those relating to internment? We have made that point to him repeatedly in debates on the emergency provisions Acts.

The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) made specific reference to the Anglo-Irish Agreement. He said that Northern Ireland had

"not consented, and never will consent, to interference by an external Government."

He would argue that such interference was implicit in the agreement. I do not wish to dispute his point of view, although it may not be the same as mine; let me point out,

[Mr. Marshall]

however, that the agreement has been overwhelmingly approved by the House of Commons, and my guess is that, if it were put to the House again this evening, it would still be approved by a massive majority. The only way in which it can be removed or superseded is through the normal political process—in this place, in London generally, in Belfast and in Dublin.

Mr. Maginnis: I note that, in five years, the Anglo-Irish Agreement has failed to deliver peace, stability or reconciliation; nor has it brought us the better security and extradition procedures that were promised, or an end to megaphone diplomacy. Given that the hon. Gentleman still supports it on the same grounds, I presume that he would still endorse the piece of paper waved by Neville Chamberlain in 1938, which—having received an overwhelming vote of approval in the House—proved equally unsuccessful.

Mr. Marshall: The hon. Gentleman's last comments are unbecoming both to him and to the House.

When we compare the present position in Northern Ireland with the position five or 10 years ago, there is no doubt that there has been progress in controlling terrorism, advancing the cause of the nationalist community, and ensuring that the nationalist community is now more confident in its position in Northern Ireland and in the security forces in Northern Ireland, and far more inclined to pass on information to the security forces, which helps in the pursuit and arrest of terrorists. Co-operation between the security forces in Northern Ireland and in the Republic is now such that even the security chiefs in Northern Ireland would praise the security forces in the Republic.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) said that the internal affairs of Northern Ireland have nothing to do with the Government of the Republic. The hon. Gentleman is perfectly entitled to his point of view, but, as he already knows, the troubles in the north have a knock-on effect in the Republic. They place an intolerable financial burden on the people of the Republic to pay for security. Much of that security arises as a consequence of the co-operation between our security forces and those of the Republic.

The hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) gave the European dimension of the events of 300 years ago, which certainly made an impresson upon me—I do not know whether they made an impression on hon. Members from Northern Ireland. The hon. Gentleman said that perhaps the present and future European dimension offers the best hope for all the people of the island of Ireland. I certainly agree with the hon. Gentleman's main point: that we need to build institutions north and south that respect differences between the various communities but emphasise the common interest. Anyone who examines the economy and the social problems of the island of Ireland is inevitably struck time and again by common matters, whether they be problems or whatever. Common interests exist, and we must continue to build upon them.

The hon. Gentleman said that it is better that we share sweat rather than blood. That sums up the matter. All hon. Members hope that the people of the island of Ireland can work together and produce a more prosperous place for all the people.

The right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) referred to shared economic and social hardships and the victims of violence. He said that we must build upon shared experiences to build political institutions that are able to ensure that both communities have responsibility for the internal government of Northern Ireland. Again, we can all share that expression of hope.

I am sure that the Secretary of State will be pleased to note that, according to the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis), he has made only one mistake today; he is normally accused of having made many.

Although much of the debate has been devoted to the future governance of the Province and the likely success or otherwise of the talks, we are talking about the renewal order for direct rule in the Province. It is clearly unsatisfactory that Westminster politicians should make day-to-day decisions that would be better made by local politicians in the Province.

Direct rule is inadequate and occasionally unjust. On the one hand, it encourages complacency and arrogance from the Government, as is evidenced by Lord Skelmersdale's recent overruling of the health boards over contracts, while, on the other hand, it denies power and genuine responsibility to the elected representatives of the Province, with a consequent detrimental effect on democratic politics and political parties. However, as has been said many times this evening, a real glimmer of optimism now exists. We can all only hope that that optimism is built upon so that we can begin to make new arrangements for the governance of Northern Ireland.

We should not underestimate the daunting task facing the Secretary of State and the harsh realities that he and politicians, both north and south of the border in the island of Ireland, will have to face. Contrary to what the hon. Member for Antrim, North may believe, Opposition Members have never regarded the Anglo-Irish Agreement as an end in itself, but as part of a mechanism that would eventually lead to a better alternative.

I believe that there is cross-party agreement on the need to find a better alternative to the agreement, but the key word is "better". Some people have deliberately attributed unattainable goals to the agreement—perhaps the better and more easily to undermine it—but that has never been the Opposition's position. As the House knows, we formed part of the vast majority in favour of the agreement when it was voted on in the House, but our support was not based on over-inflated expectations about what the agreement could achieve. We never viewed it as a final solution.

As has been said, the great defect of the agreement is the exclusion of the Unionist parties. The agreement does not purport to deal directly with the relationship between Unionism and Nationalism in the Province, but it has inevitably altered the framework within which that relationship exists. The key issue is to deal with that defect without jeopardising the progress that has been made in other areas. Protecting that progress does not mean that substantial institutional changes cannot or must not take place.

However, and in conclusion, all dimensions of the conflict must be tackled if the original problem of the Anglo-Irish Agreement is not to be replaced by new ones. If there is a Division—which I somehow doubt—we shall certainly vote with the Government in support of the renewal order.

10.42 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): Last year when replying to the debate, I had the privilege to point out that in their election manifestos all the main constitutional parties in Northern Ireland had made constructive statements about the future. But even in that debate, we did not have the sense of hope that has pervaded today's debate. If a new agreement is reached, I have no doubt that people will look back and see this debate as one of the important milestones along the way to that process.

The majority of hon. Members who have spoken have referred to political developments. Two speeches were exceptions to that, so I shall address them first. Both the hon. Members for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) and for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), whom incidentally I should like to thank for his expressions of courtesy as they related to those on the Front Bench at that moment, and especially —and deservedly so—to my right hon. Friend the Member for Northavon (Mr. Cope), referred to their concern about what is known as the Kincora affair and related matters and to the conduct of some intelligence officers, among others. Both made detailed speeches, especially the hon. Member for Linlithgow. We shall examine those speeches carefully, not least to ascertain whether issues have been raised that might require a response from my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, or from other ministerial colleagues.

Mr. Dalyell: I thank the Minister for that statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I pay tribute to not only the content but the tone of the speeches in the debate. It would be improper of me not to start by recognising a unique feature of the debate. It is not often that representatives of six different political parties in the House stand up and pay a united tribute to a working colleague. The words used included "integrity", "honesty", "fairness", "patience", "diligence", "truthfulness" and "sensitivity". All were addressed to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. That was a remarkable tribute. I suspect that he will subsequently rebuke me, although in character mildly and graciously, for drawing attention to that fact. The House has spoken and, especially in a Northern Ireland debate, it is worth drawing attention to the united view of the House. I know that my right hon. Friend will appreciate it.

No matter how great my right hon. Friend's contribution, he would be the first to recognise that others have contributed significantly to what progress has been made thus far. I pay tribute, and I know that he will want to be associated with it, to the leaders of the three parties represented in the House—the Ulster Unionist party, the Democratic Unionist party and the Social Democratic and Labour party—for their role in moving the process forward as far as it has moved. I have no doubt about the contribution that they will continue to make as we seek to move it further forward. On behalf of the Government, I assure the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) that the sincerity of the Unionists' participation in the process is in no sense in doubt.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) opened his speech by saying that direct rule is an arrangement which is designed to contain but not to eliminate terrorism. I hope that on reflection he will change that sentiment. I remind him again of what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said at the beginning of his speech. It will continue to be the first priority of the Government to eradicate terrorism in Northern Ireland. That remains the position. Given the robust support that he and his right hon. and hon. Friends have given to the fight against terrorism, I know that he will want to be associated with that sentiment.

Mr. McNamara: Yes, we want to see the eradication of terrorism, but we believe that while we have direct rule, the weapons of democracy are considerably weakened. It would be far better to have representative institutions which are acceptable to the whole population in Northern Ireland, thus reducing the area in which the terrorists can gain support.

Dr. Mawhinney: That view would command widespread support throughout the House. The hon. Gentleman and I also have common ground when we say that terrorism cannot be either excused or condoned in any circumstances. Indeed, the very word terrorism occasionally gives me cause for concern. To those who are not well versed, it might conceivably conjure up a picture that gives some vague justification for those acts or gives a degree of glamour to what these people do. Let us be clear that when we talk about terrorists we are talking about murderers.

During the debate there was a significant discussion about the constitutional point that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made in his speech. There may have been some misunderstanding when he said that he turned to the constitutional question

"in the hope of putting it to one side."

Indeed, the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) invited me to reaffirm the second half, as he put it, of that sentence, which was:

"We regard the position as clear. Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom in national and in international law."

That remains our position. I am happy to oblige the hon. Gentleman by confirming that.

The hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone and I took part in an Adjournment debate not long ago on the constitutional question and articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution. Most people understand the concern, unhappiness and disquiet caused by the existence of those articles. As I told the hon. Gentleman in that debate—I speak from memory—we would certainly expect the Unionist parties, as part of the discussions that we hope will take place, to want to put those articles on the table for discussion.

The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) and my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) all, in their individual ways, again identified the continuing concern and unhappiness of the majority community in Northern Ireland about the Anglo-Irish Agreement and their need and desire to see that agreement replaced. I believe that I am right in saying that the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley said at one point that its replacement was of paramount concern to the Unionist community.

I think that we have reached the position where the possibility of a new agreement now exists. I remind the House that my right hon. Friend said that there was no reason why the present agreement should be the last word. He said:

"While neither Government are seeking a new agreement, if a better agreement—which commanded widespread

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support within both sides of the community in Northern Ireland—were to be arrived at, that would prove to be an important step forward."

I have heard speeches which described that as a departure, a new emphasis or a change of mind on the part of Government. I do not care to become involved in any of those designations. I am happy to reaffirm what my right hon. Friend said, and to the extent that it is an encouragement, that is good. But any such new agreement will have to flow from dialogue and discussion. That is self-evident. As the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley said, it will have to be built on what has already been achieved.

One is looking for agreement among the political parties that any talks, taken as a whole, should be the occasion to tackle all the dimensions of the problem. That can be expressed in terms of the relationships between the various peoples and communities involved. It can also be expressed in terms of possible institutional arrangements and relationships. Indeed, the manner in which those matters are expressed is, like so much else, sensitive. But more important than that sensitivity is the fact—I believe it to be a fact—that there is general agreement, or common ground, to use my right hon. Friend's expression, that all these matters should be addressed as part of the same process.

It is important to realise that the shared perceptions go further than that. It is also of central importance that each of the potential participants in any talks takes the view that in practice it will be possible to reach a conclusion on any one aspect of the matter only with full knowledge of what will be involved in the others. The various questions interlock and, in the end, while much work would need to be done to address questions separately, final decisions could be taken only on the outcome of the talks taken as a whole. That is of great importance, not least because of the reassurance that it offers to all concerned. Any talks which began with the local political leaders feeling that an important interest had been compromised could not be expected to succeed.

It is essential that any agreement emerging from the talks should be one to which all participants can give their wholehearted assent. No one should feel pressurised to take part or to reach an agreement except on the basis of full and willing consent. Perhaps everyone would readily understand and agree with that, with the exception of the Provisionals, who appear to believe that dialogue can be conducted with the bomb and the bullet.

All neighbours in Northern Ireland need to learn to live together. On behalf of the significant majority of people in Northern Ireland, I reaffirm that they do live together. There is a perception in Britain that everyone in Northern Ireland is at everyone else's throat. Nothing could be further from the truth. If any hon. Members do not believe me, I invite them to come to Northern Ireland and see for themselves. They will be impressed and they will return. That is the acid test.

Most people in Northern Ireland live as good neighbours, one with the other. The right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) was correct to point out that the events which affect the lives of people in Northern Ireland affect them irrespective of which church they worship in on a Sunday. There is a commonality of experience, and of aspiration, which provides a degree of hope for the future.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North was right to remind the House that there is no direct relationship between where people worship on a Sunday and how they vote. The easy and misleading use of labels to describe what is going on in Northern Ireland is frequently an obstacle to progress. The House owes the hon. Gentleman a debt of gratitude for pointing that out.

Differences exist in Northern Ireland, but they do in every community. It is the responsibility of all of us to make sure, and to do what we can to ensure, that those differences are not allowed to lead to division. Differences can become the strengths of our society, but the legacy of the past too frequently leads to the division of today and the perpetuation of division tomorrow. That was the message of the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) and he was right to point it out.

No one is seeking an homogenised Ulster man or Ulster woman to remove differences. One is simply seeking to put differences in their context and to help people to understand, to appreciate, and in some cases to come to terms with the fact that others are different. But that does not make them in any sense threatening. There are misconceptions to be addressed and all of us have a role in that process, not least in the process of political progress.

The Government believe, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made clear, that there is now the basis for talks aimed at achieving political progress in Northern Ireland. There is a basis for entering talks intended to cover the three relationships and, as my right hon. Friend said, it is a basis which he and the Government believe would meet everyone's essential interests.

We have reached that point, not least because throughout the process no one has set a deadline. There has been some suggestion that today's debate constituted, in some form or other, a deadline. It did not. As my right hon. Friend said, direct rule must be renewed if it is to continue, and it must continue in the interim because that is the means of governing Northern Ireland. While there are those who argue that there may have been a degree of convenience, there was no deadline. The process has prospered because no deadline was imposed. I think that my right hon. Friend would agree that, having made progress thus far without a deadline, he is not about to be tempted down that road. We hope to go further, but that remains for another day.

The right hon. Member for Strangford said that he thought that the slogan had been changed from "Ulster says no" to "Dublin says no". The hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) spoke of road blocks. I hope that they are as encouraged as I am by what Mr. Haughey said in the Dail this evening:

"While substantial progress has been made on a number of important aspects—progress which we believe can be built on at an early date—a satisfactory basis which would avoid problems later and ensure success has not yet been fully established. Further consultations with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland are necessary at this stage but we are confident that a satisfactory formula and basis for meaningful discussions can be found."

I venture to suggest that, on this occasion at least, the House should unite in endorsing the words of the Taoiseach to the Dail.

Mr. Maginnis: I have listened to what the Minister said. Does not he think that it would have been helpful if, after five years, the Taoiseach had said those words yesterday, thus enabling the Secretary of State to come to the House

today with a more hopeful and positive message—as he wished to do—rather than with a statement issued this afternoon that suggests ambiguity?

Mr. Mawhinney: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman reflects the understandable impatience of everyone in Northern Ireland and the House to move to arrangements that will be lasting and will command widespread support in the Province and the House. But he will recognise that the issues with which we are dealing have been around for a long time. People feel strongly about them. As the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) said, they are not issues that lend themselves easily to resolution, or they would have been resolved long ago. The characteristic of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to which the House paid tribute was his patience. We have made progress. We do not make that statement flippantly. We recognise the issues that remain to be resolved. We hope to make further progress, but we are more likely to do so if we do not set deadlines.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Is not it true that we have been stymied in our debate because of the Taoiseach's actions? It is wrong for the Minister to end his speech without the honesty and integrity that were characteristic of the Secretary of State. Let us have the whole truth from him. We know, and the leaders of the talks know, that it was Dublin which prevented the sort of speech that we had expected to hear from the right hon. Gentleman today. The hon. Gentleman should admit that.

Dr. Mawhinney: What I shall admit is that throughout a series of discussions over the past 10 months my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State used his judgment in making progress. He has taken people with him step by step. At times he has patiently addressed what, on the surface, appeared to be irreconcilable differences in a way that satisfied the people concerned. The ultimate reason why the Secretary of State did not make a different speech today was that, in his judgment, the time is not yet right for him to make that speech. It would not command the support of all those with whom he had held discussions and therefore would not lay the best possible foundation on which to build for the future.

Rev. Ian Paisley: That is not true. The fact of the matter is that I have been deceived by the Secretary of State. Let us get that out into the open tonight. The people of Northern Ireland wanted to hear the Secretary of State say certain things today. A few hours before the debate began the Secretary of State was going to make a different speech. The Minister should lay it on the line that it was Dublin that held it up. If the Secretary of State can persuade Dublin during the next few days to take a different route, we shall all welcome it, but let us not bluff anybody. We should let the world know that today that speech was not made because of Dublin's actions.

Dr. Mawhinney: I am not seeking to bluff anyone. The people of Northern Ireland want the Secretary of State to be able to say that there is a basis for making political progress. I hope, as does the hon. Gentleman, that the day is not far removed when that speech will be able to be made to this House. What is not at issue is that that speech has to be made on a particular day at a particular time. As my right hon. Friend said, today's debate has no mystic significance. It is a function of the parliamentary calendar; it is not a function of the talks that he has had during the past 10 months. However, I join the hon. Gentleman and the other party leaders in their wish to see progress made to the point at which the Secretary of State can make the sort of speech that I believe the vast majority of the people in Northern Ireland want to hear.

Mr. Molyneaux: I am grateful to the Minister for giving me the opportunity to confirm what has already been said. As far as I know, there was no disagreement between the leaders of the main parties in Northern Ireland. The blockage came from elsewhere. We can only guess from whence it came. However, the clear implication of what the Minister said about three sentences back was that the leaders of the parties in Northern Ireland had judged that the time was not yet right. I think that I can say, subject to what the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) may say, that we came into this building today on the clear understanding and in the expectation and hope that, at long last, on the 15th renewal of direct rule, we should hear the good news that from now on we were in business, and that before the next anniversary of direct rule arrived we should have achieved something for the people of Northern Ireland—as I said in my speech, for all the people of Northern Ireland, not just for Unionists.

Dr. Mawhinney: I believe that the record will show that I said that it was the Secretary of State's ultimate judgment that today was not the day on which to make the sort of speech which I happily acknowledge that the right hon. Gentleman, along with other hon. Members, wished to hear.

A few weeks ago I had the privilege of hosting a reception in Parliament buildings in Belfast for a group of school children from the constituency of the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley. Seven primary schools in Lisburn had come together under "Education for Mutual Understanding" and had produced an anthology of poetry, which is well worth reading. The event attracted a certain amount of media attraction. A 10-year-old boy from Largymore school—the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley will be aware that it is a controlled school—was asked what "Education for Mutual Understanding" meant to him. Most adults would find that question difficult to answer, never mind a 10-year-old boy. He made three or four attempts to answer and told a story which initially seemed to those who heard it to be a diversion.

The boy told of a trip that his school and St. Joseph's school had made to Canada, how good it had been and how much he had enjoyed it. He said that the highlight of the trip was being allowed to get into a kayak and row across a lake. He made it clear that after a little while they learnt how to row straight across the lake. He told the interviewer, "There were two of us from Largymore who were paddling on the left of the kayak, and the two from St. Joseph's were paddling on the right. We eventually got it going in a straight line." He paused and said to the interviewer, "Do you know, if the two boys from St. Joseph's had got out of the kayak we would have just gone round in circles."

From the mouth of a primary school boy in Northern Ireland, that seems to sum up the overwhelming need of the Province—the ability to combine together to make progress in a straight line.

I am conscious of the political realities of Northern Ireland. I know of the significant difficulties that still must be resolved and I am aware of the sensitivities, but equally

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I know of the hope and the magnitude of the prize to be won. I commend the order to the House and hope that it will be the last time that it will be necessary to move it. I also hope that the spirit of the debate can at last be translated into substance.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Northern Ireland Act 1974 (Interim Period Extension) Order 1990, which was laid before this House on 20th June, be approved.

ESTIMATES

Resolved,

That this House agrees with the Report [3rd July] of the Liaison Committee.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

PETITION

Local Government Finance

11.12 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): I beg leave to present a petition signed by some 25,000 people from Cornwall in opposition to the poll tax. It is an opportune moment for it to be presented, because not only did those people oppose the poll tax, but they asked for changes to be made to make it more related to people's ability to pay, specifically through a system of local income tax.

A Committee of the Cabinet is meeting to consider alternatives to the poll tax and how it may be improved. If reports in the newspapers are anything to go by, next year people will have to pay more and the destitution that faces many at present will not be answered by its proposals.

Those proposals have not been finally drawn. The petition suggests a specific way ahead through the Liberal Democrat scheme of a local income tax, and I hope that that Cabinet Committee, whose attention has been drawn to the petition by a letter delivered to No. 10 Downing street by the people of Cornwall, will pay attention to the opportunity and the option that it presents the House.

The petition is signed by 25,000 people from across the county of Cornwall. If it had been collected United Kingdom-wide, that would be the equivalent of 2·5 million signatures. It is a significant petition from my county, and I hope that the Government will respond to and respect the heartache and despair that led so many to put so much effort in collecting it.

To lie upon the Table.

Local Government Boundaries (Lincolnshire)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

11.14 pm

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): My purpose in initiating this debate is to ask my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to request the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to give further consideration to the desirability of recommending the abolition of the present county of Humberside, and its replacement as an administrative entity north of the Humber by a county of East Yorkshire and south of the Humber by a restoration of the historic county of Lincolnshire under the administration of the efficient and economical Lincolnshire county council.

I recognise that my right hon. Friend cannot simply wave his magic wand and return the county of Humberside to the estuary mists from which it unhappily emerged in 1974. He can only table an Order in Council to that effect following a recommendation to that effect by the commission. The commission has been giving much attention to the subject in the knowledge of the great unpopularity of the county of Humberside among its residents on both sides of the Humber. So far, the commission has stopped short of recommending abolition. I hope that this debate will help to persuade it to do so in its next report.

In its interim review, published on 7 March this year, the commission states on page 13 that there are three strands to any consideration of boundaries. Paragraph 47 of the interim report says that the three strands are:

> "(i) whether the boundary accords with the wishes of the local inhabitants;
>
> (ii) whether it reflects the pattern of community life; and
>
> (iii) whether it is conducive to the effective operation of local government any associated services."

In the next paragraph, it goes on to say:

> "The Commission has never sought to place any of these criteria above the others in principle. It treats each case on its merits, taking all three strands into account."

The commission adds, significantly, the words:

> "Any one of them may, in particular cases, be more important than the other two as justification for change".

In the limited time at my disposal tonight, I want to say a few words under those three headings. First, does the boundary of Humberside county accord with the wishes of the local inhabitants? The commission, in a number of its reports, including the interim report, accepts that it does not so accord, although the commissioners seem still to underrate the strength of feeling on the point. The commissioners say:

> "these feelings were very strong in Humberside"—

that is, hostility to the county of Humberside.

The commissioners add that their report No. 563 remarked on

> "the intensity of feeling against the county, and took the view that there must come to a point at which longstanding and strongly held feelings of alienation towards an authority on the part of large numbers of its residents must in themselves call for a re-examination of the justification for its existence."

However, in that interim report, the commissioners concluded—incorrectly, in my view—that that degree of alienation had not yet been reached in the case of

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Humberside. I think that it has been reached and passed. To everyone who knows the area well, it seems that alienation has grown into exasperation.

The commissioners are not local people. No doubt that helps them to be impartial, but it lessens their insight into local public feelings. It is widely felt that they pay too much attention to local government officers, who are, of course, concerned with jobs for the boys.

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): Would the hon. Gentleman be kind enough to tell the House how much of the county of Humberside he represents?

Sir Peter Tapsell: I do not represent any of the county of Humberside; I represent a constituency in Lincolnshire. But if there is to be any change in the arrangements, I have to make remarks about Humberside, which I shall go on to justify, having undertaken considerable research in Humberside and having spoken to quite a large gathering in Grimsby within the past three weeks.

I have been a Lincolnshire Member of Parliament for more than a quarter of a century. My constituency is contiguous with south Humberside. My home, where I have lived for more than 25 years, is not far from Grimsby. I am also a member of the court of Hull university on the north bank of the Humber. I can assure the commissioners from my personal experience that there is a strong and almost unanimous wish among those living north of the Humber to return to a county of East Yorkshire and an equally strong desire among the residents living south of the Humber to return to Lincolnshire.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): As one who represents a constituency wholly in south Humberside, I can assure my hon. Friend that he speaks for the overwhelming majority of my constituents.

Sir Peter Tapsell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. All the opinion polls confirm what he has just said. The local newspaper editors confirm it. Mr. Simon Jenkins, the editor of *The Times*, in an earlier article on Humberside, described it as

"a Frankenstein of a county".

Even the lord lieutenant of Humberside has suggested that a change in the name of the county might help to reconcile its residents to its continued administrative existence. That is faint praise indeed.

Extraordinary as it may seem, the news of this strong body of hostile public opinion has actually reached the Department of the Environment. My right hon. Friend the former Secretary of State for the Environment, now the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, who usually prides himself on his contempt for public opinion, was moved to write to the commissioners noting

"the degree of unhappiness at the concept of Humberside which evidently persists among many of its residents some 15 years after its creation".

The then Secretary of State added that, on the basis of submissions received by his Department,

"No other principal area established in 1974 has provoked such widespread and sustained opposition from its residents."

Nor is that surprising. In no other part of England are county loyalties as strong as they are in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire. It is the duty of Parliament to reflect these feelings and it is doing so.

In the House of Lords on 13 June, their Lordships debated this issue. Of the nine Back-Bench peers who spoke in that debate, many of them with the closest personal and family ties with Humberside—some stretching back over centuries—only one was not in favour of the abolition of Humberside county. My noble Friend Lord Kimball, who initiated that debate described Humberside county as

"an unloved bastard that no one has been prepared to adopt."
—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 13 June 1990; Vol. 520, c. 380.]

Our debates in this House tend of course to be less robust than those in their Lordships' House. However, I am confident that every Lincolnshire Member and most Yorkshire Members would privately echo that lordly sentiment. Therefore, I hope that the commissioners will now conclude that public opinion on the matter has passed the point of no return.

The commissioners' second criterion is whether it reflects the pattern of community life. Humberside county clearly does not. Very few people from south Humberside go to north Humberside and very few people from north Humberside go to south Humberside. All the statistics confirm that. I will refer to only one set of statistics, but they are symptomatic. More than 6,000 residents of Lincolnshire work in south Humberside, but only 180 residents north of the Humber work in Humberside to the south of the Humber. That speaks for itself.

The Humber is a formidable barrier, physically, socially and one might almost say ethnically. It is one of the widest estuaries in the world. It is three miles across, and is not to be compared with the Tyne or the Tees. The Humber bridge, although in my judgment beautiful and certainly a magnificent feat of engineering, does not begin to unite the two sides of the Humber. It is some distance from Grimsby and Hull, and the toll to cross it is £3.

The chairman of Humberside county council recently said that, if tolls were abolished, more people would use the Humber bridge. I dare say that is true. However, the Government have made it clear that the tolls will not be abolished. One of the association branch chairmen in my constituency—a very strong lady—has swum the Humber. Her sister has swum the English channel. They assure me that the Humber is the more daunting challenge. Their exceptional prowess does not reflect the pattern of community life.

The boundary commission's third criterion is whether Humberside county is conducive to the effective operation of local government and associated services. Clearly it is not. The community charge is £100 per head higher in Humberside than in Lincolnshire. The county of Humberside has spent huge sums—its council leader said recently that the sum was £18 million—trying to popularise its existence, but to no avail, either with its own residents or with people elsewhere.

For instance, I am told that North Sea Ferries positively avoids any mention of Humberside in the literature that it distributes about its business activities on the continent of Europe. Most non-governmental organisations conduct their affairs on both sides of the Humber as if the county of Humberside did not exist.

Lincolnshire county council sent me a list of 76 organisations that operate in Lincolnshire, as if no boundary existed between Lincolnshire and Humberside and as if the barrier of the Humber was the de facto boundary. The list, eloquent in its comprehensiveness and

length, includes the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church, the Methodist Church and the Jehovah's Witnesses. It ranges from the Amateur Swimming Association through the Lincolnshire Steam Engine Preservation Society to British Telecom, thus embracing every phase of travel and communication through which mankind has so far passed. For all of them, Humberside does not exist.

The same is true north of the Humber. A local newspaper editor from there sent me an almost equally expressive list, ranging from the Hull and East Riding rugby union club to the Hull and East Yorkshire council for drug problems. These bodies, too, avoid using the dreaded word "Humberside" if they possibly can. Apart from the bureaucrats and a few Labour politicians, the great mass of residents north and south of the Humber do their best to conduct their lives and run their organisations as if the county of Humberside did not exist.

In these circumstances it should be self-evident that the continued existence of the county of Humberside is not conducive to the effective operation of local government and associated services. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary for coming to listen to this debate. I hope that he will ask the Secretary of State to request the Local Government Boundary Commission to give further study to option three of its interim report of last March, with a view to recommending the abolition of the county of Humberside, the revival of a county of East Yorkshire north of the Humber and the return of South Humberside to its natural, historical, geographical and social place as part of the county of Lincolnshire.

11.30 pm

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): I am delighted to support my hon. Friend the Member for East Lindsey (Sir P. Tapsell) in putting the case for one Lincolnshire. In a balanced scale of history, tradition and local sentiment far outweigh the convenience of leaving in place the recent bureaucratic structure that is Humberside —ugly in name and cumbersome by nature. Lindsey, Kesteven and Holland are proud parts of an ancient county. Who says, "I am a Humbersider?" I doubt whether even the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) does. His constituents say, "I am a Yorkshireman," and we, south of the Humber, are proud to say that we are yellow bellies.

Public opinion is clear: the Humber is a divide between two different cultures. Why not allow people to do what most people want to do—return to their roots? Is not that the nature of Conservatism? For the interim report of the Local Government and Boundary Commissioners to argue that there is

"nothing unusual in Humberside apart from the estuary"

shows a staggering lack of appreciation of 1,000 years of social history.

I need not rehearse now the obvious administrative advantages—in terms of police and educational provision —of ending the ludicrous invented boundary that runs like the Berlin wall in the minds of administrators between villages which, for 1,000 years, have been one. Thirty-one thousands cars a year pass between Lincolnshire and south Humberside, and only 13,000 cross the bridge, which shows that the links between Lincolnshire and south Humberside are infinitely greater than those between south and north Humberside.

I ask the Minister to trust the people and to create a local government structure that is effective and convenient —and which can inspire loyalty. That course is favoured by no fewer than 60 per cent. of the population. After 15 years of propaganda, the leaders of Humberside county council have managed to persuade only a paltry 28 per cent. of the population to support what my predecessor as the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle called a bastard county.

I urge my hon. Friend to trust the people abolish this bastard county and create one Lincolnshire again.

11.32 pm

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Does the hon. Gentleman have the leave of the hon. Member for East Lindsey (Sir P. Tapsell) and of the Minister to speak?

Hon. Members: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Brown: I congratulate and thank my hon. Friend the Member for East Lindsey (Sir P. Tapsell). Everything that he has said will be endorsed by the overwhelming majority of my constituents. He will be the toast of the people of Brigg and Cleethorpes tonight, and I sincerely hope that the Minister will ensure that the comments of my hon. Friends the Members for East Lindsey and for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) and of myself —on behalf of all the people of south Humberside—are drawn to the attention of the Local Government Boundary Commission.

11.33 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for East Lindsey (Sir P. Tapsell) on securing this debate and on the forceful and cogent way in which he set out his views on local government boundaries in his part of England. I also carefully noted the interventions of my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown), and of my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh), who left the House in no doubt about his strength of feeling on this issue.

I will briefly describe the background to the boundary commission's deliberations, with particular reference to Humberside. The Local Government Act 1972 created a major innovation in local government. Before then, the review of boundaries proceeded by fits and starts. There were periods of intense activity interspersed with periods of stagnation. The 1972 Act provided a new system. There was general agreement that it should not be possible for the Government of the day to make changes as they saw fit. The new system ensured that changes could be made when desirable for

"effective and convenient local government."

As my hon. Friend the Member for East Lindsey said, that has three components.

First, changes should reflect the wishes of the majority of the local residents. Secondly, they should allow for the provision of more efficient services at county or district level, or both. Thirdly, they should better reflect the pattern of community life. My hon. Friend set out his reasoning for a return to what he considers an earlier pattern of local government, taking what is now part of Humberside into the rest of Lincolnshire.

[Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory]

Under the 1972 Act, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England was established. It is a small expert body of people that studies and reviews local government boundaries. The legislation provides for the commission to take the Government's views into account, and the Secretary of State is given power to give it guidance—and that has been done in a series of Department of the Environment circulars.

The 1972 Act also provides for local people to be given every opportunity to make their input. The commission must publicise the fact that reviews are taking place, and must make public in draft form any proposals.

Only after all that has been done does the commission formulate its final proposals—but the public then have yet another opportunity to have their say. When the Secretary of State receives a set of proposals, he cannot take an immediate decision but must wait for at least six weeks to allow anyone who wishes to have a further say. His decision must be based on the commission's report and recommendations, and on all the other representations that he receives.

An important feature of the system is that the Secretary of State can only act within the framework of the commission's recommendations. He can accept its recommendations or he can reject them, or he can accept them with modifications—but the modifications must still leave the proposals in line with the commission's recommendations.

The Secretary of State has no power to go off on his own and do something quite different from that which the commission recommended, or to act when the commission makes no recommendations.

I turn to the situation in respect of Humberside. In 1986, the Secretary of State issued guidance for the current round of reviews, making it clear that the commission should be reluctant to recommend the abolition of a principal authority, such as a county council, unless the existing arrangements did not provide satisfactory local government services. Against that background, the commission reviewed Humberside and recommended no change, to the extent of abolishing the county council.

Public comment was massive. More than 7,000 representations were received, and in the light of the degree of dissatisfaction so expressed, the former Secretary of State for the Environment, my right hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley) decided that the commission should re-examine the Humberside question without all the constraints of the general guidance that it had previously been given.

The commission is now engaged in that further review, and is taking a fresh look. It is free to consider the abolition of Humberside county council and the division of the county in whatever way seems appropriate. We now await the commission's report on the further review.

Mr. McNamara: I am sorry to interrupt the Minister —and I am bearing in mind the difficulties that you encountered earlier this week, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman will be aware, however, that, as this is an Adjournment debate, only one side of the case can be given. May I ask whether the Local Government Boundary Commission will be able to take into account the result of the local election, in which those who argued forcefully for what the hon. Member for East Linsey (Sir P. Tapsell) has recommended were trounced?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The commission will take into account anything that it deems relevant. We are awaiting its final review, and we know that it is carrying out a very careful and thorough study of all aspects of the question, including the costs of any change.

Mr. Leigh: I appreciate that my hon. Friend may not be able to reply to the point made by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), but—on behalf of my hon. Friends—I must do so. What the hon. Gentleman said was nonsense. The boundary was not an issue at that election, and he knows it. Every public opinion poll clearly shows that people living in south and, indeed, north Humberside want to return to their roots in Lincolnshire and east Yorkshire.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I should make it clear that it is not for the Government to express a view at this stage. Parliament clearly intends that the Government should form a view on a boundary change only in the light of the expert recommendations of the Local Government Boundary Commission. We do not have them yet, and I shall not jump to conclusions.

We had hoped that we would have the final report by now, but the commission has told me that its consideration is proving more difficult that it had anticipated, and that it will be some time yet before its report is available. We must therefore be patient. Until we have the report, there is nothing that the Government can do. Once we have it, we can only act to implement—with or without modifications—such recommendations as the commission chooses to make. If the commission concludes that the balance of advantage is against change, the Secretary of State has no power to make any such change.

I shall certainly ensure that the view expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for East Lindsey, and his hon. Friends are conveyed to the commission for its consideration. I shall personally ensure that the commission receives a copy of the *Official Report* of the debate. Of course, their comments—strongly expressed —are in the direction of "option 3", if I may so characterise it. For the rest, I can only say that the Government are looking forward with interest to what the commission will say in the light of its second—and more fundamental—review of the future of Humberside county council, and the consequences for the future of the northern boundary of Lincolnshire.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at eighteen minutes to Twelve midnight.

House of Commons

Friday 6 July 1990

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITION

Community Charge (Private Estates)

9.34 am

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): I have the honour to present a petition on behalf of 165 residents of Herne Bay, being almost the entire membership of the Studd Hill property owners association. Studd Hill is a small, informal retirement estate. My petitioners say

"that those living on the Herne Bay Studd Hill private estate, previously in receipt of rate reduction in respect of services not provided by the local authorities are, as a result of the terms of the Local Government Act and the introduction of the community charge, now denied that reduction and therefore required to pay for services that they do not receive."

My petitioners ask that the Government amend the section of the

"Local Government Act that is relevant to require local authorities to rebate the community charge in respect of services enjoyed by other charge payers but not available to residents living on private estates".

I believe that the petition reflects a genuine grievance, and it has my fullest support.

To lie upon the Table.

9.36 am

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. My point is extremely important, particularly today, when we are considering no fewer than 46 private Members' Bills. It concerns the question of the tradition of objecting to Bills that seek to achieve their passage, as it were, on the nod.

That has long been a tradition in this place. Private Members' Bills are vulnerable animals in legislative terms and, because of the pressure of time, it is inevitable that, on the last day, a large number of measures will be down, some seeking to obtain Second Readings and so on on the nod.

Because of the pressures on Fridays in constituencies, it has sometimes happened that hon. Members with genuine objections or reservations about legislation, and who prefer to see those matters debated properly rather than passing on the nod, get a colleague here to object on their behalf. It has long been the tradition for that to happen.

Recently, a sinister development has occurred, in that hon. Members promoting those Bills have sought to name the individuals concerned who are raising the objections, with the express purpose of identifying publicly, for those outside who are interested in the lobby, that those were the individuals concerned.

That development has had sinister results. For example, when objections were recently raised to a Bill, a twisted minority outside—I can only describe them as that—part of a lobby, sent threatening and abusive letters to hon. Members, and even issued death threats. That is not the way in which democracy should be conducted.

I seek your guidance, Mr. Speaker, on the principle whether you should call hon. Members who are promoting Bills, who see their Bills objected to and who seek to name the individuals concerned. It is not good practice, and I wonder what you, as guardian of our affairs, can do to defend us from that twisted and bitter minority who seek to disrupt our democratic procedures.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. You, like hon. Members in all parts of the House, will deplore the activities of people outside who issue threats of the type described by the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin). But you will confirm that it has long been a tradition of the House that what we do in the Chamber goes on the record. When we go through the Lobby to vote, our names are recorded. To my knowledge, certainly since 1974, it has been normal practice when hon. Members shout "Object" for other hon. Members to seek to identify those who are objecting so that the action that they are taking in the House may be made clear to their constituents.

While you will deprecate any threats that may have been made against hon. Members, Mr. Speaker, I hope that you will not stop the practice of hon. Members trying to identify those hon. Members who block Bills. Although they have every right to object to measures, they should be prepared to accept the public responsibility for doing so.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that this will not delay today's proceedings.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): Further to that point of order Mr. Speaker. You, Mr. Speaker, will be aware that in the city that I represent there has been a recent outbreak of violence against ordinary people simply because they have fallen foul of a twisted minority who claim to be in favour of animal rights. The threats to which my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) referred are in exactly that category. While I totally accept the democratic point made by the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett), I hope that, through you, Mr. Speaker, the House can achieve its continuing objective of fair debate that is not conducted under a possible sentence.

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): Further to the point of order of my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin). If the sinister development to which he referred continues and grows, it will make hon. Members frightened to come to the Chamber and object on Fridays.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): I support the Protection of Badger Setts Bill and would like it to be passed into law. An article appeared in the *News of the World* last Sunday suggesting that my right hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester (Mr. Morrison), who objected to the Bill on its last appearance in the House, was responsible for it not becoming law. As you, Mr. Speaker, and all of us know, that is absolute nonsense. If it does not become law it will not be because, quite

[Mr. Robert G. Hughes]

properly and reasonably, someone objected to it, but because its promoters failed to secure sufficient parliamentary time. If we are to go ahead with the normal procedures for private Members' Bills, it is important that they should be reported properly. Any hon. Member who objects to a Bill should not be pilloried as my right hon. Friend was because that is dishonest.

Sir Charles Morrison (Devizes): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. There is a difficult problem here, not necessarily because of the point raised by the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) about the identification of a Member who objects, but because outside the House there is, not surprisingly, a lack of knowledge about the way in which the procedure of the House works. As everyone inside the House last Friday would have known, an objection is not necessarily an objection to the Bill in principle.

The objection made to the Protection of Badger Setts Bill last Friday was made purely and simply because the objector wished further amendments to be made to the Bill. The only opportunity to do that was to object to the Bill so that there would be a further opportunity, hopefully today, for discussing the amendments. The lady who wrote the article in the *News of the World* clearly thought that such an objection was an objection in principle, but that was not so. That misunderstanding of parliamentary procedure could mean serious consequences for those who object to Bills.

Mr. Speaker: It is useful, I think, for members of the public who now witness our proceedings on television to be given the explanations that we have heard in this morning's points of order. The Select Committee on Procedure reported on this matter three years ago, on 5 May 1987, in its second report. The Committee set out the arguments for and against identifying Members who object to Bills being read a Second time without debate and unanimously recommended no change to present procedure. Therefore, such a change could certainly not be introduced without a formal decision on the part of the House—I say that to the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) who raised that point. It may well be that hon. Members will ask the Select Committee on Procedure to look at the matter again to see if the decision should be reviewed.

As one who was responsible, in a previous incarnation, for looking after Bills on Friday, may I say that what the hon. Member for Devizes (Sir C. Morrison) said was true. It is not good practice for legislation to go through the House without proper debate. We frequently find—I think that the House will agree—that when that happens, amendments need to be made to the Bills and there is little time in our parliamentary programme to achieve that. There is a good reason for objecting to Bills that have not had a full and proper debate in the House.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a totally separate matter. A Bill has appeared on the Orders of the Day and Notices of Motions for today, until today, but mysteriously it no longer appears. I have the great honour and privilege to be the Parliamentary Private Secretary to, among others, my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Industry and Consumer Affairs, who is present today. The hon. Member who drew No. 1 in the ballot—the most coveted prize in the House—sought to introduce a Bill relating to consumer guarantees. With the Minister I attended every one of the Bill's sittings on the Floor of the House, in Committee and on Report. It was down for debate today at position No. 4 on the Order Paper. My hon. Friend the Minister, his advisors, officials and I spent a considerable amount of Government, ministerial and official time preparing ourselves so that we could ensure that the House had the opportunity of considering the vast number of Lords amendments tabled by the Bill's promoter the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones)—

Mr. Speaker: What is the point of order for me?

Mr. Brown: My point of order for you, Mr. Speaker, is this: is it in order for an hon. Member who draws position No. 1 in the ballot, when the Bill has gone through all its stages in the House, suddenly and without notice to the Minister or the House, to withdraw his Bill on the day that Lords amendments are to be considered?

Mr. Speaker: Yes, it is absolutely in order for him to do that. If the hon. Gentleman reads the Votes and Proceedings of yesterday, 5 July, he will see that the Consumer Guarantees Bill has been set down to be considered on Friday 20 July. Therefore, what has happened is perfectly in order.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Well, it takes time from today's Bills, which I think hon. Members are anxious to debate.

Mr. Hughes: I accept that, but this is an important matter—for two reasons. First, I have come here specifically today because I have been lobbied by my constituents who wish the Bill to be passed. It is right that the Bill appears on the Orders of the Day for 20 July, but the reality is that today it had a chance of being debated and passed into law, but on 20 July it has not.

Mr. Speaker: That is a matter for the Member in charge of the Bill. He decides; it is his responsibility.

Mr. Hughes: I accept that, but the point of order is that it is not only a gross discourtesy to the House and the Minister, but to you, Mr. Speaker, because the Bill was put down for today, could have been debated but has effectively been killed. That has wasted everybody's time and is a gross discourtesy. I am appalled by it.

Mr. Speaker: That is a matter for the Member concerned, but in putting down his Bill for a later date he has possibly given another hon. Member whose Bill was lower in the ballot the opportunity of seeing his Bill put on the statute book.

Orders of the Day

Road Traffic (Temporary Restrictions) Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Schedule 1

SECTIONS SUBSTITUTED FOR SECTIONS 14 AND 15 OF THE ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 4, line 39, leave out "and (3)" and insert ", (3) and (4A)"

9.49 am

Mr. Martin. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider Lords amendments Nos. 2 to 8.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I am grateful to be turning to the House with my Bill for its concluding stage today. It is a little more than five months since the House approved the Bill's principles when it granted it a Second Reading. I hope that I shall be permitted to detain hon. Members a little longer than I was able to do on that previous, brief occasion. Having thanked colleagues and other hon. Members previously for their help with this measure, I also thank the noble Lord, Lord Brougham and Vaux, who so kindly took up the measure and steered it expertly through another place.

The amendments deal with unfinished business which we did not have time to complete during the earlier stages of the Bill. They can be debated as single group because they are consequential upon one another and result from the undertakings that we gave in this place to interested parties: the Ramblers Association, the British Horse Society and others. Naturally they were concerned about the impact that the Bill might have, unamended, on walkers, riders and other non-motorised traffic.

The House will recall the misunderstanding on Report, on 27 April, and the limited time that we had for Third Reading, on 4 May. That meant that we were unable to deliver our promises before the Bill went to their Lordships' House. The House accepted that we would table suitable amendments to meet the criticism and concern. The other place was clearly satisfied with our proposals, and had seen and accepted the correspondence with interested organisations, which are also satisfied with what we have proposed and with what their Lordships have done.

I hope that the amendments will be accepted by the House, since they satisfy the promises that we made, although I am more than happy to provide a little detail so that colleagues on both sides of the House may feel satisfied.

All the amendments refer to the schedules. The first five refer to schedule 1, paragraph 15. Amendments Nos. 1 and 2 insert a new paragraph, (4A), which makes effective provision for the shorter order time of six months, which we accepted was reasonable in the circumstances. We have tried to solve that problem while preserving the main thrust of the Bill which was to create an 18-month temporary traffic order. Notices are of much shorter duration.

Amendment No. 3 describes when such different provision will apply and meets concerns that I outlined earlier and on Report. Amendment No. 4 means that the 18-month order will not apply when the temporary prohibition or restricton is made for reasons mentioned in paragraph 14 (1)(a) and that it will take longer.

Amendment No. 5 defines the process by which the Secretary of State can extend an 18-month order. Amendment No. 6 inserts two new paragraphs, (4A) and (4B), to respond to the two new order times of six and 18 months, and to how and in what circumstances the six months order can be extended. The amendment also clarifies what must happen if the Secretary of State refuses an extension.

Amendment No. 7 recognises the two new paragraphs by inserting them in paragraph 6 of the main schedule. Amendment No. 8 seeks to define a footpath, cycle track and byway. I am pleased that we have tried to ensure that the words will have the same meaning north of the border.

The law outside Greater London imposes a three-month limit only on temporary traffic orders, and the Secretary of State has the power to consent to longer periods on request. The major objective of the Bill was to relax that requirement and to create an 18-month order.

The proposed period in the Bill was understood to be consistent with the extensions of the time limit that was acceptable to the Secretary of State in the past. It matched the 18-month period allowed for experimental orders under section 9 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, and it seems to represent a reasonable step towards deregulation as it removes the need for many orders to be subjected to the unnecessary bureaucratic process of approval. Consent requirements have been progressively relaxed since the early days, when a Minister for Transport approved all traffic regulation orders. So, the time is ripe for a modest further move away from central decision-making.

The proposal in the Bill is among a number of ideas on which the Department of Transport consulted widely in 1987, following the report of the traffic and parking working group, which involved representatives of local authorities; and the proposal received majority support from consultees.

The Bill caused the Ramblers Association and other groups to make fresh representations on the issue, which were well received; we were sympathetic to their concerns. It is fair to say that they had always been a little cautious about the relaxation proposals and they felt that a shorter period would be appropriate for temporary orders affecting paths, bridleways, cycle tracks and bridleways that are open to all traffic. I understand and share their view.

Temporary orders can be used only to restrict or prohibit traffic. For the purpose of the 1984 Act, traffic includes pedestrians and any

"person driving, riding or leading a horse or other animal of draught or burden."

The result is that a temporary traffic order can be used temporarily to restrict the passage of all traffic, including walkers and riders—hence the concern that was expressed. I acknowledge that the hon. Member for Denton and

[Mr. Brandon-Bravo]

Reddish (Mr. Bennett) is in his place, as he particularly wished to raise these matters early in proceedings on the Bill.

The powers can be used only for the purposes set out in the Bill—because of works or proposed works on or near a road, or because of the likelihood of danger to the public or of serious damage to the road. The Bill makes no significant change to the present law in this respect, but it is clearly right that the authorities should be able to restrict or prohibit all traffic on the grounds of public safety, until the problem—a temporary danger caused perhaps by subsidence from quarrying, an unsafe building or fallen trees—can be dealt with.

I have spent a little time giving the background to the Bill in some detail to explain the need for the Lords amendments. I have accepted, as the Government have accepted, that the restoration of footpaths and bridleways ought generally to be less problematical, and to take less time, than the restoration of vehicular use where that has had to be restricted or temporarily suspended for more substantial remedial work.

Diversions are more likely to be disruptive for users on foot or on horseback than for motorised traffic, which may be back on its intended route fairly quickly. A detour of a mile is perhaps insignificant when travelling by car, but it is a rather different matter for walkers. For those reasons, a shorter period for such orders seems to be wholly reasonable. The amendments propose a period of six months, which has been accepted as a reasonable compromise by all concerned parties.

When necessary, an authority can, before the six months perod is up, seek the Secretary of State's consent to a longer period of closure or restriction. That follows the present law.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): My hon. Friend is on an important matter. Some years ago, I used to go horse riding in Heston farm, and when the M4 was being built, the bridlepaths that I used were closed for about two years. The building of major motorways and railways is important, but they can take two or three years to complete. Is it right that the local authority should be able to apply to the Secretary of State to close the appropriate footpaths or bridleways for that period?

10 am

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: If the footpath, bridlepath or cycle track is in integral part of a road, road restrictions will apply and people will not be able to treat the footpath or bridlepath as a separate entity. We could not have allowed a coach and horses to be driven through the arrangements for the building of the M25 simply because a foothpath ran across the route. We could not have a six-month rule for one bit and an 18-month rule for the other. If a footpath or bridle path is an integral part of a projected road, we are dealing with a highway and not with a footpath in the accepted sense of the word.

If the Secretary of State refuses consent, another order may not be brought forward until three months have elapsed. I do not think that the consent procedure will be used very often, but it is a sensible arrangement where circumstances warrant it or necessity dictates. The Bill gives the Secretary of State power to prescribe by regulations the procedure to be followed in connection with temporary restrictions by order or notice. Those powers are contained in clause 1(2), which is a substitute for section 16(2) of the 1984 Act. The regulations will be made by statutory instrument after consultation with the relevant bodies. I understand that my hon. Friend the Minister has given such assurances to the organisations that will be consulted about draft regulations.

For the purposes of illustration, I have concentrated on footpaths and bridleways, but the amendments apply equally to cycle tracks and byways that are open to all traffic. That is for the reasons that I have outlined and is subject to the explanation that I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes). Definitions are provided in the final amendment by reference to existing statutory definitions. Surprisingly, they differ north and south of the border, so reference is made respectively to the position in England and Wales and in Scotland to which my Bill also extends.

We are working from Bill HL 76 which was printed on 9 May and the amendments refer to that document. The Bill was reprinted on 21 June after their Lordships' deliberations as Bill HL 99, and it contained some printing errors. They have been noted and I am assured that they will be rectified in the Act if the Bill is successful. The errors relate simply to cross-references consequential upon the insertion of the new amendments to section 15 where it appears in the schedule. In the wrongly printed Bill, in page 4, line 40, the reference to subsection 2 should be to subsection 3. In page 5, line 15 the reference to subsection 4 should be to subsection 5. In line 21 on the same page, the reference to subsection 3 should be to subsection 4. On page 15, line 48, the reference to subsection 2, should be to subsection 3. I would not like the House to think that I had been careless and had not noticed those errors. That is why I am drawing them to the attention of the House.

When I introduced my Bill, I scarcely thought that it would in any way promote the green image. Its primary objective is to rationalise and enhance the powers of highway authorities in dealing with temporary restrictions on roads where by far their most challenging problems must arise. I respect the interests of walkers, riders and cyclists, and I am glad to be able to meet their concerns by these amendments.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): I shall be brief. The last time that I spoke on a Friday, I was upbraided by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), who accused me of speaking for 77 minutes. You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, said that you found that difficult to tolerate. It is amusing to note that, just 12 hours ago, the hon. Member for Linlithgow spoke for even longer. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) for drawing my attention to that and contrasting it with my 77-minute speech two months ago.

The Bill is a good one and deserves a speedy passage after consideration of the Lords amendments. I am delighted to support the amendment which the Lord Brougham and Vaux proposed and which my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) has drawn to our attention. The amendment is necessary because, when the Bill left this House, some voluntary organisations, especially the British Horse Society and the Ramblers Association, were worried about it. I am grateful to those organisations for allowing me to have copies of the correspondence between them and my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic.

The British Horse Society wrote to my hon. Friend on 2 May and said that it supported the amendment as a strengthening of the Bill in the context of footpaths and bridleways. However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South said, the amendment also covers cycle tracks, so that restrictions should not be subject to 18 months but to a much more acceptable period of six months.

The British Horse Society asked my hon. Friend the Minister to consider the issue of appropriate guidance by his Department on the exercise of these powers by highway authorities, and the society would like to see consultations about the preparation of such guidance.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister on the way in which he has responded to the British Horse Society, the Ramblers Association, and amendment No. 1. The Department of Transport consulted interested parties to ensure that the amended legislation meets with their approval. That shows the Department at its best. That is why it will be possible to incorporate the amendment in the Bill.

I see that the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish is present. He has taken a great interest in footpaths, bridleways and rambling for many years. He will agree that the way in which consultations have taken place on Lords amendment No. 1 before it was put to the House, are a great assurance to the people outside the House whom he represents. It is on the record that there have been exchanges of correspondence between the organisations and the Department.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman is starting a long filibuster, with several of his hon. Friends, to stop us reaching the Protection of Badger Setts Bill. I warn him that Opposition Members will be tempted to call Divisions if the filibuster continues on this amendment, which could have been moved formally. We have been through all the matters which the hon. Gentleman is discussing. Divisions had a disastrous effect on the Bill on a previous occasion. I suggest to him that, in trying to prevent us from reaching the Protection of Badger Setts Bill, he should not tempt Opposition Members too far.

Mr. Brown: I would be prepared to have the charge of filibustering levelled by you, Mr. Deputy Speaker or by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), if I had been speaking for 77 minutes. However, I resent it utterly when I have given you, the House and now the hon. Gentleman, a commitment that I have no intention whatever of filibustering. My speech will probably now last six or seven minutes instead of four or five minutes. It will have been prolonged not by me but by that intervention.

When I have given an absolute assurance that I do not intend to filibuster and shall speak for only six or seven minutes, I am not prepared to have that charge levelled at me. I have spoken for less than four minutes. I spoke for 77 minutes two months before the hon. Member for Linlithgow spoke for 80 minutes. If I had spoken for a similar length of time today I would accept a charge of filibustering from the hon. Member for Linlithgow.

I now wish to make progress. The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish would know right from the beginning of my speech if I intended to filibuster. The signs are not there today. Those who have had the good fortune to listen to some of my slightly more lengthy speeches can tell from the tone and style of my speech and the speaking voice that I use whether I am filibustering. This morning I am not filibustering.

Representations were made in the House from various quarters. Therefore, it was agreed that a shorter period, of 18 months, would be appropriate where temporary orders would affect walkers, horse riders or cyclists, who may be rather more inconvenienced than motorised traffic by temporary closures and diversions. The effect of the amendment is simply to introduce a six-month time limit for such orders instead of an 18-month limit.

The amendment provides that the Secretary of State may extend the six-month period at the request of the authorities which issues the order.

That is an important fallback for the authorities. One cannot guarantee that everything will always be in apple-pie order within the six-month period. Equally, I understand worries about the original period of 18 months. That allows, as now, for some flexibility where circumstances justify a longer restriction. If my hon. Friend the Minister refuses the request, the authorities may not frustrate it and bring forward a further order until a period of three months has elapsed. Again, that formulation already exists in section 15.

Definitions are also provided for footpaths, bridleways, cycle tracks and byways open to all traffic by reference to existing statute, including those in Scotland where appropriate. The objective behind the amendment was agreed by the parties who intially expressed anxiety about long restrictions.

I bring my remarks to a close approximately two minutes later than would otherwise have been the case if the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish had not intervened.

10.15 am

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: It is a great pleasure to speak on the amendment. This most important Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) was a good Bill from the outset but, because of the examination that it received in another place and, indeed, its examination by organisations such as the British Horse Society and the Ramblers Association, it is now a better Bill. None of us can doubt that, after the work that the organisations have done, and the generous response which they and members of another place received from my hon. Friend the Minister, the Bill has been improved.

I was a local councillor and then a member of the Greater London council, so my local government experience is confined to London. I must confess that I had not realised what a mess this aspect of the law is outside London. I am pleased to note that London can teach the rest of the country something in that respect. There is no doubt that the law was a mess. We may well have cause to be extremely grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South for sorting out the law on the matter.

Road users stand to gain from the presence of an adaptable and comprehensive measure to regulate traffic where necessary. The relaxation of the period for temporary orders will be widely welcomed as a useful step towards deregulation. The 18-month rule and the six-month rule created by the amendment will almost certainly simplify and reduce much of the bureaucracy.

[Mr. Robert G. Hughes]

I am led to speculate on why the Bill and the amendment are necessary. The answer is that people do not get the efficiency they want from local authorities. Neither is it satisfactory from other statutory undertakers. When a sewer is replaced, or gas, or electricity or British Telecom works take place, promises are made about how long the work will take. We have all experienced that and we know that the promises never come true: the works go on and on. If one is really lucky, when the gas board finishes, the water authority immediately starts work.

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): The hon. Gentleman's remarks on that matter should be directed to the Minister. It is well within the power of the Government to bring in legislation in a new street works Bill to deal with the problem that the hon. Gentleman outlines. That is not the purpose of this Bill.

Mr. Hughes: The Labour party thinks that it is possible to legislate for everything. I recognise that the Labour party takes the magic wand approach to policy.

Ms. Ruddock: I am sorry, but that remark is not worthy of the hon. Gentleman. He will be aware that the Department of Transport has held long sessions with working parties and that there is a consensus on the need for a new street works Bill. It is not a Labour party matter, although we support the proposal. There is a consensus across local authorities and the Departments involved.

Mr. Hughes: I am suitably admonished. I accept that that remark was not worthy of me. There again, it was an accurate description of Labour policy.

I wish to examine the matter in detail. Local authorities probably have a responsibility. Undoubtedly people who use footpaths, bridlepaths and cycle tracks have been frustrated about the amount of time that the paths have been obstructed. The main procedural difference is that orders require local publicity in advance of restrictions, whereas notices can introduce restrictions with immediate effect. The more summary notice procedure is therefore strictly time-limited. The Bill clarifies the need in both instances to have regard to alternative routes. It will allow procedures to be prescribed that will ensure adequate signing.

What are the incentives for speedy completion of works? We all know that footpaths and bridleways are highways. One would not think so from the way in which they are abused at times. Authorities are under a general duty under section 130 of the Highways Act 1980 to

"assert and protect the rights of the public to the use and enjoyment of any highway"

and

"prevent . . . as far as possible, the stopping up or obstruction of the highways".

Authorities must still have regard to that duty when satisfying themselves of the need for a temporary restriction. Such restrictions will not be allowed to continue indefinitely, and those who wish to protect the right of people to use highways, bridleways, footpaths and cycleways will have the law on their side when they seek to ensure that that does not happen.

I was grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) when he responded to my intervention about major roadworks. Everybody wants major public works in principle, and everyone demands that the Government should pay for them. No one, however, wants them built on his doorstep. We may have an interesting example of that when we come to debate private business next Thursday. We shall learn whether hon. Members think it more important to build a new tube line in London than to have life disrupted just outside their front door. It will be interesting to hear the reaction of hon. Members. No one wants disruption, but it must take place if we are to have the infrastructure that we require.

My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South flattered me unintentionally. He thought, when I was talking about riding horses in my youth, that I was referring to the building of the M25. I am rather older than he thinks. I was talking about the construction of the M4, which cut across the footpaths and bridleways that I was accustomed to using when on horseback. I am grateful for the clarification that the Bill will not stop that usage.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) spoke about the British Horse Society and the consultation with it. He posed a question, and I am uncertain about the answer that he received. I know that the society, in a letter of 2 May to my hon. Friend the Minister, asked to be included

"among the interested bodies to be consulted on procedure regulations to be made under Clause 1."

What was the answer to that request? I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to clarify the position when he replies to the debate. The society and other organisations should be included in consultation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I ask the hon. Gentleman to direct his remarks to the amendments that are before the House.

Mr. Hughes: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for your intervention. I recall that the subject of consultation, and participation in it, was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South. I was seeking clarification. It is important that the British Horse Society and other organisations should be consulted and that their views should be known in detail, and not only in terms of the Bill, the provisions of which will be set in concrete when we enact it.

Lords Amendment No. 8 is important because of definitions. We always think that we know what we are talking about, and before I considered the Bill I thought that I knew what a footpath was. It is sometimes said, "I don't know what it is but I know it when I see it." When the Bill becomes law, it will be abundantly clear how a footpath, a cycle track or a bridleway is defined. The amendment redefines these facilities in a commonsense way that will be helpful to everyone.

When others come to determine tricky problems of protecting the countryside, including footpaths and bridleways, I believe that they will congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South on accepting Lords amendment No. 8 and on introducing the Bill to the statute book. I say that in a wider sense than footpaths and bridleways, because I consider the Bill to be an important measure, if a limited one. In times to come, people may want to name footpaths and bridleways after my hon. Friend; instead of Grimsdyke, which runs through part of my constituency, we shall have Brandon-Bravo footpaths and cycleways. I congratulate my hon. Friend on his Bill.

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Robert Atkins): My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) is to be congratulated on having successfully piloted his Bill through to this stage. It has not always been easy. I recall that there was one occasion earlier in the proceedings when it almost seemed that the Bill had been lost. But he rescued it from the brink, and has seen to it that we are taking our final opportunity today to wish the Bill well.

It was perhaps a mark of the astuteness of my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South that he should choose a measure whose general principles had already received a favourable response when they were the subject of wide consultation with interested bodies back in 1987. I refer to the TAPWORK report—the report of the traffic and parking working group—which my Department produced following discussion with local authority associations.

I understand that this group continues to provide a forum for discussion on a range of traffic and parking issues of mutual concern to the Department and authorities. I welcome that. The issues at stake in this area are as much of local relevance as they are nationally, and can only benefit from the mutual discussion and exchange of views which such a forum provides.

Other recommendations in the report have also found their way into law, notably in the Parking Act 1989, which was sponsored by my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope). We are indebted to hon. Members on both sides of the House who bring forward worthwhile measures of this sort. Sponsoring a private Member's Bill can be a bit of a thankless task, but those who persevere, like my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South, have their reward, if only in terms of personal satisfaction.

The proposal to relax the existing consent requirements on temporary orders was included among a number of other proposals for improving traffic and parking powers and practices. As my hon. Friend has said, it met with majority approval. Local highway authorities, in particular, supported the suggestion that the time periods should be relaxed. The existing three-month time limit outside London has proved unrealistic. It has resulted in large numbers of orders being referred to the Department for extension. The case for an extention is incontrovertible. It makes no sense for central Government to be involved in such matters on a routine basis.

So it is clearly time for change. Local highway authorities are responsible bodies. They should be trusted to make their own judgment in these matters without having to resort to the Department.

Local highway authorities are also creatures of statute —with statutory obligations to exercise their traffic regulation powers with due regard to maintaining access, to the effects on the amenity of an area, and to other relevant matters. They must

"secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of traffic".

They must

"prevent as far as possible the stopping up or obstruction of the highway".

And they must

"protect the rights of the public to the use and enjoyment of the highway".

These duties are enshrined in the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and the Highways Act 1980.

Against the background of these safeguards, it is indefensible to continue to subject authorities to a second-guessing consent regime after three months, especially where measures of a temporary nature only are involved. The case for relaxation is therefore overwhelming.

My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South has explained the amendments themselves in careful detail. I fully endorse his remarks. I am happy to express the Government's support for the amendments which are before the House and which were approved in the other place. what they will do is help to provide an incentive for authorities to limit the duration of orders affecting walkers, horse riders and other non-motorised traffic. It ought to be possible—as he says—for the inconvenience to such groups to be minimised, and rights of way restored more quickly after their temporary suspension.

The arguments advanced by the Ramblers Association and others were cogent and persuasive. I was therefore happy to give written undertakings to them and to the British Horse Society that their concerns had been noted.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) for his kind comments about the Department's response to those who were concerned. It is very much the business of the Department, where it possibly can, to ensure that agreement is obtained. In this instance, the help of my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South, together with my officials, has resolved the difficulties. It may be appropriate to put the undertakings on record, which I was not able to do in earlier proceedings. I shall read out the main text of my letter of 30 April, addressed to the deputy secretary of the Ramblers Association:

"I believe you are not opposed to the Bill, in principle, but have a number of concerns over the details, on some of which there was unfortunately insufficient time for debate last Friday. I discussed these with Mr. Brandon-Bravo and we had agreed between us a number of points on which we hoped we could have satisfied you. It may be helpful if I record them below.

We are content for the Bill to be amended so that temporary orders affecting traffic other than motor vehicles on a footpath, bridleway, cycle track or byway have a more limited duration. We would like to propose 6 months, which would provide a limited relaxation on the present 3 month period, with a power for the Secretary of State to authorise a longer period, on the same basis as now under section 15 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. A suitable amendment would be brought forward in the Lords.

I am also prepared to consider whether, when the Bill is enacted, appropriate guidance might be issued by the Department to highway authorities about the exercise of their powers. This would aim to emphasise the statutory duties which already oblige them to protect rights of way and minimise obstruction. The Bill enhances the provisions about traffic signs. Guidance would underline the need for clear signing and its maintenance throughout the period of any restriction. It could also endorse the requirements in respect of alternative routes. I would be prepared to involve interested bodies in the preparation of such guidance. They will, in any case, be consulted on procedure regulations to be made under clause 1."

10.30 am

Those undertakings are now on the record, and I promise the House that they will be carefully respected. I am glad to report that the responses received were united in their welcome for, and acceptance of, this proposition.

For the Ramblers Association—this is the point that the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) raised in the original debates—Mr. Trevelyan suggested,

in his reply, that the proposed guidance might be discussed in due course in the rights of way review committee, an informal non-statutory committee under the chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst). At the most recent meeting of the Committee, which I believe was on Monday this week, whose constituent members include the Ramblers Association, the Countryside Commission and a variety of other bodies concerned with countryside matters, I understand that members expressed their satisfaction with the outcome on the Bill and were content to be consulted in due course through their representative organisations. I should like to put on the record my gratitude to them for their co-operation, which I know is shared by my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South.

As has been said, clause 1 provides for the Secretary of State to prescribe procedures to be followed in connection with the exercise by highway authorities of their powers under the Bill. This approach mirrors that already followed in connection with the main types of traffic regulation and parking place order under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. It has the advantage that procedures can be more easily modified at a later stage to reflect changes in circumstances; and that time can be taken to consult affected parties and take account of their views in drawing up the necessary regulations. The 1984 Act requires such consultation before regulations can be made. We value that process and will look forward to receiving responses from consultees in due course.

I hope that we shall consult on draft regulations during the autumn. Suitable guidance would be prepared at the same time. We would then aim to implement what I hope by that time will be an Act by commencement order, and publish the guidance, simultaneously with introducing the procedure regulations—perhaps, I hope, around the turn of the year.

Regulations on procedure will replace the provisions currently set out in schedule 3 to the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. Those deal, at present, with requirements for the prior publication of notices in local newspapers before a temporary order is made, and further notices to be published when the order is made. The notices must state the effect of the order and include a description of alternative routes available.

In the case of temporary restrictions by notice rather than by order, there is no requirement for prior publicity, but the same obligation to describe alternative routes must apply. In all cases, whether the restriction is by means of a notice or order, street notices must be posted conspicioulsy at each end of the road and at intermediate junctions.

It is envisaged that new procedure regulations will cover much the same ground. There may be some modifications. In the case of motorways and urban clearways, for example, it hardly seems appropriate to require the posting of street notices where motorists cannot possibly stop to read them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Perhaps the Minister will tell me how all that relates to the amendments.

Mr. Atkins: I had hoped, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I was dealing with the amendments in the round. As we did not have the opportunity to debate the details that were raised by the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish on Second Reading, I was seeking to deal with them now. I hope that that meets with your approval.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope that the Minister can tell me and the House how he relates the matter that he is describing to the amendments that we are considering; otherwise, he must address his remarks specifically to the amendments.

Mr. Atkins: I shall endeavour to do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I was under the impression that I was discussing those matters at the request of the House, following the Second Reading debate, when I undertook to provide amendments that the representatives of my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South could table in another place. I said that, when the amendments returned to this House, I would respond to them, and that is what I was endeavouring to do.

Perhaps I can continue, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and if you find me——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the Minister will not be too prolix and that he will recognise that the Chair has a duty to safeguard the interests of other hon. Members who are waiting for their Bills to be reached. This is a private Members' day.

Mr. Atkins: Yes, I understand that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I was trying to respond to the real concerns that were raised in the original debate, which I was requested to do by hon. Members of all parties, when my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South and others raised a number of topics. I thought that I had recorded my desire to do so in my earlier remarks, and my gratitude to those people who responded as a result of the amendments that were tabled in the Lords. What I am saying relates to those amendments. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South will agree with that. I shall endeavour to proceed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and see whether I can stay within your terms of order.

I am glad that, in his later comments, my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South recognised the importance of traffic management. The main impact of the Bill will be in respect of traffic on the road network. We must ensure that highway authorities have an adequate and efficient means of managing the network. That is as relevant to temporary measures for emergency work, repairs to water mains, or other remedial work as it is in respect of permanent traffic orders. With rising car ownership and the increasing demand for travel, we must use every endeavour to ensure that we make the best use of the available road capacity.

I know that many hon. Members are concerned about congestion and delays that result from roadworks. That matter was referred to in interventions by my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) and the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock). The Bill does not seek to strengthen the law in respect of road works by utilities, and the matter of subsequent reinstatement. Many hon. Members have made clear their support for more far-reaching changes in the management of utility street works. The Horne report—the report of a review carried out under the chairmanship of Professor Horne—made a convincing case for reform. The Government accepted that case, and I am delighted that the hon. Member for Deptford also accepts it. I hope that,

when that matter is debated in the House, we shall have a short debate and reach agreement on the reform of the Public Utilities Street Works Act 1950, which covers the matter that we have discussed.

The Bill, however, is now an appropriate vehicle for piecemeal changes to street works legislation. I hope that we shall bring forward such legislation in the not too distant future.

The Bill and the Lords amendments relate to the TAPWORK report—the report of the traffic and parking working group—to which I referred in my opening remarks. The report supported the recommendation of the Horne committee that highway authorities should have the power to charge public utilities undertaking road works, so recovering the costs of making traffic orders, erecting signs and other associated costs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not think that that has anything at all to do with the amendments. Am I wrong?

Mr. Atkins: I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but this matter arose during the debate and I am responding to it. I thought that that was the task of a Minister during debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I do not think that these matters relate to the debate—I may be wrong. Perhaps the matter was referred to when Mr. Speaker was in the Chair.

Mr. Atkins: I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but you were not in the Chair when that matter was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West, and the hon. Member for Deptford intervened; Mr. Speaker was in the Chair at the time. In the circumstances, I thought that it would be wise for me to touch on that matter now, and I hoped that the House would approve of that. That was certainly my intention.

My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South has not sought to include those matters in his Bill. Perhaps he was wise to limit his ambitions in that respect. The Government have, however, already accepted the principle that the highway authority should be able to recover from any body excavating in the highway any reasonable costs in making temporary traffic orders and signposting traffic diversions. That is what the Bill and the Lords amendments are all about.

In view of your strictures, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not wish to delay the House unnecessarily. There are matters that I can gloss over, in view of the concerns that have been expressed. The ones to which you have just referred are not incorporated in the Bill. In many respects I am glad that they are not.

On Report, the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish suggested that the sole aim of the Bill was to help bureaucrats in the Department and in local authorities and that it would do nothing for the general public. That is not the case. Anyone who has worked in local government, as I have, will know that local authorities take their highways responsibilities seriously. Their aim is to minimise disruption from roadworks and maintenance and to manage traffic efficiently in the public interest. The Department's objectives in that respect are no different. My hon. Friend's Bill, and the amendments that were tabled in the Lords, are not designed simply to save my officials' time. He would be the first to admit that.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): My hon. Friend has done a remarkably good job in trying to co-ordinate the speed and pace at which road repairs are going ahead, but is he aware that in my constituency there is a positively third-world problem?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman should obtain a copy of the Lords amendments before he intervenes again.

Mr. Atkins: Perhaps my hon. Friend ought to come to see me on another occasions, when we might discuss the third-world effects of road congestion in Crawley.

On Report, the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish suggested that the sole aim of the Bill was to help bureaucrats. However, it is aimed at streamlining the process and cutting out wasteful and unnecessary bureaucracy at the centre. I am confident that the aims of the Bill and the amendments that were tabled in the Lords, at my hon. Friend's suggestion, will commend themselves to the whole House.

On Report, the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner)—who, I regret to say, is not, unusually, in his place—took us on a brief visit to Swallow Falls. It reminds me that the Bill, and the amendments that were tabled in the Lords, relate to Wales as well as to England and Scotland, as does the 1984 Act that the Bill seeks to amend.

On a number of occasions, our debates have also touched on green lanes, the colloquial expression for byways open to all traffic, otherwise known as BOATs. The amendments that we are considering would introduce the shorter six-month time limit for temporary orders affecting byways, which Lords amendment No. 8 defines more prosaically as

"a highway over which the public have a right of way for vehicular and all other kinds of traffic but which is used by the public mainly for the purpose for which footpaths and bridleways are used."

That definition already appears in section 127 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

In view of your strictures, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall not linger on byways, a subject that properly deserves separate attention. Suffice it to say that I share the desire to preserve historic routes and that I am concerned at instances where there appears to be inappropriate or over-intensive use by vehicular traffic.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has been requested by the Countryside Commission to initiate traffic regulation powers on part of the Ridgeway national trail. Preparations are in hand for draft orders that would impose a ban on recreational vehicle use on Sundays throughout the year. The aim is to reduce the scope for conflict between vehicular users and those on foot or horseback. Draft orders will be published in due course. There will be an opportunity for public comment and representation.

Mr. Soames: Is my hon. Friend aware of the strong feeling that the orders go far too far as it is, and that the conflict between users of vehicles and pedestrians and horses has not been satisfactorily resolved by the Government? Further consideration must be given to the extreme selfishness of those who drive motor bikes and motor cars over those roads, resulting in such dreadful effects for horse riders and walkers.

Mr. Atkins: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's intervention. I know that he feels deeply about the matter and that he speaks about it with considerable knowledge. I am sure that he will pursue it. If I dealt with it now, you

[Mr. Atkins]

would rule me out of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Perhaps, therefore, my hon. Friend will write to me, when I shall be more than happy to pursue the matter.

10.45 am

Mr. Michael Brown: If the Lords amendments were passed, I understand that the highway authority could ask the Minister to extend the period beyond six months, but that the Minister could refuse the request. After such a refusal, highway authorities could not make another application for at least another three months. My hon. Friend would have an absolute power in respect of highway authorities if the Lords amendments were passed. In what circumstances would he use his absolute power to refuse a highway authority permission for an extension beyond the original six-month period?

Mr. Atkins: I am cautious about suggesting that I have absolute power over anything. I should not wish to exercise absolute power. However, as usual, my hon. Friend has hit the nail on the head and in his question has also defined the answer.

The aim of the draft orders would be to reduce the scope for conflict between vehicular users and those on foot or horseback. Draft orders will be published in due course. There will be an opportunity for public comment and representation before the matter is taken further. I am reminded that at one of my earlier meetings with my departmental officials the topics included green lanes, orange badges and red routes. I do not intend to be drawn on matters that are outside the terms of the Lords amendments.

Traffic signals are an essential component of many temporary traffic schemes. I am very nearly at the close of my remarks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which, as the House will recall, were the result of a commitment that I made at an earlier stage when I was pressed, not least by the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish, to establish the procedure for tabling the Lords amendments. I am grateful that the House recognises that it is important for me to expand on the amendments.

Traffic signals are an essential component of many temporary traffic schemes, the subject of the Bill and the Lords amendments. They can make the difference between an orderly queue at roadworks, and chaos as alternating traffic competes for priority. It is sometimes sensible to phase roadworks along a stretch of road so that the minimum length of road is out of commission at any one time. In such cases, the temporary restriction need apply only where appropriate traffic signs are in place.

However, when the temporary order is first made it may not be known what the contractor's sequence of work will be. There is a need for flexibility to cope with that. One of the less conspicuous items in the Bill, clause 14(4), provides the necessary freedom to organise these matters in the most effective manner by reference to section 4(1) of the 1984 Act, which allows a traffic regulation order to have effect only where the relevant traffic signs are in place.

The Bill retains the present power to make temporary restrictions in the interests of protecting the public from danger. It is equally important that safety at roadworks is given due consideration. That is why I welcome clause 1(5), which ensures that temporary speed restrictions at roadworks and contraflow sections on motorways are subject to the same penalties as speeding offences elsewhere. The maximum penalty will remain at level 3 —£400, as now—but will be strengthened by the additional powers of obligatory endorsement and discretionary disqualification.

On report I made a comment about being an avid follower of grand prix and other motor sports. The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish thought that I might have powers to close roads temporarily for motor racing. I have to disappoint him; I have no such powers. Racing on the public highway is an offence. Motorists who do not observe speed limits through coned-off sections of road are acting foolishly and dangerously, as well as illegally. The Bill will ensure that they face the full force of the law.

The Bill contains a collection of small but useful measures. Taken together——

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: I am not entirely sure that the Minister gave me the assurance I sought about consultation with the British Horse Society under clause 1. He referred to the consultations and the correspondence, but I am not sure that he said that he intended to consult the society under the terms of clause 1.

Mr. Atkins: I certainly intend to consult wherever necessary. That has always been the policy of the Department of Transport. Given the opportunity to consult, we always do so.

In conclusion, the Bill contains a collection of small but useful measures. Taken together, they will provide more flexibility and better powers to manage traffic for temporary periods in the interests of minimising congestion and disruption. They will reduce unnecessary bureaucracy and help authorities to respond more quickly and positively when the need arises.

In congratulating my hon. Friend on the way in which he handled the Bill, which demonstrates his skill in these matters, I give the Bill and the Lords amendments my wholehearted support.

Ms. Ruddock: I shall make the briefest of remarks, because I hope that we shall proceed to other private Members' Bills this morning.

I associate the Opposition with the Minister's remarks —of course only those which were in order—in supporting the Lords amendments. It is a considerable tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) that he so powerfully raised the interests of the Ramblers Association, walkers and riders at the start of our proceedings on the Bill, leading to the success of the Lords amendments which have enabled us to reach a happy consensus.

Perhaps I am anticipating today's conclusion, but, as one who has successfully piloted a private Member's Bill through the House, I know just how much stress is involved and how thrilling it is when one reaches the final hurdle and, one hopes, gets over it. However, I warn the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) that he will have to make sure that the Minister keeps his undertaking to make regulations. To date, the Government have failed to put the regulations to my Bill. I am sure that that comment was out of order, but I thought that I might get away with it.

I conclude on a happy note. I congratulate the hon. Member for Nottingham, South. It is indeed a Bill of small but useful measures. We support the Lords amendments and the Bill as amended.

Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 28, Noes 0.

Division No. 283] **[10.51 am**

AYES

Atkins, Robert	Lightbown, David
Brandon-Bravo, Martin	Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*	Rhodes James, Robert
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*	Sackville, Hon Tom
Carrington, Matthew	Shelton, Sir William
Colvin, Michael	Soames, Hon Nicholas
Durant, Tony	Stanbrook, Ivor
Dykes, Hugh	Steen, Anthony
Favell, Tony	Summerson, Hugo
Gale, Roger	Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan	Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*	Wood, Timothy
Heathcoat-Amory, David	
Knapman, Roger	**Tellers for the Ayes:**
Knowles, Michael	**Mr. Michael Stern and**
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*	**Mr. Robert G. Hughes.**

NOES

Nil

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Harry Barnes and
Mr. Dennis Skinner.

It appearing on the report of the Division that 40 Members were not present, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER, *declared that the Question was not decided, and the business under consideration stood over until the next Sitting of the House.*

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am not the loser as a result of this childish procedural nonsense; the loser is the British public. The hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) graciously gave the Bill the Opposition's blessing. You will be aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this is the second time in the past few months that a procedural attempt has been made—by people who otherwise profess their support for the Bill—to ensure that it is blocked. Is there no way in which Back Benchers can seek some form of protection from this crazy nonsense?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I well understand the hon. Gentleman's resentment, but it is not a matter for me. Nothing out of order has taken place, and I think that it would be unfruitful for us to embark on a post mortem.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope that it is one.

Mr. Skinner: I think that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will be knowledgeable enough to know that what happened this morning was that the Government failed to get their required 40 hon. Members to vote. That is an indictment of Tory Members and others who were unable to be present. Let me remind you, Mr. Deputy Speaker—you were not in the Chair at the beginning, although you were probably present—that at the beginning we were happy to allow the Bill and the amendments to go through on the nod. It is pretty clear that Conservative Members were talking at length to stop the Protection of Badger Setts Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a matter for me. It will not help the House or hon. Members who have Bills——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Hon. Members must not seek to rise when the occupant of the Chair is on his or her feet. It only wastes time, and it is not useful. Unless hon. Members raise genuine points of order, I warn them that I shall not hesitate to interrupt them.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is there no way in which you can use your influence to tell the House whether the Government are filibustering in an attempt to block all today's Bills? After all, the Minister spoke for half an hour on the last Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Point of order, Mr. Martyn Jones.

Mr. Martyn Jones (Clywd, South-West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It seems that the Bill has merely been adjourned until the next sitting, which will comprise Government business. If the Government wish the Bill to go ahead, they can give time for it on Monday.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Unlikely though it may seem, that is correct.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it a genuine point of order?

Mr Robert G. Hughes: It is entirely genuine. I raised a point of order earlier with Mr. Speaker about the disgraceful conduct of the hon. Member for Clywd, South-West (Mr. Jones)——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I heard that exchange, and I remember that Mr. Speaker ruled on it. I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not seeking a second ruling from me.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope that this point of order is more genuine than the last one.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: It is genuine. It is a different point of order relating to my previous point of order. The House has already been insulted; now a filibuster is in progress, with pointless votes——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This is merely a different bogus point of order.

Rights of Way Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Clause 1

AMENDMENT OF PART IX OF HIGHWAYS ACT 1980

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 5, line 18, after second "if" insert "(a)".

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this we may take Lords amendment No. 2.

Mr. Leigh: These are technical amendments, but it is only proper that I should briefly explain them to the House.

I thank my predecessor Lord Kimball for so ably steering my Bill through the other place. I also thank my noble Friend the Earl of Radnor for his diligence and experience, which enabled him to spot a point that had hitherto been missed, despite all the careful scrutiny that the Bill had received from those on the working party that developed it—lawyers, officials of three Government Departments, parliamentary draftsmen and so on. The point did not surface during the Bill's earlier passage through the House, despite the careful consideration that it was given.

Although the amendments are being dealt with as Government amendments, they derive from that important point. It concerns the definition of "grass" in new section 137A, which the Bill inserts into the Highways Act 1980 to deal with the problem of crops that are allowed to encroach on or grow on a right of way. I do not need to remind the House that the new section is the key provision of the Bill. The survey carried out by the Countryside Commission into the condition of the rights-of-way network found that crops growing on the line of rights of way were the single most prevalent factor affecting the public's use and enjoyment of footpaths and bridleways.

The vagueness and uncertainty of the present law severely limits the ability of local authorities to deal with the problems effectively. The amendments go to the heart of an important Bill. Section 137A requires a farmer to prevent any crop "other than grass"—that is the key phrase—from either obliterating the line of the right of way on the ground or making the right of way inconvenient to use. The Bill will impose on the farmer a clear duty to ensure that the line of the right of way is apparent on the ground. If he fails to do so, the authority may clear or cut back the crop as necessary and recover its costs, or it may prosecute him. It is essential that the section is as clear and unambiguous as possible. When the Bill left this House it was not, and that could have led to all sorts of problems.

The section applies to a crop "other than grass" for a number of reasons. I have spoken before about the problem caused to walkers and riders by the invasion of paths by oilseed rape, nicknamed by some "the yellow peril" because of its vivid colour and its habit of growing as a dense impenetrable mass reminiscent of a tropical rain forest.

More traditional crops—wheat, oats, rye, barley and the like—can be a considerable problem when they are growing across the line of a right of way. It is hard to have an enjoyable walk in the countryside if one must wade through acre after acre—should I now say hectare after hectare?—of knee or waist-high crops, particularly if they are wet.

We have heard from hon. Members about the scale of the problem and how such crops can deter many people from even venturing on to footpaths and bridleways. As every survey shows, most people who walk in the countryside are very law abiding and are discouraged from walking by such hindrances.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): My hon. Friend says that the majority of people who walk in the countryside are very law abiding. Is he aware of the increasing concern among farmers about people failing to secure gates and to leave the countryside as they found it? Is my hon. Friend satisfied that the Bill and the Lords amendments deal sufficiently with the farming community's concern in that respect?

Mr. Leigh: I am anxious to keep strictly to the amendment. My hon. Friend makes a worthwhile point and speaks from personal experience, but I hope that he will not mind if I do not go down that footpath because I want to remain strictly in order. As always, he made his point fairly and very well.

It has always been accepted that there is no justification for applying the provisions of the new section to pasture land—pasture can be either permanent or pasture that has been sown like any other crop—and that they should not apply to hay meadows. It was pointed out in an earlier debate that hay meadows can be pleasant to walk through.

The problem throughout has been how to define grass. The amendment addresses that because it was the substance of what their Lordships were worried about. The problem was considered by the working party of the rights of way committee. That group, which represents all interests in a powerful network, put together the excellent measures in the Bill, and I stress that the Bill is widely supported by all sides of the countryside network and hon. Members. The committee's legal advisers paid much attention to the problem.

Hon. Members might say that crops and grass are understandable and straightforward terms, and so they are, and the working party's initial advice from its experienced learned counsel was that the courts would have no difficulty with either term. The Bill, as first presented to the House and debated on Second Reading, simply referred to

"a crop other than grass"

without attempting to define either term. The House was satisfied with that; although several important points of detail were made by hon. Members, that was not one of them.

Doubts were first expressed, however, about several detailed points on the drafting of the Bill by Department of Transport lawyers. In their initial reaction, they were unkind enough to say that the word "grass" might be roast beef to litigators. Whether grass can be roast beef to the Department of Transport or anyone else I do not know, but they raised several detailed points that caused much difficulty to those who drafted the Bill.

That caused the working party to reconsider the issue with the experienced draftsmen who had framed the Bill and to take further technical advice from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the National Farmers

Union on how grass might be defined. It considered many possibilities, but, as I do not want to prolong the debate, I will not go into them. Suffice it to say, briefly, that it considered the definition of grass in previous Acts of Parliament, such as the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and in common agricultural policy set-aside procedures.

The working party found two problems, the first of which is technical. The crops that must be kept clear of rights of way must include cereal crops—wheat, oats, barley and the like. The difficulty is that, technically, or botanically at least, certain cereals—wheat, barley and oats, for example—are also classified as a grass. It might have been possible for a clever lawyer to argue that a crop growing on a right of way was perfectly legal and permissible, however inconvenient it might be to path users. That is why the amendment is so important. If their Lordships had not spotted the problem, it might have been possible to drive a coach and horses through the provisions of the Bill. That is why we must briefly discuss it.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): I must declare an interest, because, as a farmer, I am growing oats and vetches for silage, and it might be difficult to define how the amendment would apply to them. If there are difficulties with cereal crops grown for silage, could not they be overcome if the so-called problem crops to which my hon. Friend referred—rye, oats, wheat, maize, barley and the like—were defined in the amendment? If they were set out in statute, it might overcome the difficulty and prevent those of us who earn a paltry living by farming from running foul of the law.

11.15 am

Mr. Leigh: That is an important intervention; my hon. Friend speaks from personal experience. I rang the executors of Sir Joseph Nickerson, which is one of the leading seed companies in the country and is my constituent. If I wanted to waste time, which I do not, I could go through an enormous list of varieties of winter wheat, winter barley and spring barley. I have the set-aside procedures and could read out all the crops that are listed.

My hon. Friend's suggestion would not have worked because the schedule to the Act would have had to be so long that it would be unworkable. I am trying to go through this carefully, step by step, but if my hon. Friend is patient I shall explain that, having rejected the schedule setting out what is or is not a grass, and having gone through those difficult matters botanically, we have found another way of proceeding. I hope that at the end of my brief explanation the House will be satisfied about these technical but important matters.

As I said, the problem could have caused much confusion in the courts, and it has been made more difficult by the great advance in recent years in plant breeding. A range of cereal crops, many of which, botanically, are considered as grasses, have come on to the market.

The second problem is a practical one—to achieve a definition of grass that will not only be satisfactory for the statute book and understood by the courts but can be understood and applied by the farmer and the rights of way officer. The working party has striven hard to make the Bill as clear and straightforward as possible, and the essence of the Bill is that it must be easily understood. The working party was keen to ensure that the rights of way officer should not have to be a qualified agronomist or have a degree in botany to work out whether the law was being broken. He must be able to do so at any stage of the crop, or at least as soon as it begins to inconvenience users of the right of way. That goes to the heart of the Bill and I reassure farmers that they need not worry about a crop growing on a path; they need to worry when it becomes inconvenient to users of the path. One should not have to wait until the crop is matured to be able to see what it is. The farmer needs a straightforward, simple definition of what he can or cannot grow on a right of way. It is no good expecting him to refer to a long technical list of botanical species and sub-species or different strains to decide whether he is keeping within the law.

The working party rejected as impractical the idea of identifying individual species or strains, as identified in some Acts or Common Market regulations. Its draftsmen produced a simple—I am coming to the question that my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) asked—and straightforward definition that a particular crop shall be treated as grass—and these are the words that were in the Bill before it went to the other place—

"if, and only if, it is of a variety or mixture commonly used for pasture, silage or haymaking, whether or not it is intended for such a use in that case."

That seemed to satisfy everyone. The Government's parliamentary draftsmen, the lawyers, even the lawyers of the Department of Transport who had caused so much trouble earlier, the Department of the Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the NFU, the Country Landowners Association and the ramblers were all satisfied with what seemed to be a reasonable way of defining the problem.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): My hon. Friend is my next-door neighbour and represents a large rural agricultural constituency, where probably more cereals are grown than anywhere else in the country. Is he aware that the definition of grass in the Bill, at least when I last heard it, mentioned silage? Is he aware that silage can be made from cereals? Is not that a problem?

Mr. Leigh: My hon. Friend makes a fair point. If he will be patient for a moment, I shall deal with the issue of cereals being used for silage, which is a relatively modern procedure. This point also goes to the heart of the Lords amendments.

The amendment was one of a series that were designed to add clarity to the Bill and which both sides of the Committee were pleased to accept. The long experience and wise counsels in the other place, which are so valuable to us, especially on countryside matters, came into play in this issue. The Earl of Radnor, from his long experience of farming and the countryside, noticed what no one else had noticed, but which my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) has already noticed—in the past, certain cereals have been grown for silage. At once it was possible to see that there was a gaping hole in the middle of the Bill. Perhaps the Earl of Radnor had in mind also the rapid and continuing development of new strains and species. He was concerned that the words in the Bill could still lead to legal arguments, which we are all trying hard to avoid.

Raising the point in this way encouraged the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to look at the problem again on behalf of the working party. It found that,

[Mr. Leigh]

although oats were once grown widely for silage, that practice is currently restricted to a few hundred acres in Scotland. As the Bill applies only to England and Wales and as no cereals are grown for this purpose in England and Wales, the Department's initial advice was that any claim that cereals were commonly grown for silage would be unlikely to succeed.

At this point, therefore, it seemed that their Lordships' fears were ungrounded and that the amendment was not necessary. But it was then realised that failed cereal crops could sometimes be used as pasture or be fed to livestock while they were still green. That might be the case with, for example, a crop that had been damaged by frost or had failed to ripen. Occasionally a farmer might run short of feed and want to use a growing cereal crop as emergency pasture.

In the light of all this, everyone realised at that stage that the Earl of Radnor's amendment was a valuable and important addition to the Bill. It will close this potentially troublesome loophole by excluding any cereal crop from the definition of "grass". It does so regardless of arguments about botanical species or strains, with all the difficulties that I have described to my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside, and it clearly sets out what a crop will be grown and used for.

Unfortunately a further difficulty arose, for which I must apologise. The parliamentary draftsmen were not entirely satisfied with the words chosen by the Earl of Radnor to frame his amendment and preferred their own words. Throughout the Bill's passage, we have repeatedly come up against parliamentary and departmental draftsmen and we have always given in to their demands, just as we have done today. The difficulty led to a Government amendment to an amendment on Report in the other place.

I have gone through the story logically step by step and am now coming to what I hope will be a happy ending. The amendment is a small but valuable addition to the Bill.

Mr. Colvin: I thought that my hon. Friend was coming to a point that he has not yet covered. Although he has dealt with grass and cereals in the countryside, he has not covered another crop. I have a crop of peas in at the moment, mixed with oats and vegetables. Would a pea crop be adequately covered by the Bill? I bring my hon. Friend back again to the possibility of having a schedule. It would be cumbersome, but it would leave the matter beyond doubt, as it would set out precisely what crops were covered and what were not. What about peas?

Mr. Leigh: That is an interesting point. At about half-past eleven last night, I asked myself that question when an officer of the Countryside Commission and I were discussing how we could get the Bill through today. He told me that he was satisfied that the Bill covered all crops, whether they are soft root crops, peas or beans. The Countryside Commission was anxious that the Bill should be passed, and it is satisfied that these matters are covered.

Although sometimes the House has a reputation for shouting party political abuse, it comes out best on this type of issue. There is all-party support on this technical and complicated Bill. There have been hundreds of hours of detailed scrutiny by parliamentary draftsmen. Thanks to the efforts of my noble Friend Lord Kimball, the Earl of Radnor, members of the Labour party, the Countryside Commission, the NFU, the CLA and Conservative Members, and provided the House agrees to the Lords amendments, the Bill will be right, will work and will be a major benefit to the 17 million people who every year walk through the countryside.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): I follow my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh), who said that he hoped that the Lords amendments would lead to a happy ending, by expressing a small measure of doubt. As he knows, the Bill is supported by both sides of the House, and I have expressed my support for it in the past. My concern, as on the previous occasion when I spoke, relates to the fact that the Bill must be not only enforceable by farmers and countryside officers, who can be presumed to have the detailed technical knowledge necessary to enforce its provisions, but immediately obvious to ordinary members of the public, like the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) and myself—two keen ramblers. People must be able to see clearly when the Bill's provisions are breached and when they are not. I have severe doubts whether the amendment as drafted, without a schedule, will make the Bill more easily enforceable.

Without a schedule, we have to fall back on whether a path, bridleway or road is being encroached upon by a crop of cereals or by grass. I am not sure that the definition will be obvious to the average rambler like me or even to the average amateur botanist. My first query is directed to either my hon. Friend the Minister or my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle: in the absence of a schedule, is there in statute or case law a definition of "cereal" which could be used instantly without recourse to further legislation?

Mr. Leigh: I shall try to answer my hon. Friend's question. I understand his anxiety. I am sure that he will accept, however, that it would have been absurd to have drafted the Bill in such a way as to make it illegal for a farmer to grow grass across a right of way.

Mr. Stern *indicated assent.*

Mr. Leigh: My hon. Friend accepts that point. One must let the grass grow. Having accepted that, one is up against the second problem—botanically, many cereals are grasses. We all know that cereal crops are a major disincentive to walkers, and this is the key point of the Bill. My hon. Friend heard me refer to the many strains of cereals that exist and the many new strains that are being developed. I hope that he accepts that, as a matter of common sense, we have got the Bill about right. The farmer will understand that he can grow grass on a right of way, provided that it is not a cereal. That is a common-sense way forward. I believe that he can make the legislation stick.

Mr. Stern: I accept my hon. Friend's point. The majority of farmers who wish to stay within the confines of the Bill will understand it. My point relates to the small minority of farmers who, as in the past, do not necessarily wish to stay within the strict confines of the law and those people who are not farmers, and presumably do not have the technical knowledge to recognise a cereal crop. Those who feel that the law is being encroached upon will not immediately be able to say, "I must report this offence to the highways authority, because it involves encroachment

by grass"; or, "This is an offence that I must report to the Countryside Commission, because we are dealing with encroachment by cereals"; or, "This is not an offence."

11.30 am

As I explained to my hon. Friend on a previous occasion, I am concerned that although we must accept —as he does and, as he knows, I do—that the vast majority of people who use the countryside will do so with good will and in the spirit of the legislation, which I hope reaches the statute book today, we must remember the areas where friction has arisen. In that connection, we must question whether the legal definition that we are using in the Bill will aid the resolution of problems that have arisen as a result of that friction.

I must go more deeply into why I am worried by the absence of a definition of cereals. I have had the good fortune to refer to what I understand to be the standard work on British grasses. In "Grasses" by Mr. C. E. Hubbard, I find that there are eight different groups of grasses which are commonly referred to as cereals.

I will not go through all the groups because I am conscious of the need to make progress today. But I shall refer to the three groups which are commonly referred to under the heading of oats, and I hope hon. Members will forgive me if I refer to them also by their Latin definitions, not least because the debate will be unintelligible to botanists without mention of those definitions.

That group of oats is known as the avenas. The three groups of avena which are commonly referred to as cereals are the avena-strigosa, which is the bristle or small oat; the avena sativa, which is the common oat and the one most frequently seen; and the avena byzantina—not often seen in this country—which is the red or Algerian oat. None of those groups includes perhaps one of the commonest plants in the countryside, the avena fatua, which is the common wild oat.

So we immediately have the difficulty that even by basic botanical definition, there are four similar plants, three of which are cereals and one of which is not. When we consider the structure of those plants, the position to anyone other than a farmer or acknowledged botanist becomes even more confusing because all four plants are annuals, all four can grow to about 100 cm high and all four have culms—for the benefit of non-botanists I should explain that the culm is the overall structure of the seed of the plant which can be tufted or solitary, erect or bent and can contain three to five nodes.

I trust that my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle appreciates that a non-botanist, walking along a path which has been encroached on by something which even to a non-botanist is recognised as a member of the oat family, whether wild or cultivated, will have some difficulty knowing whether an offence has been committed and, if it has, to whom to complain. If the encroachment is by cereal oats, my hon. Friend may say that it will be obvious because the rambler might see the cereal oats stretching for some distance, but where a field has been left to pasture and it has been seeded——

Mr. Leigh: I appreciate that my hon. Friend is making a serious point and, while I cannot claim to be a botanist, I intervene because I think that I have the answer to his question. The Lords amendment would make the provision read:

"For the purposes of the application of sub-section (1) above in the case of a particular crop, the crop shall be treated as grass if, and only if . . . it is a variety commonly used for pasture, silage or haymaking, and . . . it is not a cereal crop."

In other words, the oats about which my hon. Friend is speaking must meet those two tests. But the problem he raises would be addressed not simply by that provision, for they might not meet those tests. The difficulty would be addressed by the point I made in my initial remarks, when I explained that when the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food did its reasearch, it found that although it may have been true that oats were once widely grown for silage, that practice is currently restricted to a few hundred acres in the far western islands of Scotland, and the Bill will apply only to England and Wales. So my hon. Friend's point about oats, although well made, should not be a problem in England and Wales, where the Bill will apply.

Mr. Stern: I take my hon. Friend's point, but I fear that he has not taken mine. I accept that when it comes to enforcing the legislation, as a result of the expert advice which my hon. Friend just cited, the enforcement authority may be clear that we are dealing with encroachment by a grass, the common wild oat, or by a crop—any of the other versions of avena to which I referred.

The trouble is that by the time we have reached that stage we shall be several steps down the road. We do not have, as a result of the Lords amendment, a list of the different botanical varieties of oat available to the Countryside Commission and the highways authority so that, on receipt of a complaint from, say, myself as a rambler, the highways authority will immediately be able to say that it is a particular type——

Mr. Leigh: I interrupt my hon. Friend again because I think I can help him overcome that problem. The officers of the Countryside Commission are listening to the debate. They are drawing up a code of practice which will be sent to every farmer in the country. Would it help my hon. Friend if I said that after the Bill becomes an Act we can do some work on the subject and make sure that clear guidance is given to farmers so that the problem is addressed?

Mr. Stern: My hon. Friend is going a long way towards meeting my objection, but if such guidance is to be drawn up, it should be made more widely available than just to farmers. As I told my hon. Friend on a previous occasion, difficulties have occurred not with the vast majority of farmers but with the few who are prepared to see highways, bridleways and paths misused and who in the past have not shown themselves to be particularly concerned with infringements of highways and byways. If such guidance is drawn up, it should be made available not only to every farmer but to the Ramblers Association for dissemination among its branches, to local botanical societies for dissemination among their members and to all organisations through which users of the countryside might have access to the information. By disseminating the information to farmers my hon. Friend is going some way to meeting the problem, but he should go further.

Mr. Leigh: I cannot give an undertaking on behalf of the Countryside Commission, but I undertake to convey my hon. Friend's fears to that body. I agree that if this important measure is to work, the widest possible

[Mr. Leigh]

dissemination of the points in question should be made to all interested organisations. So I give my hon. Friend the undertaking he seeks.

Mr. Stern: I am grateful to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Soames: I support the view of my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern), and I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) will honour the undertaking that he has given. But in view of the extreme lack of credibility in the Countryside Commission among those who have knowledge of, or dealings with, the countryside, may I ask my hon. Friend to agree to discuss with my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle the issue of what is the right body to produce the material for dissemination? By that means we shall ensure that its presentation is entirely honourable and factual.

Mr. Stern: I should be only too happy to accede to that request and to become involved in discussions of that nature with my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle. Given the good will that exists generally for the Bill among hon. Members in all parts of the House, I hope that such discussions could involve not just me but, for example, the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish, with his well-known concern for the ramblers' organisations, and other hon. Members who have expressed interest in the subject.

At present, there is a general understanding of what the Bill means by a "cereal", at least among farmers and their organisations. However, we are dealing with one of the fastest-changing sectors of agronomy in this country and in the western world. Therefore, I hope that in making the arrangements to provide regular information to farmers and other organisations about the definition of a cereal as it now appears in the Bill, the Countryside Commission and other organisations will undertake regularly to review the nature of their advice so that all new varieties of cereal are compared with similar grasses and there is no possibility of the position being changed by legislation or litigation in four or five years' time. By that time, as I am sure farmers present will agree, there may be an entirely different major cereal crop in this country.

Mr. Soames: My hon. Friend will recall that, during his excellent speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) mentioned set-aside policies. I believe that my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) is pursuing an important point because the imperative of the set-aside policy may lead to the sort of circumstances that he mentioned. That makes it even more pressing for my hon. Friend the Minister to state at length how the Government intend to frame the legislation.

Mr. Stern: I entirely accept my hon. Friend's point.

I accept the spirit of the amendment, but I remain concerned about the availability of information to enable the amendment to be enforced. I readily accept the undertaking of my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) to involve non-farming organisations as widely as possible in the drawing up of the definitions and their dissemination to make the clause enforceable.

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): I wish to make two or three points, and to raise a possible inconsistency, a possible difficulty and a matter brought to my attention by a group of constituents. I am a great supporter of the Bill and spoke in support of it on Second Reading. The Bill states that crops should not encroach on a highway to reduce its apparent width, which means that tall crops such as rape should be cut back by farmers should they grow over the right of way. That does not apply to grass, but, as we heard earlier, cereals are grasses and the amendment is designed to deal with that.

There is an inconsistency, because cereals will have to be cut back to provide a clear right of way, but not grass. A crop of grass such as cocksfoot has a growing habit similar to that of wheat or barley. It grows to much the same height and tends to hang over more than wheat and barley, yet the cereals will have to be cut back, but the cocksfoot will not.

I raise the second difficulty not to be nit-picking, but because it seems best to raise such points and receive an answer to them in this place. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) said, if, growing among a field of cocksfoot there are wild oats, are they defined as grass or cereal? I do not know. If the wild oats among the cocksfoot overhang the path, are they to be treated as grass or cereal?

My final point was raised with me by a group of constituents who enjoy walking in the country.

11.45 am

Mr. Leigh: We know that my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) has professional expertise in this matter, and he makes a fair point. However, the basis of the Bill is compromise. It was agreed that the Bill would not apply to grasses used for silage or hay making. If we were to try to address the problem as my hon. Friend seeks, the agreement on which the Bill is based —we all know that private Bills go through with agreement—would have fallen down. My hon. Friend was making a fair point, but I hope that he will accept that we had to make a rough compromise, which is what we have done.

Mr. Summerson: I appreciate the work that my hon.Friend has done on the Bill, and I realise that it involves a delicate compromise between various groups of interests. In the light of what he has said, I am satisfied on that point.

A group of my constituents have raised an unusual point. They told me that, when they go for walks in the country, they actually enjoy finding difficulties and obstructions on the paths. They say that when they go for walks around the constituency and in towns and cities, everything is even and easily laid out for them, so they simply walk along the pavements, which is no challenge to them. When they get into the country, they enjoy it if they have some difficulty in getting from A to B, and have to clamber over a tree trunk that has fallen over the path. They say that they carry wire cutters and if they come to a strand of barbed wire they take the greatest pleasure in snipping it so that when they get home they feel that they have accomplished something. Therefore, it seems that the Bill, although welcome——

Mr. Leigh: I refer my hon. Friend to column 1181 of *Hansard*, 23 February 1990 where, on Second Reading I

referred to the very point he makes and mentioned the 1988 Countryside Commission survey, carried out by 1,000 volunteers. I said:

"They discovered that on a typical two-mile walk along the 140,000 mile footpath network there was a two in three chance of meeting an obstacle . . . Impenetrable vegetation or hedges or fences across a footpath can be dealt with by existing legislation. The most important problem, which occurs repeatedly in the surveys, is the ploughing up and cropping of footpaths."—[*Official Report*, 23 February 1990; Vol. 47, c. 1181.]

They found that, contrary to what my hon. Friend says about some people liking to wade through knee or waist-high cereals, most people do not like doing so. The problem addressed by the Bill is the single greatest disincentive to the enjoyment of the 17 million people who wish to walk in the countryside every year.

Mr. Summerson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I have raised with him the point that my constituents asked me to, he has given me an answer that I will happily relay to them. I am sure that what he says is right and the vast majority of people would much rather not meet with obstacles. I thank him for the fair-minded way in which he has answered my point.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory): Rights of way are notoriously complex and arouse strong emotions and argument. Even the botany underlying some of the issues is far from straightforward, as we have heard this morning. It is to the credit of my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) that he has threaded his way through the complexities and produced legislation that commands almost universal assent.

More than 40 amendments were accepted in Committee. They were mostly technical amendments, clarifying the Bill's intention. Taken together, they demonstrate the almost overriding importance of ensuring that the Bill is practical, workable and immediately understandable. It was because the Highways Act 1980 was widely misunderstood, and landowners, local authorities and path users had difficulty in interpreting some of its provisions, that the need for this legislation became so apparent.

The failure to restore paths properly is probably the major cause of dispute and misunderstanding between landowners and path users. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) that a walk in the countryside should be something of an adventure, and perhaps our paths and rights of way should not always be clinical and straightforward. But I think that all hon. Members agree that blocked paths that are impossible to traverse are against everyone's interests. Not everyone is as athletic as my hon. Friend. We want the countryside to be enjoyed by all people, old or young, athletic or less so.

It is right that the Bill should not merely clarify the law but ensure that our marvellous network of footpaths—about 140,000 miles of them are kept open and, as far as possible, free of obstruction.

We have been lucky that the Bill received such detailed and expert scrutiny in another place. I pay tribute to the work of Lord Kimball, and perhaps it is also appropriate to remind the House of the important role played by the rights of way review committee, chaired by my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst).

The Bill recognises that pasture land already provides a suitable surface for walking and riding. One of the pleasures of the countryside is walking through crops of grass—it is one of the reasons why people go into the country—but walking through cereal crops is a different matter. Riders' and walkers' confidence is diminished if they are faced with a field of oats or barley across which there is no visible path. That is why the Bill requires that such a path be kept clear of crops other than grass, and provides a definition of grass.

The Bill was drawn up as widely as possible to cover grass mixtures of a type commonly grown for pasture, silage or hay-making. Certainly, to the layman's eyes, that definition excludes cereals, which are not commonly grown as silage. My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) who as always, has done his homework, mentioned the possibility of different species of barley causing problems. I draw his attention to the fact that oats are not merely botanically, but are commonly considered to be, cereals and would therefore have to be removed under the provisions of the Bill. He also mentioned wild oats, which are not botanically classified as cereals. Page 5 of the Bill makes it clear that grass will be permitted on the footpath only if it is commonly used for pasture, silage or hay-making. Wild oats, which are chiefly a weed, would not fall into that definition, and would therefore require to be removed under the provisions of the Bill.

Mr. Stern: I am not sure that my hon. Friend understands the point that I was trying to make. I agree that wild oats are not classified as a cereal, and so I assume that, under the Bill, they will be treated not as a cereal but as a weed. My point was that, botanically, wild oats are so similar to oats treated as cereals that problems of description and identification could readily arise unless clear guidance were given to as many countryside users as possible.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Whether wild oats are classified as a cereal or as a weed is not important in practical terms, because under both definitions they will require removal.

My hon. Friends the Members for Bristol, North-West and for Gainsborough and Horncastle raised the question of guidance to educate the public about their rights under the Bill. I draw hon. Members' attention to the rights of way review committee's intention to draw up detailed notes for guidance, which will perhaps—it is up to the committee—go into the matters raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West. It is intended that those notes for guidance will be distributed to every farmer and local authority in England and Wales, and possibly more widely, through groups such as the Ramblers Association which are anxious to improve access to the countryside.

The explanatory and educative function of the rights of way review committee will help to remove any lingering uncertainties or scope for misinterpretations, as well as ensuring that the Bill is a success in practice as well as in theory.

The Bill represents a hard won and possibly unique consensus between users and landowners. Some disbelief was expressed in another place that the National Farmers Union had agreed to a rights of way Bill, but I confirm that it has done so, and that it has been extremely supportive throughout the passage of the legislation. Along with the

[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory]

Ramblers Association, the British Horse Society, local authority associations and many other groups, the NFU hopes that the Bill will help to remove the uncertainties and misunderstandings that have bedevilled the issue in the past.

Mr. Soames: I must mention a serious matter which relates to the amendment and to the legislation which will flow from it. Does my hon. Friend agree that it is not surprising that the NFU should wish to co-operate because no one, least of all farmers, seeks to deny the public access to land? But access must be responsible access. What worry the farming and countryside communities are the dreadful abuses heaped upon the countryside by those who use it.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I agree with my hon. Friend that rights carry obligations. I hope that the public will use the right of way network for recreation, but will understand that their rights carry duties and obligations to respect the countryside, to shut gates after them, not to throw litter down or to leave waste materials littering the countryside. I also agree with the idea behind my hon. Friend's intervention—that the rights of way network provides a marvellous means of reconciling potentially conflicting pressures. Of course there are difficulties—the public may interfere with farm practices—but the rights of way network provides a means of avoiding such conflicts.

Mr. Soames: Does my hon. Friend agree that in such cases, when farmers and other landowners are able to get together with people who wish to use the countryside for recreation, they may be able to work out extensions to the footpath network which will be of great advantage to both sides?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My hon. Friend is clearly acquainted with the system whereby permissive rights of way can be negotiated or granted by landowners, in addition to the traditional rights of way network. That is an encouraging way forward. I urge landowners and farmers to work where possible with local authorities and access organisations so that, where appropriate, they can extend the marvellous rights-of-way network which we already enjoy. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle on piloting his Bill thus far. It is now at the last hurdle. It is called the Rights of Way Bill but I anticipate that the legislation will be known as the Leigh Act.

12 noon

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): I shall be brief because the House wishes to attend to other important business. The Bill is as important as the Protection of Badger Setts Bill which we hope to reach later. The Opposition are as anxious as the Countryside Commission, the working party and the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) to see the Bill on the statute book. However, we regret that the Government have not come forward with comprehensive proposals of the type that were set out in the last Conservative party manifesto. It was made clear in our debate on Wednesday that although such legislation might be near it is still some way off. We need far-reaching and comprehensive legislation on the countryside which will incorporate the Bill and other measures about access.

The interests of path users are not always as well represented in the other place as they could be. The Second Reading debate showed that the Opposition were worried that the views of the land owning lobby and its nervousness about public rights of way were again about to make their influence felt. That view was expressed by the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames).

I hope that the Bill will overcome its last hurdle. The strong support for the Bill from the National Farmers Union, the Country Landowners Association and ramblers has no doubt helped its progress. I pay tribute not only to the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle but to my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) who played a large part in helping the Bill over its many hurdles. Even though the Bill has only two helpful amendments its progress thus far is a significant achievement.

The hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle fully explained why it is important for the section of the Bill that deals with crops to be as clear as possible. I hope that subsequent discussions will clarify that matter and that the regulations and code of conduct will make such clarification widely available. Neither the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle nor the Minister mentioned the importance of the role of local authorities, in enforcing the new law. The Government must make sure that authorities have the modest resources that are needed to do that. This week discussions took place with the Secretary of State for the Environment about the standard spending assessments and the poll tax. Those matters will place intolerable burdens upon local authorities and we doubt whether the resources that they need will be available.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady knows that such matters do not arise from the Lords amendments.

Ms. Walley: Careful consideration of the Lords amendments shows that local authorities will have to make sure that the excellent measures in the amendments will work. However, those authorities have had curbs placed on their finances. Many make a valiant effort to enforce the law, but their achievements will be limited.

In areas where land-owning and farming interests dominate, local authorities could find a ready excuse for doing nothing and we want to avoid that. Walkers, riders and the voluntary groups to which they belong have an important role to play in encouraging farmers to comply with the new law as a matter of course. We are confident that the Ramblers Association and other such organisations will play that role.

New section 137A of the 1980 Act is one of the sections under which a prosecution can be brought by an individual or group or local authority. That is of great importance to such bodies, not only because of its provisions about crops but because it gives them the power to enforce the provisions and that is crucial. The clarification that is made by the two amendments and the closure of a potential loophole will be as welcome and useful to path

users as to local authorities and farmers. For that additional reason, we welcome the amendments and hope that the final hurdle can now be overcome.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendment agreed to.

Horses (Protective Headgear for Young Riders) Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Clause 2

REGULATIONS

Lords amendment No. 1, in page 2, line 11, at end insert—

"(1A) Before making any regulations under this section the Secretary of State shall consult such representative organisations as he thinks fit."

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

I thank Lady Masham of Ilton for the eloquent way in which she steered the Bill through the other place. Lady Masham lost her ability to walk in a point-to-point accident 30 years ago and since then she has been confined to a wheelchair. She breeds beautiful highland ponies and runs a fine riding establishment. No one could be better equipped to understand the need for a Bill to protect the heads of young riders, too many of whom have been killed or maimed in appalling accidents. People of all ages have suffered from such accidents, but it is the young whom the Bill seeks to protect.

The three amendments introduced on my behalf by Lady Masham were accepted and do much to improve the Bill. The first amendment requires the Secretary of State for Transport to consult widely before making regulations to enforce the wearing of hard hats. Hon. Members will recall that my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) moved a similar amendment on Report on 27 April. My hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic and I assured him at that time that there was every intention to consult widely and that no such amendment was necessary. However, on reflection the Department of Transport felt that the amendment was necessary to ensure the commitment in the Bill and that the wording as printed was the most desirable.

It is more than possible that the Sikh community will want to be consulted about protective headgear for young Sikhs when riding. I do not have expert knowledge, but I accept that it is likely, indeed almost certain, that Sikh headgear is as strong as anything that we can provide. That is shown by the fact that such headgear is accepted as legitimate on building sites.

The Pony Club would naturally expect to be consulted as the organisation which represents children who ride and those who do not. I know that the Pony Club has great expertise and exercises care to ensure that children who ride are properly protected and ride in as safe a manner as can be achieved in a sport which is accepted by those of us who ride as the most dangerous in the world. It is certainly the most exhilarating and the most marvellous sport in the world. The Pony Club will have proposals to put forward, as I am sure will the British Horse Society which strongly supports the Bill. I am an elected member of the council of that society and for a long time worked with the society on the preparation of the Bill.

I was first elected to the council of the British Horse Society in 1973 on the nomination of the late Dorian Williams, who was a marvellous man, and Field Marshall Lord Gerald Templar, a great man who cleared Malaya of

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Communists at a time of great difficulties. I sat on the council of the British Horse Society and have been regularly re-elected ever since. The last time that I was re-elected was a few days ago. [HON. MEMBERS: "hear hear".] I am grateful to my hon. Friends.

The British Standards Institution would also be an obvious body to consult. I hope that it will not too regularly introduce new standards. The British Standards Institution has achieved a good safety helmet for children in British Standard 4472 and a good riding hat 6473. I hope that those pieces of protective headgear if properly worn and done up in the correct manner will be satisfactory.

Every time that a parent, a child or anyone buys a new piece of headgear for riding, protective or otherwise, it is an expensive operation. It would not be right constantly to put individuals and parents to that expense. We always want the safest possible protective headgear for children and others but people should not be forced to buy new headgear too often.

It would be right for the Department of Transport to consult maintained schools and schools for disabled children where riding is on the curriculum. That is worth thinking about. I founded in 1964 an organisation called the London schools curriculum riding scheme, which enabled children in ordinary maintained schools and special schools for the disabled to ride. Every kind of disabled child, including autistic, delicate, physically disabled and mentally disabled children can ride into my scheme. Such children often have virtually nothing else in their lives and obtain such pleasure and joy from their riding that we should do nothing to make it more difficult for them to have that splendid games option.

My scheme applied to schools in inner London only. It was financed by the former London county council and the Inner London education authority—to their great credit in each case. The riding and any headgear had to be paid for out of public funds. Headgear had to be in accordance with British Standards Institution recommendations so that children were as protected as possible. I would expect the Department of Transport to consult maintained and independent schools, and certainly special schools.

There may be doubt in some hon. Members' minds about my scheme, under which hundreds of thousands of children in the city of London learned to ride. Many such children lived in high-rise flats where they had no other access to animals. They were not even allowed to keep mice, dogs or cats. The London borough of Lewisham, which has taken over control of education in the borough, confirmed this week that riding will continue at Sedgehill school where I was deputy headmaster for seven years and which I ran for a period. It is a large school of 2,000 pupils. The decision to allow riding to continue is most enlightened. The borough will also ensure that riding continues in special schools where it is already provided. It would be well to consult such boroughs. Westminster city council is making favourable noises about continuing my scheme, so there is every reason to consult schools which provide riding, including special schools.

There is no doubt that the widest possible consultation will be undertaken by the Department of Transport before the Bill is enacted, I hope, in the autumn. Consultation is a prerequisite to the enforcement of the Bill. I commend the amendment to the House.

12.15 pm

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): When my hon. Friend first introduced his Bill I was not happy with the form that it took. However, he has made all sorts of alterations and it is now in a far more acceptable form. I wish him well with it.

The Bill will make it an offence for an adult capable of stopping a child from doing so, causing or permitting that child to ride a horse without wearing protective headgear. I am sure that "adult", "capable" and "stopping" have all been defined, but if I, for example, saw a child without protective headgear on a horse, could it be said that I was capable of stopping that child riding?

We are dealing with children riding horses. I know that "horses" has been defined. I hope that it will not be taken as read that children will be allowed to ride foals, even with protective headgear. That would not be kind to the foal. After all, children vary in size, height and weight. It would be a shame to allow any child to ride a foal.

Mr. Harry Greenway: I can advise my hon. Friend that that important point will be covered on the second amendment. There was a long and good debate in another place on permitting a child to ride without wearing protective headgear. The adult who owns the horse or is in charge of the horse is required to use best endeavours to see that the child wears protective headgear on the road.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Perhaps I could make it clear, in case there is any misunderstanding, that, unlike in earlier debates on other Bills, we are required to take the three amendments separately. There will be separate debates.

Mr. Summerson: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I was about to say that I would not be capable of stopping a child on a horse because I am allergic to horses I can not go within half a mile of one without sneezing, so that might preclude me.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for answering that point. That was all I wanted to raise.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): The amendment is important. When the Bill was first introduced it was not intended that formal consultation should go ahead. Everyone assumed that those affected would be consulted. It was wise of my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) to accept the advice of my hon. Friend the Minister that consultation should be formalised.

I wish to make a few remarks about the nature of headgear which should be put firmly at the top of the agenda for consultation. I am the sponsor of another private Member's Bill that deals with safety—the Safety in Children's Playgrounds Bill. One of our problems is that it is not always entirely clear to local authorities which equipment is safe and which is not. They are not accustomed to the relevant British standards.

In pursuing the logic that I am seeking to set out and advance in my own Bill, I have sought to draw on my experience in buying car seats for my children. I have no knowledge of the construction of child seats and do not know what is safe and what is not. I recognise, however,

that if something complies with a standard of the British Standards Institution and carries the BSI's kite mark I can have confidence in the construction of the seat.

There is some confusion about what is safe headgear and what is not. British standard 6473 of 1984 relates to protective hats for horse and pony riders. Its predecessor was British standard 3686. The hats that come within the terms of that standard can still be worn, depending on their age and condition. There is also British standard 4472 of 1969, which relates to protective skull caps for jockeys. British standard 6863 sets out specifications for cycle helmets. Some parents will be confused and will not know whether they have to buy two different sorts of hat. Those who represent their views will want to be consulted. Users will want to know whether they must buy different types of hat. I am certain that all responsible parents would want to buy the right sort of hat for a child who engages in horse riding. They will want to know that the hat that they are buying is safe. It is easy to buy something in the belief that it is safe only to learn later that it is not. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to give some assurances about safety and consultation.

Mr. Harry Greenway: My hon. Friend is making an interesting contribution to the debate. It would be desirable, if it could be achieved, to have protective headgear for children that could be used for riding horses and ponies and for cycling. I think that jockeys' helmets that come within British standard 4472 would be safe for cyclists. I am not so sure that current cyclists' helmets would be safe for horse riders. I shall listen with interest to the response of my hon. Friend the Minister.

Mr. Hughes: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his intervention. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will use the opportunity that will be provided by consultation to put some pressure upon the British Standards Institution. In a market where sales will be relatively few and in which the profit for the institution in undertaking testing will be relatively small, there may be a reluctance to help companies move towards a position where they can use the kite mark. As I have said, I believe that the kite mark is essential in giving guidance to parents who are purchasing headgear for their children. It is vital that pressure is put on the institution. I hope that we shall have easily understood markings of the kite mark sort to guide parents.

It is important that we consult religious groups that may wish to have exemptions introduced. The Government have an excellent record of helping Sikhs to be exempt from certain requirements when their religion does not allow them to take the same safety measures as others. There was an enormous row over some years about motor cycle helmets and Sikhs. In the end, the Government wisely agreed that Sikhs would not be obliged to comply with that requirement.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): Is my hon. Friend aware that the Government's decision to give way on that issue was admired and agreed with by very many people? Does my hon. Friend agree that Sikhs had a fearsome and immensely courageous reputation during the second world war? They never went into battle with any form of head gear apart from their turbans and——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is difficult to see any connection between the hon. Gentleman's intervention and the Lords amendment.

Mr. Hughes: I shall respond to only part of my hon. Friend's intervention. He has made the valid point that the campaign which the Sikhs mounted and their bravery shows that they put their religion much higher than their personal safety.

The Government have acted once again on behalf of Sikh believers in respect of regulations for the wearing of hard hats on building sites. In the past few months they have changed the regulations while being mindful of the spin-off from that decision in terms of safety and insurance. Again, the Government acted extremely courageously and wisely in helping Sikhs, many of whom work on building sites, to be exempt from the regulations. I attended an enormous meeting in a temple at Southall and it was clear that those present were extremely grateful to the Government for what they had done.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway), who is my parliamentary neighbour, may be able to tell us how popular horse riding is among Sikh children. I have no knowledge of that.

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): It is clear that the hon. Gentleman was not listening when the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) introduced the amendment. He referred to Sikh children riding horses, Sikh headgear on building sites and Sikh headgear generally for horse riding. It seems that the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) is deliberately wasting the time of the House on a day when there are many other important Bills to consider. The hon. Member for Ealing, North has more than adequately dealt with the issue which he has raised.

Mr. Hughes: I have a long record of speaking on these issues. I was one of those who led the campaign to persuade the Government to exempt Sikhs from wearing hard hats on building sites. I do not remember the hon. Gentleman ever saying anything about that subject. I do not know whether he has any Sikh believers in his constituency. I have a right to talk about these matters and to amplify the important issues about which my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North spoke.

Consultation is important and it will be regarded as especially important by Sikhs who are constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North and myself. I believe that a compromise can be arrived at that will not offend their religion or frustrate our important aim of seeking to protect children.

This is an important amendment to an important Bill. We must get things right. It is important that within the consultative framework it should be understood that we have the protection of our children in mind. That consideration must be put above all else. In doing so, we shall be doing an enormous amount within a relatively select area to improve the safety of our children. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North on the amendment.

12.30 pm

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): I rise to speak briefly in support of this eminently sensible amendment. I am concerned that the House spends so much time nannying people. The Bill is an example of nannyism gone mad. More people have accidents because of slipping in the bath

[Mrs. Teresa Gorman]

than falling off horses. Do we propose to introduce a Bill at some stage to advocate that people should wear helmets when they take a bath? Slipping in a hard iron bath and cracking one's head is a very dangerous thing to do—surely the state should take a line on that. In doing so, why not consult the representatives of all the organisations involved in the bathing business or those who take baths? I can think of an endless series of people to consult—we might even set up some little quangos for consultations and to investigate the accident levels.

I feel strongly that, before bringing forward this type of legislation, we should stop and think about the basic tenets of this Conservative Government which, historically, are different from those of other Conservative or Socialist Administrations because we eschew the nonsense of the nanny state and regulation for the sake of regulation.

I frequently visit Portugal on holiday where workmen work on scaffolding without wearing helmets. To the best of my knowledge, the accident rate there for serious head injuries is not any worse than that in this country. When we get round to trying to dictate to parents what their children should wear when they go for a trot on their ponies——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope that the hon. Lady is reading the same amendment that I am reading, which refers to the need to consult representative organisations before the making of regulations. The hon. Lady is a long way from that.

Mrs. Gorman: I believe that I am getting to the point which, in my view, is that the only representatives who should be consulted on such an issue are the parents of the children who will go horse riding. It is time that we left such decisions to the family concerned when it decides whether their children should take a ride on a horse.

Mr. Harry Greenway: I hope that my hon. Friend will concede that I am as firm a defender of freedom as she is. However, we are talking about a Bill which would apply only to under-14-year-olds. I hope that my hon. Friend will acknowledge that we have changed the provisions from applying to people of all ages. If my hon. Friend had seen the many children I have seen who have been maimed for life, shattered or even killed by falling from a horse on to a road and the distress that that has caused, I am sure that she would accept that the Bill is reasonable. In any case, 80 per cent. of children under 14 already wear protective headgear.

Mrs. Gorman: I thank my hon. Friend for that information. I am pleased to learn that most parents with children who go horse riding have apparently made that decision for themselves. I am concerned that we are seeking to make an offence of something that should be the choice of the individual concerned. A basic principle is at stake——

Mr. Robert G. Hughes *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The debate is now far wider than the scope of the amendments. I hope that we can return to amendment No. 1, which refers to the need to consult representative organisations prior to the Secretary of State making regulations. I have heard little about that so far from the hon. Lady.

Mrs. Gorman: Thank you for drawing my attention to that point, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

My point is that the only people concerned with making such a decision should be the families of the children who will go out on a horse. Other organisations, including the medical profession, may have a variety of opinions, but that point is secondary to the basic issue which is that the state should leave people to make such decisions for themselves. We in the House of Commons should not be wasting all this time on such material.

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Robert Atkins): I am delighted to be at the Dispatch Box for the second time this morning and, in doing so, to join my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) in recognising the importance of his Bill, and of the Lords amendments. If I may—*[Interruption.]* I am delighted that the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) has rejoined us. I know that he believes this issue to be as important as do my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North and others.

I should like to explain in a little more detail what the consultation will cover since I have been asked so to do. The regulations will cover any exemptions from the requirement to wear protective headgear on religious grounds or for medical reasons or in particular circumstances. I shall be consulting both religious groups, especially the Sikhs who have already been mentioned, and medical organisations. I shall also be consulting the Child Accident Prevention Trust and the Masters of Foxhounds Associations, plus various horse organisations, such as the British Horse Society which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North has said, have been following the passage of the Bill with interest—*[Interruption.]* I should be grateful if my hon. Friends could pay a little attention.

The regulations will also contain the required standard or standards of the hat to be worn and the manner in which it should be worn. At present there are two types of suitable protective hats conforming to British standard 6473: 1984 "Protective Hats for Horse and Pony Riders", the predecessor of which, BS 3686 is still worn and will be considered depending on age and condition, and BS 4472, which relates to protective skull caps for jockeys. These hats are already compulsory for jockeys under Jockey Club rules at its race meetings and at competitions and events organised by the Pony Club.

I shall have to decide whether any other hats are as safe as these, such as the pedal cycle helmet, BS 6863. The reason I would wish to consult on whether to include cycle helmets is that they appear to provide the same amount of protection, if not more than—for the side of the head, for example—as horse rider helmets. We are trying to encourage more children to wear cycle helmets. It would be unreasonable to expect parents to buy both a riding and a cycle helmet for their child if one hat would provide sufficient protection for both.

When the amendment was introduced in the other place Lord Monson said that it implied that consultation would be only with organisations, not individuals. I assure any hon. Members with similar fears that the consultation process will be the standard one, whereby a press release is made by the Department of Transport. Any member of the public will be able to telephone the Department and obtain a copy of the consultation document. Their ideas will be given all consideration.

I shall also consult individual doctors who have experience of dealing with head injuries arising from riding accidents. Lord Monson was also concerned that a publicity campaign would be needed. He suggested that, arguably, a publicity campaign would have been better than the Bill. The publicity that will surround the consultation period will be just part of the publicity; there will be additional publicity when the regulations are made. Part of the campaign will be to encourage those over 14 to wear protective headgear, and not just on the road. Part of the campaign will be to encourage pedal cyclists to wear protective helmets.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): The initial controversy that surrounded the Bill, because it applied to adults as well as to young people, has given my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) the publicity that he sought. I, too, am a member of the British Horse Society. I shall welcome the opportunity to discuss with interested parties, particularly the armed forces and those who enjoy riding and hacking, how important it is that the legislation should apply to young people rather than to adults. My hon. Friend will be the first to appreciate that there is a royal component to the consultations. Certain notables have avoided wearing protective headgear. That might have caused some difficulty. However, because of the way that the Bill is now drafted—on the principle that the way that the twig bends the tree will grow—I join in contratulating my hon. Friend on the way that he has carried out his consultations and on the fact that the Bill is now in a form that is truly acceptable to all.

Mr. Atkins: I am delighted, as ever, that my hon. Friend is pleased by what I have said.

I said earlier that I wanted to spare parents the double expense of buying a riding hat and a cycle helmet if one would so the same job. Some hon. Members may know that the use of cycle helmets is limited and therefore might think that it is unnecessary and a waste of time to worry about whether one helmet be substituted for the other. However, I shall be launching a campaign next spring to make all parents fully aware of the benefits of cycle helmets. That matter will be raised then.

I find it extraordinary to see some cycle racing competitors riding without helmets and some wearing helmets which appear not to conform to any recognised approved safety standard. The message to young cyclists is very poor and may explain why they are often reluctant to wear helmets which they think might make them look foolish. However, as my right hon. and noble Friend, Viscount Davidson said in the debate on the Second Reading of the Bill in another place, it is paradoxical that we can bring forward a measure such as this only when there is already general acceptance of its great benefits.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): My hon. Friend suggests that at the end of the consultation period cycle helmets might be thought to be suitable and could be used to meet the objectives of the Bill. However, he also said that cycle helmets do not conform to the necessary safety standards. Does not that undermine my hon. Friend's Bill? The Minister suggests that he wants to save parents the expense of two helmets if their child is both a cycle rider and a horse rider, but, as he has just said that he is not satisfied about the safety standards of some cycle helmets, how does he reconcile those apparently different objectives?

Mr. Atkins: As ever, I enjoy my hon. Friend's interventions as he poses questions and then answers them. None the less he makes a valid point. There is some interest and concern in the quality of cycle helmets and the need to ensure that children understand the importance of wearing them. We must be absolutely certain that they do the job for which they are required. As my hon. Friends the Members for Ealing, North and for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) have said, a helmet that did both jobs would make a great difference to some parents for whom the cost of two helmets might be unnecessary and difficult.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Let me take my hon. Friend back a couple of sentences to his remarks about racing cyclists. Surely my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) is wrong because with such examples being given to children, and without the wearing of helmets being compulsory, parents will spend whatever money is necessary to make sure that children have the helmets, but children will not wear them because they are not fashionable. I used to ride horses and when I was 16 and rode a motor scooter, it was fashionable to have a helmet but not to wear it. We want the children to wear the helmets.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. Will the Minister bear in mind that we are dealing with consultation with representative organisations? I am sure that he will bring his remarks within that context.

Mr. Atkins: Of course I shall do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but obviously I shall try to answer the points that have been raised. As one who has a daughter who rides and a son who cycles, I understand the points that my hon. Friend has made. I shall endeavour to ensure that the consultation that I undertake will deal with all those matters. In the circumstances, I have dealt with those concerns as briefly as possible. I have deleted several comments that I had hoped to make to ensure that we make progress.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): I was engaged in some discussion with the promoter of the Bill at an early stage in its proceedings. I welcome the practical way in which my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) has approached the Bill and congratulate him on a Bill that will do a great deal of good. I also welcome the consultation to which my hon. Friend the Minister referred.

Mr. Atkins: I am grateful for the acceptance and congratulations of my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash). I now hope that we can move on to the other amendments.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 3

INTERPRETATION

Lords amendment: No. 2, in page 2, line 16, leave out from "includes" to end of line 17 and insert "pony, mule, donkey or other equine animal".

Mr. Harry Greenway: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

[Mr. Harry Greenway]

I know that other people want to get in, so I shall endeavour to present these points properly yet as quickly as possible.

The amendment was proposed in a spirit of compromise by Lady Masham on my behalf to give a clear definition of horse, and to include ponies and donkeys which are often ridden by children. Mules are not ridden as often as they were 100 years ago, but they might become fashionable again. The words, "other equine animal" include all the other animals which were in the original definition: mare, gelding, foal, colt, filly, stallion, ass and hinny.

I have been asked to mention three fairly unusual equines because, people being what the are, we may find children riding such equines on the road.

Some years ago I was riding a rig and was disturbed by its extraordinary behaviour.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Perhaps it would be helpful if my hon. Friend could say what a rig is.

12.45 pm

Mr. Greenway: The Oxford dictionary defines a rig as "an animal which has been imperfectly castrated (or spayed), or whose genital organs are not properly developed; especially a male animal (ram, bull or horse) with only one testicle". A rig can be exceedingly dangerous, in that it can have its mind on a mare on heat. If there is a rider in the saddle he may be put in great danger, such as I have experienced. I have been bucked higher in the air by a rig than by any other equine. No equine can stand as vertically as a rig can, and the rider is often in danger of falling over backwards with the rig on top of him.

Mr. Soames: My hon. Friend makes a good point about rigs. They can be dangerous. A year ago, my sister-in-law bought a children's pony which, she left in a field with a rig. When the pony was taken back to Norfolk, she discovered it to be in foal. That is how dangerous rigs are.

Mr. Greenway: I am sad to hear of my hon. Friend's experience. I hope that the foal was acceptable——

Mr. Soames: It is a sweetheart.

Mr. Greenway: At least that outcome was useful, but terrible things can happen.

In another place, there was much debate about zebras. As children may find zebras attractive and they are sometimes ridden, they should be dealt with, too. There are many things that not all hon. Members know about zebras. They are definitely members of the horse family, as are asses, so they are covered by the Bill. Biologically, a zebra is closer to a horse than is an ass; although it is difficult to break in and train them for riding, it has been done. I understand that in the 19th century a member of the House of Lords was in the habit of driving a four-in-hand in which the horses were replaced by zebras. Between the wars, some intrepid white settlers in the Happy valley of Kenya occasionally rode zebras. I do not know whether they stayed on for long—zebras do not like having riders on their backs.

Mr. Soames: I can confirm that. A distant cousin of mine, Jack Soames, used to ride zebras regularly in the Happy valley.

Although this discussion about zebras is important, I urge my hon. Friend, given his important position in the horse world—he does an enormous amount in the House in that connection—to counsel people strongly against riding them: they are extremely tricky and disagreeable animals. I was told by a white hunter in Kenya that in Africa more people are killed by zebras each year than are killed by lions.

Mr. Greenway: My hon. Friend has regaled the House with some fascinating and important information. Few people stay on a zebra, but I am not surprised that his uncle did so, given the wonderful stock from which my hon. Friend comes, nothing would surprise me. I am grateful for his important contribution.

Mrs. Gorman: Will my hon. Friend clarify that the Bill will affect camels, which are ridden by children at zoos? I understand, as we have strayed into the wilds of Africa, that wildebeest are sometimes mounted by British children in Happy valley, or anywhere else.

Mr. Greenway: Camels and wildebeest are not in the horse family; the Bill deals with equines. Some perverted people ride rams or tups and other animals they should not ride, but that is outside the scope of the Bill so I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me for not dealing with it.

Zebras can be crossed with horses and asses and the resulting hybrids are easier to break in and train than zebras. That possibility is covered. Huxley, writing in 1862, said:

"It is a very rare thing to see a Hinny in this country"

However, I have occasionally seen one. Given how things have changed in the past 128 years, the conclusion must be that there are many more zebras in Britain than hinnies, so if such improbable and unlikely mounts as foals and hinnies are to be covered by the Bill, it is right that zebras should be.

It would be wicked if anyone rode a foal because it would damage the young equine and could have serious repercussions for the rider. The amendment will cover that possibility. The new definition is simpler but more comprehensive than the former one, and I commend it to the House.

Mr. Michael Brown: I am unhappy about the inclusion of the word "donkey" in the Lords amendment.

I have the honour and privilege to represent the seaside resort of Cleethorpes. For most hon. Members, the word "Cleethorpes" conjures up visions of seaside, donkey rides and the promenade. One of the greatest pleasures for young people of visiting Cleethorpes is the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of normal seaside pleasures. Donkey rides have been a traditional seaside pleasure at Cleethorpes and at other seaside resorts in the north, such as Skegness and Blackpool for a long time.

Mr. Harry Greenway: A donkey is not referred to as an equine, although it is within the equine family. Most often, donkeys are ridden on beaches, so there would be no danger in children riding them. I caution that donkeys are incredibly dangerous to ride and I have seen them unseat the best jockeys without difficulty.

Mr. Brown: I know quite a lot about the donkeys at Cleethorpes. Two years ago, the mayor of Cleethorpes, Mrs. Gladys Nuttall——

Mr. Atkins: The mare?

Mr. Brown: No, the mayor. Mrs. Nuttall had a distinguished career. She and her family ran the donkey rides at Cleethorpes for many years. She and I are worried that because the donkeys set off from the promenade they may be within the scope of the Bill. Horses that are owned by riding stables, ridden by children under 14 and which go on to a public highway, as well as donkeys that go on to promenades before they get to the beach, would fall within the scope of the Bill. It would therefore be necessary for Councillor Mrs. Nuttall and her family to provide children under 14 with hard hats.

Mr. Soames: My hon. Friend raises an important point about his constituency. I am familiar with the donkeys there. They are a fine breed.

My hon. Friend should not ignore the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway). Donkeys are absolute brutes. Some two years ago, I suffered a terrible fall from a donkey when riding in a donkey derby at a village fete. The donkey was completely unscathed but I was quite badly injured.

Mr. Brown: I am distressed to hear that, but my hon. Friend is overreacting slightly. I take the point that donkeys can be bad tempered. I know the donkeys at Cleethorpes better than anyone else, and have always found them more agreeable than the average donkey. The issue is the danger that donkeys pose to children under 14 and whether they should therefore come within the scope of the Bill.

Between February and June 1988—covering half the summer period—out of a sample of 500 horse-related accidents, five resulted from fall from a donkey, three of them involving children under 14 and one involving a three-year-old, who cut his head. We should set the danger posed by my hon. Friends the Members for Crawley (Mr. Soames) and for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) into perspective. If the Lords amendment is accepted, donkeys will be within the scope of the Bill, yet only three out of 500 horse-related accidents involved children under 14.

Seaside resorts, especially the traditional type, are going through a difficult time. Providers of donkey rides in constituencies such as mine do not have an easy time. They have to work hard over long hours, especially during the summer season, to make ends meet. If they have to provide hard hats for potential customers, charges may increase. In Cleethorpes, by necessity, a great deal of the seaside leisure activity, including donkey rides, must take place as much on the promenade as on the beach. There is pressure on seaside resorts not to allow animals to go on to the beach —some people complain that dogs and other animals put dirt on it. If pressure continues to remove animals from the sand, the promenade will be used more for donkey rides at seaside resorts. That will inevitably bring providers of donkey rides within the scope of the Bill. Let us remember that donkey rides are an inexpensive form of entertainment and leisure for the children of not-so-well-off families. I fear that charges for donkey rides would be bound to increase.

1 pm

Mrs. Gorman: My hon. Friend is referring to the possibility that people hiring out donkeys will have to provide at the same time helmets for riders because of the small chance, less than 1 per cent., of an accident occurring. Has my hon. Friend considered the question of cross-infection as a result of helmets being passed from one wearer to another? There has been a great increase in the incidence of head lice infection in society, particularly in schools. Unless the helmets about which my hon. Friend is speaking can be sterilised between use, cross-infection could present a great danger.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind hon. Members that we are dealing with the definition of a horse.

Mr. Brown: I see the relevance of my hon. Friend's intervention, but I must abide by your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker. She is suggesting that if a donkey is defined as a horse, the donkeys of Cleethorpes will come within the scope of the Bill and the providers of donkey rides there, Councillor Mrs. Nuttall and her family, will have to go to the expense of providing a dozen or 20 helmets, which during the day will be passed from one child to another.

I will not detain the House longer. While I do not oppose the Lords amendment, I urge the Minister to appreciate the concern that has been expressed by the providers of donkey rides at seaside resorts such as Cleethorpes.

Mr. Atkins: We have had an important discussion—including a humorous discussion, as I would have expected from the interventions of my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames)—about the definition of a horse. Hon. Members have dealt with the issue in some detail and have been specific in their remarks.

The matter was referred to by Lord Stoddart in Committee in another place on 20 June, having also been mentioned by parliamentary counsel when the Bill was being redrafted in the spring. Hon. Members who attended the Committee on 4 April or who read the *Official Report* of those proceedings will recall that the definition was already in some difficulty at that stage.

The hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) moved an amendment to include rig in the definition. My hon. Friends the Members for Crawley and for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) defined a rig, but I have a further definition from the "Encyclopaedia of Flat Racing" by Howard Wright:

"a rig is a horse who has one testicle which has not descended into the scrotum: more rare is the example in which neither testicle has descended. The condition may be inherited and is likely to cause aggressive behaviour unless treated by castration."

That sums up the situation. Such an animal is an equine animal, and whether or not it was clear that it was covered in the former definition, it is certainly covered in the present one.

Of the 17 unsuccessful amendments that were tabled in another place, five were concerned with the definition of a horse or size of horse to be covered by the Bill. In Committee on 20 June, there were amendments to limit the scope of the Bill to horses over nine hands—in other words, to exclude Shetland ponies, foals, asses, mule and hinny. Lord Stoddart argued that a fall from a small animal would not be as dangerous as a fall from a large one. He also suggested that to ride a foal would damage the animal in a critical stage of its life.

Lord Monson moved an amendment on report to restrict the Bill to riding foals over five months. One reason for changing the definition was to remove the word "foal" from the face of the Bill without removing protection to children riding them.

[Mr. Atkins]

The definition of a foal is a loose one. The "Oxford English Dictionary" states that it is:

"the young of the equine genus of quadrupeds; properly one of the male sex, a colt; but also used where the sex is not specified, a colt or a filly."

Under the definition of "colt" it states:

"while the young of the horse is still with the dam it is usually called a foal."

No one wants to suggest that a child or anyone should be encouraged to ride such an animal. That is why it no longer appears on the face of the Bill. However, if a child were to ride such an animal it should be protected from injury and by the use of the words "or other equine animal" such protection is guaranteed. The phrase, "ass, mule or hinny" is now coverd by "mule" and "donkey".

My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) referred to the problems of the Cleethorpes sands. Exemptions can probably be made for donkey rides and I shall endeavour to see during the consultation period whether that is necessary. That is an important point which I expected him to raise on behalf of his constituents.

Another reason for choosing that definition of horse was that it covered every member of the horse family, whether or not it had been thought of. Lady Nicol asked whether "jennet" was covered. It is a small Spanish horse and so is covered. She used the term as an alternative to "hinny", sometimes called a "jenny". All are covered. I am astonished that there are so many names for horses, not being a horse rider myself——

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): It is a Geordie expression.

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman tells me it is a Geordie expression. It is a delightful one.

The fifth amendment, in another place, to deal with the definition, had the most effect on changing the legislation, apart from the concern over foals. Lord Monson wanted to include zebras in the list. He admitted that it was difficult to break in and train zebras for riding, but he referred to a 19th century member of the other place who was in the habit of driving a four-in-hand in which zebras were substituted for horses. He also mentioned settlers in Happy valley in Kenya who occasionally rode zebras. I do not know which of the three species of zebra they were —Burchell's zebra or bonte quagga, Grevy's zebra or the Mountain zebra—but all three will now be covered in the unlikely event that they are ridden.

Lord Monson also mentioned that zebras can be crossed with horses and asses. I do not know what such crossbreeds are called, and I await the answer of my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley. It is a pity that he is not here. I do not know what sort of animals could be crossed thanks to the wonders of modern genetic engineering. However, if they are members of the family Equidae they will be covered by the Bill under the new amendment, and children under the age of 14 will not be allowed to ride them without the appropriate protective headgear correctly worn.

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): I am unhappy about the clause, but not the Bill, on which I congratulate the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) for getting it this far. I am certain that it will be passed, and it will have my vote.

The amendment is too narrow and relates to a world that has gone. I take up the Minister's point about genetic engineering. It would be a stronger amendment if "equine" was not included, and it simply read:

"leave out from 'includes' to end of line 17 and insert 'pony, mule, donkey or other animal'."

As the Minister said, new amimals are not being created. The range of members of the equine family referred to today, and the various crosses which can occur, are undoubtedly covered by the clause. However, during the past 10 years we have seen, at Cambridge university, the creation of a new animal, the geep—a cross between a sheep and goat. There has been the insertion of a rat gene into a mouse to create a supermouse of enormous size. My worry is that before the end of the Act's lifetime—I assume that it will be on the statute book for decades to come —we shall be living in a world where completely new forms of animal have been created. It would be much better if the amendment did not contain the word "equine" but allowed for developments that will take place arising from future genetic engineering so that any animal created in a laboratory that becomes part of circus or holiday entertainment would automatically be covered.

We are dealing with size. The problem arises when anybody falls from a great height.

One reason why we have evolved to an average height of about 5ft 10 in for a man and a couple of inches smaller for a woman, but have not evolved beyond that, is that if large numbers of people were 7 or 8 ft tall, falling over would carry a high risk of injury or death. Putting people of any age on the back of an animal immediately creates a similar problem.

I vote for the amendment with reluctance because it is flawed by being so restrictive. I hope that the Government will continue to consider the problem in case there is a tremendous increase in genetically engineered animals. Given the billions of pounds being invested in genetic engineering by multinational corporations, before the century is out we are likely to have peculiar new animals created specifically for profit. Clearly young children are likely to be drawn along to see interesting, exotic beasts.

Mrs. Gorman: Given the hon. Gentleman's knowledge of genetic engineering, does he know of any experiments to cross newts with frogs? We might get nogs or fewts.

Mr. Livingstone: I detect an element of humour in that intervention, but there is a giant salamander which is 6 ft long and if people were to ride it there would be a serious risk of injury if they fell off. The animal is very rare and is found only in the colder parts of China, Manchuria and Japan, and fortunately it would be far too expensive to ue it for rides. However, the gene which controls size in the giant salamander could be inserted into another animal —that is the world that we now live in.

The Government should keep the issue under the most vigorous scrutiny so that the intention of the Bill is not flouted by genetic engineers and crafty people who would no doubt earn vast sums of money if they got young children to ride on exotic new animals. It is not merely a case of existing species of cross-breed; genetic engineering would give us the opportunity to recreate extinct animals if their bones are preserved. For example, the quagga, a member of the equine family, could be recreated by inserting its genetic material into the ovum of a horse or zebra, and I am certain that something of the sort will happen in the next 10 years. The quagga would be covered

by the Bill, but a completely new form of animal, which was not in the equine family, would not. I hope that the Government will keep the issue under consideration in the years to come.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 3, in page 2, leave out lines 19 to 27 and insert—

""road" does not include a footpath or bridleway but, subject to that, has—

(a) in England and Wales the meaning given by section 192(1) of the Road Traffic Act 1988; and

(b) in Scotland the meaning given by section 151(1) of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984.

(2) For the purposes of the definition of "road" in subsection (1) above—

(a) "footpath" means a way—

(i) over which the public have a right of way or, in Scotland, of passage on foot only; and

(ii) which is not associated with a carriageway; and

(b) "bridleway" means a way over which the public have the following, but no other, rights of way: a right of way on foot and a right of way on horseback or leading a horse, with or without a right to drive animals of any description along the way."

Mr. Harry Greenway: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The amendment restricts the scope of the Bill to the road, excluding bridleways and footpaths. On Report on 27 April, my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) moved amendments which were intended to restrict the scope of the Bill in such a way. I agree that the worst injuries to a hatless child falling off a horse would occur on the road. Therefore it was important to make it crystal clear where the wearing of a hat was most important. I agreed to the amendments which were duly passed by the House then.

Unfortunately, my advisers in the Department of Transport realised that the wording was not ideal to achieve what the House had agreed upon. This amendment was drafted by Parliamentary Counsel to meet our desire and was duly passed in another place. It is intended to restrict the scope of the Bill to roads where there is a risk of collision between vehicles and horse riders. That is why bridleways and footpaths are excluded. However, it will be illegal for children to ride horses on the footpath alongside a road without protective headgear. I commend the Lords amendment to the House.

Mr. Atkins: I have been endeavouring to react to the will of the House by speaking briefly. This is a neat compromise, and who am I to argue with Parliamentary Counsel? I am delighted that the amendment has found acceptance in another place and I hope that it will find it here.

Question put and agreed to.

Sexual Offences Bill

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [11 May],—That the Bill be now read the Third time.

Question again proposed.

1.15 pm

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): The period since we last discussed the Bill has allowed some debate in the media, not all of which was useful or well informed. It has also allowed a considerable amount of correspondence which I and, I am sure, other hon. Members have received. I should like to tell the House about some of the objections and letters of support that I have received and draw attention to some press coverage.

I am sure that many hon. Members who wished initially to support the legislation might change their minds in the light of the information that has come to me. In the earlier debate, as we worked our way through the amendments, the Minister of State, Home Office, who I am glad to see in his place, made several offers in an attempt to win support for the legislation. Time and again he asked hon. Members for examples of where the existing legislation, which the Bill seeks to amend, has resulted in mistaken convictions.

As a result of the publicity arising from my intervention in the earlier debate, three men contacted me—one by phone and two by letter. They said that even under the existing legislation, which restricts the use of the word "persistent", they had been wrongly convicted. Some hon. Members may say that those men are clearly guilty and just protesting their innocence, and that we should not pay too much attention to them.

The people who wrote to me did so in interesting circumstances. The press coverage that followed our previous debate on the subject made it seem that the Bill was dead for ever and a day. Therefore, the people who wrote to me did so in the expectation that the Bill would not come back for further debate and that the matter was effectively closed. For that reason they were able to be particularly honest in writing letters of support or objecting to the action that I had taken. They assumed that what they said would not influence what would happen in future.

We should pay some attention to the proposals of the three men who contacted me. The existing legislation leads to wrongful convictions, which are extremely damaging to the reputations of the people concerned. As the Bill seeks to remove the word "persistent", which will lead to an increase in convictions—if we are to believe the speeches of the hon. Member for Streatham (Sir W. Shelton), who has put that forward as the reason for proceeding with the Bill—it follows that there will be an increase in the number of wrongful convictions.

I shall not give the names of the people concerned because if I did so reporters from *The Sun* and the *Daily Express* would be on their doorstep before the hour was out. However, I would be quite happy to give the letters to the hon. Member for Streatham or to pass them to the Home Office. I may do that in any case to find out whether these people have been wrongly convicted and whether the stain with which they live can be removed.

I do not want to detain the House for longer than necessary, and for that reason I shall deal with only one of the three people who contacted me. I have selected a letter at random. It states:

[Mr. Ken Livingstone]

"Dear Mr. Livingstone, Your speech during the debate on the report stage of the Sexual Offences Bill earned my full support and gratitude, in that I was recently the subject of a wholly unwarranted police prosecution for the offence of kerb-crawling. Without being cautioned, let alone arrested, I received a summons to appear in court to be bound over to keep the peace. My solicitor"—

I shall not give the name—

"then furnished evidence to the police, with the altogether legitimate reason for my being in that place at that time. The hearing has now been postponed till October. In my opinion, it should never have been instigated in the first place. The fact that it is possible to be stopped and arbitrarily summonsed without any kind of preamble seems like a flagrant violation of the individual's rights and to have really frightening implications. I much appreciated the stand you took against the Sexual Offences Bill. I intend to fight this already oppressive regime where it affects me directly, but if there is any way in which I can assist you in your parliamentary battle, I will be very pleased to make my contribution."

If that has already happened, the House should have cause for concern. Here we have a case where someone received a summons out of the blue. He was not stopped by the police or cautioned. He could not say there and then what he was doing in the area. I find that extremely disturbing.

We are all aware that it would be impossible to extend the Bill to Scotland. It would be completely out of line with Scottish law and legal precedent. That is true of almost every other western European nation which has a Bill of Rights or written constitution.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's desire to find a proper balance between the liberties of the innocent citizen and the need to protect women against harassment. But if he feels that the Bill is at fault on that count and criticises it, he should suggest what might be done to put the Bill right.

Mr. Livingstone: I am perfectly prepared to do that. I shall rearrange my notes and come to that point immediately, if it helps the hon. Member.

The House knows that I am not a lawyer. Often the law and the language of the law mean different things to lay persons and lawyers. Perhaps my argument will carry more weight if I draw the attention of the House to page 659 of the *New Law Journal* issued on Friday 11 May this year. It devoted an article to the legal consequences of the Bill. Interestingly, rather than saying what is wrong with the legislation, it takes up the point that the hon. Gentleman made. It points to where we could tackle the problem under the existing powers, if the Government have the political will to do so and if they make the resources available.

The article shows what lawyers think of the legislation and makes positive proposals for an immediate assault on the problem in the areas affected. It is headed "Guilty until proven innocent" and it says:

"Kerb-crawling legislation extends to men some of the biases the prostitution laws inflict on women. In the same way as police evidence alone is enough to convict women of loitering and soliciting, it is enough to convict men of kerb-crawling. The need for corroboration is purposely left out of the law on the grounds that witnesses would be reluctant to give evidence. Giving evidence is always hard, but it is crucial to establish the truth and protect the rights of defendants. The red-light residents in whose name loitering, soliciting and kerb-crawling legislation were introduced have never had to substantiate their allegations.

The prostitution laws create the much vilified red-light areas by making it almost impossible for prostitute women and clients to contact each other without breaking the law. Abolition of these laws would allow women to work from premises and advertise in contact magazines without being charged with brothel-keeping, thus undermining the need for red light areas."

That was the first positive proposal.

All the letters that I have received on the matter are from people who live in red-light areas. It is also noticeable that all the hon. Members who have been active in the debate and who have supported the hon. Member for Streatham represent areas or constituencies adjacent to areas where a red-light district makes life intolerable for residents.

The proposal in the *New Law Journal* is relevant and something which the Government could push through the legislative process with the overwhelming support of both sides of both Houses of Parliament. It would remove the prostitution laws. It would decriminalise prostitution so that women could work from home. There would be greater safety for the women and entire areas would not be blighted. The law would withdraw from an area which involves, as I suspect many police officers would say in private, victimless crime. When police resources are directed to victimless crime they are removed, of course, from crimes where there are victims.

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): Would the hon. Gentleman be prepared to have a legalised brothel in his constituency? How would he propose to compensate house owners who happen to live next door to a woman who is operating as a professional prostitute?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): The Question before the House is whether the Bill should be given a Third Reading, and a Third Reading debate must relate to the contents of the Bill.

Mr. Livingstone: I am caught, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by the narrow remit of the debate. At the same time, Conservative Members want me to set out the options.

I have represented areas in which there have been red-light districts. Those areas would be affected and would come within the terms of the Bill. From 1977 to 1981 I was a member of the Greater London council. I represented Hackney, North and Stoke Newington, which had a red-light area round Finsbury park. It is the sort of area at which the Bill is aimed directly. I spent a considerable amount of time negotiating with local residents. At that time the idea of legislation to stop kerb crawling was seven or eight years away. It had not been thought of and consequently it was not being promoted. I had to respond to tremendous pressure from residents whose lives were intolerable. The most appallingly offensive comments were being made by kerb crawlers as they drove round the red light area of Finsbury park. Working under what was then a Conservative administration—I was an opposition member of the GLC under Sir Horace Cutler—we devised a road scheme which meant that someone required an honours degree from Oxford to be able to drive through the areas and find his way out. That provided some limited relief.

In proposing that the Bill should be enacted, the hon. Member for Streatham said that schemes of the sort to which I have just referred have not worked. He argued that they merely move the problem to another area. The hon. Gentleman is seeking a blanket power that could be used throughout the country and would enable the kerb crawler to be targeted. As I said, the people of Hackney, North

and Stoke Newington have been subjected to incredibly offensive experiences by kerb crawlers. They feel that the House should find a way to end the problem.

It is argued in the *New Law Journal*—there is specific reference to the Bill—that we shall create a power so wide and so sweeping that far too many genuinely innocent people will be caught by the Bill if it is enacted. Innocent people will be destroyed by it. They will be unable to recover and to live a normal life. The article states:

"The Government has done the opposite"—

that is to decriminalise prostitution—

"It is backing Sir William Shelton's Sexual Offences Bill now going through Parliament which seeks to tighten kerb-crawling legislation by further increasing police powers. The Bill proposes to remove from the 1985 Act the only legal constraint against false arrest: that kerb-crawling should be 'persistent or likely to cause annoyance or nuisance'."

That is the heart of the Bill.

The article continues:

"The case of the Guildford Four and of Hassan Khan (a black man whose conviction was quashed following the disbanding of the West Midlands Serious Crimes Squad) have shown the dangers of convictions that are based solely on the word of the police. They are also an indication that the police are more likely to use any new powers against black, Irish, immigrant and other working-class men they may want to charge for quite unconnected purposes.

In 1984, we initiated the Campaign Against Kerb Crawling Legislation—a coalition of anti-rape, black and civil rights organisations, AIDS prevention groups, lawyers, probation officers and Labour Party activists. We predicted that the Bill would become a new 'sus' law. In response, the House of Lords introduced the requirement of persistence which Shelton's Bill wants dropped. Its removal would mean that any street exchange between a woman and a man could be criminalised, especially, but not only, if the woman is a prostitute.

CAKCL argued that kerb-crawling legislation would add to prostitute and other women's vulnerability to violence by: forcing working women further underground; curtailing the time available for prostitute women to 'sus out' clients nervous about arrest before going with them; committing more police time and resources to prostitution rather than rape and other violent crimes."

That is a telling argument against the Bill from the legal community. Although the Bill is narrow and removes only one word from the existing 1985 legislation, its ramifications are wide.

The *New Law Journal* continues:

"Women in Bristol, Leicester, Manchester, Swindon, Walsall and the London red-light areas of Balham, Bayswater and King's Cross, have confirmed an increase in violence which the police have done little or nothing about. A typical example is that of a black woman who was almost strangled: when the police arrived they ignored the man sitting across the road and arrested her instead. In King's Cross, special police squads have arrested hundreds of women and men in a combined effort to 'clean up' the area, while failing to act to solve murders and rapes.

Women are also being forced to entrap clients. One woman who couldn't refuse outright to be used as bait for fear of arrest, spent all night waving clients on. Other women have been offered immunity if they 'gave the police two kerb-crawlers'."

That happens under the existing legislation. Removing the "persistence" requirement makes it all the more likely that such abuses, mistakes and genuine errors will worsen.

The *New Law Journal* continues:

"If the Government were really interested in women's safety, would it have opposed MP Harry Cohen's Bill . . . to make rape in marriage a crime? The 1986 Public Order Act gives the police wide powers to arrest anyone for 'threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour.'"

The hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) asked what I would do instead. I am talking about legislation that the Government can use immediately. Instead of passing this Bill, which would create further problems, it would be better if the Government intervened to ensure that the existing legislation—the Public Order Act 1986—was used to crack down on kerb crawling. I repeat the exact words,

"threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour."

Those provisions cover the points with which the hon. Member for Streatham is trying to deal. Any kerb crawler who approaches a woman on the street and makes offensive, disgraceful and disgusting suggestions is covered by the existing legislation.

I am prepared to give way to the Minister of State if he will intervene to say that, rather than wait for the outcome of this legislation, he will undertake today to send a letter to every chief constable in Britain, drawing their attention to the existing legislation, which gives them the power under the Public Order Act 1986 to arrest any man who approaches women and makes such suggestions, and to gain convictions in such a way that would mean that the evidence could be tested in court, that there would be a proper chance for defence, and that there would be much less risk of innocent people being entrapped.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): I sympathise with the hon. Gentleman and the promoter of the Bill. I take his point that people are arrested wrongfully. Before betting shops were legalised, that trade was plied on the streets and gave offence to passers-by. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the solution would be to legalise prostitution among adults so that it could take place indoors, away from the public gaze? Moreover, those who seek the services of prostitutes would not be at risk from prosecution.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) must not widen the debate to that extent. I repeat that we are dealing with the Third Reading of the Bill. His remarks must be directed to its contents.

Mr. Livingstone: I completely agree with the hon. Lady. The House should pay attention to her. Before she became a Member of Parliament her career, like mine, was in local government. She lived close to an area where prostitution is persistent; therefore, she speaks with considerable authority. Since she became a Member of Parliament I have been surprised by the number of times that we have found ourselves in the same Lobby.

The Bill is unnecessary. I regret that the Minister has left the Chamber. I offered to give way to him so that he could say why the Government do not use the existing legislation. The onus is on those who want the Bill to say why the existing legislation does not work. Those who support the Bill complain about the kerb-crawling legislation that was introduced in 1985. They were warned at the time, in this House and in another place, that it would not solve the problem and would lead to wrongful arrests. That legislation has failed. Instead of tinkering with it and making it worse, surely it would be better if the Government used existing legislation that does not attract the same kind of opprobrium, withdrew their support for the Bill and used their powers under the Public Order Act 1986 to give directions to chief constables.

I should like the Home Secretary to issue today a memorandum to chief constables and the Commission of Police of the Metropolis drawing their attention to that legislation and asking them to provide protection for

[Mr. Livingstone]

women on our streets who are harassed not just by kerb crawlers but by lewd and offensive suggestions from workers on building sites. Before we vote to change the law, the Government must tell us why they neglect to use legislation that they pushed through the House against considerable opposition, giving to the police the power to deal with the problem. Why is the House being asked to pass new legislation when much more effective legislation is already on the statute book? It provides checks, balances and safeguards that would prevent wrongful arrests and charges from being made.

I have not referred to many other sections of the article in *New Law Journal*, but it concludes:

"If kerb-crawling legislation is allowed to set a standard of equality between women and men, possession of condoms may be used as evidence of kerb-crawling, further discouraging clients already reluctant to use condoms. Fines against prostitute women may increase to £1,000 to match Shelton's proposal for kerb-crawlers, thereby forcing more women to see more clients to pay higher fines. And any woman or man may be criminalised for carrying condoms —*The Sunday Telegraph* reported that a woman solicitor who was coming back from abroad was arrested for having condoms in her bag."

Mr. Colvin: That is most extraordinary. I thought that the Government's campaign against AIDS—to persuade the public to protect themselves against AIDS—would encourage people to carry condoms and be prepared at all times. I recall a recent television programme by Mr. Dave Allen in which he pointed out—I do not say that he is always right—that when most gentlemen remove their wallets from their pockets, there is always a telltale outline which shows that most gentlemen go round the world fully prepared for the unscheduled event.

Mr. Livingstone: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that intervention. I shall watch in future as hon. Members take out their wallets in the Tea Room.

The legislation would worsen the chances of reducing the spread of AIDS by the use of condoms. Those who work with prostitute women and have studied the Bill warn that the pressure on a prostitute to get a client quickly, before that client is arrested for kerb crawling, means that it will be difficult for the prostitute to chat for a while to try to sus out whether the client is a psychopath, to discuss the terms of the arrangement and to make it clear that she is not prepared to get in the car unless the man is prepared to use a condom. The man will be under tremendous fear of being arrested, so he will not want to loiter and talk or discuss the terms. The danger is that there will be less use of condoms as the women will get into cars before they have obtained the assurance that a condom will be used. Therefore, the legislation may increase the spread of AIDS.

In the case to which the *New Law Journal* drew attention, the woman concerned used that defence in court. I cannot remember the outcome of the case, but it was stressed that the Government are urging everyone to use condoms more frequently, yet the possession of condoms in a handbag in a red-light district is all the evidence that a police officer needs to gain a conviction against a prostitute woman. It is absolute nonsense and the legislation will worsen the bias against the use of condoms that exists in the laws relating to prostitution.

We also have to bear in mind the risks to prostitute women. A prostitute has very little time in which to determine whether someone is a genuine punter or a psychopath. There are a vast number of unsolved murders and brutal attacks on prostitute women. The case of the Yorkshire Ripper illustrated that it is extremely difficult for police to catch random psychopathic killers.

The *New Law Journal* concludes:

"When the rights of prostitute women are trampled on, the rights of others, women and men (the poorest first, of course), are not far behind. The road to equality downwards—between prostitute women and clients, between women and men—is a bottomless pit."

The Sexual Offences Bill does not seek to tackle the causes of the problem but simply to increase penalties for kerb crawlers and to make them as punitive as the penalties faced by prostitute women. I have not the slightest doubt, if the legislation becomes law, that the next stage will be legislation to increase the fines on prostitute women to the level of those laid down in the Sexual Offences Bill.

I know that some Conservative Members will not be particularly persuaded by this, but on Tuesday *The Guardian* carried a most informative article by Jo Grant about the implications of the Bill. After a long introduction which covers the issues that I have already mentioned, Jo Grant comes to the nub of the argument:

"However, the bill faces vociferous opposition from an unlikely but well-organised pressure group—the English Collective of Prostitutes. The Collective was formed in 1975 to promote the interests of black and white women working in the sex industry. Its members campaign vigorously from a base at King's Cross Women's Centre in north London. Their aims include the abolition of the prostitution laws, legal and civil rights for prostitutes and economic improvements for women so that no one is forced into prostitution through poverty. Nina Lopez-Jones is the Collective's articulate spokeswoman and leading light. She has written many of the books and pamphlets on the Collective's extensive publications list. She also gives talks to community and women's groups about the Collective and its campaigns.

Chief among those at the moment is their opposition to the new Sexual Offences bill. Before the second reading in February, they lobbied key MPs to make their objections known. A particular concern is that the new bill removes the old requirements that a man has to kerb crawl 'persistently' before he can be arrested.

Under Sir William Shelton's bill, any man who talks to a woman once could be convicted solely on the evidence of one policeman. The woman would not be required to attend court, so there would be no proof that she was a prostitute. Although it would be unlikely that the police officer had actually heard what was said, his evidence alone could secure a conviction that could ruin a man's life."

In virtually any other modern western democracy, such legislation would be unconstitutional. It could not be applied in Scotland, where legal protections and rights are much stronger than in England. In this, as in many other respects, Scotland is well in advance of the rest of the United Kingdom.

The article continues:

"The collective are concerned at the power this puts into the hands of the police and fear the bill could be used in an arbitrary and random fashion by unscrupulous officers. It is so open-ended, they feel, that it could soon become a replacement for the notorious 'sus' laws."

I remind the House that the campaign against the sus laws continued for a long time and built up massive support. They were a complete anachronism. When they were wiped from the statute book, everyone —both in the legal profession and outside breathed a sigh of relief. I know that the hon. Member for Streatham is an

honourable man, and seeks to solve an appalling problem that affects his constituents. It is not his intention to provide a trojan horse through which a new sus law can be brought slowly to bear.

Sir William Shelton (Streatham): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his recognition of the problem that kerb crawling causes to my constituents, and to many other people throughout the country. Is he aware that on Report and Third Reading recently we had a debate lasting for four hours, and that he spoke for more than one hour? Does he recollect that he has objected to the Bill five times on Fridays? Is he proposing to talk it out? If so, he may become the friend of the kerb crawlers and prostitutes and the enemy of the badgers, as he will deny an appearance on the Floor of the House to those friendly animals.

Mr. Livingstone: I oppose the Bill because it is bad law. That is the right of an hon. Member. I recognise that the *Daily Express* and the *Daily Mail* do not agree with me. As, is often the case, those two virulent little journals have lied and distorted the truth about this debate. They are a disgrace to their profession: they have lower professional standards than the prostitute women and kerb crawlers to whom they have referred. One must ignore that, however, and do what is right. The Bill would lead to the conviction of innocent people, and I will do everything possible to stop it reaching the statute book.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I wish to correct something that was said by the hon. Member for Streatham (Sir W. Shelton). I have it on good authority that, were the Bill to complete its remaining stages before 2.30 pm, the Protection of Badger Setts Bill —sadly—would still not be reached. The spokespeople of the British Field Sports Society in the House who tried to impede it in Committee—on which I sat—intend to talk out the Radioactive Material (Road Transport) Bill. I have an amendment to that Government-sponsored Bill. Irrespective of the length of the speech of the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone)—or any other contributions—we shall not reach the Protection of Badger Setts Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: After those interventions, let us return to the Bill that we are discussing.

Mr. Livingstone: I shall do everything possible to ensure that the Protection of Badger Setts is passed. That is not the problem. There cannot be a deal which says, "Let us pass this Bill although it might lead to the conviction of innocent people, except that we do not need it because we already have the Public Order Act, which gives the police full powers to tackle the problem, and carry on to reach the Protection of Badger Setts Bill." As the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) said, other hon. Members determined to talk that out.

Mr. Colvin: As a member of the Standing Committee that considered the Protection of Badger Setts Bill, I must point out that some hon. Members have been wrongly associated with a movement to stop it. As the hon. Gentleman knows, given the delicate nature of private Members' legislation, it is essential that there is a meeting of minds which often takes place outside the Chamber. I succeeded in getting a private Members' Bill on to the statute book this Session. Without a great deal of compromise, which was reached in discussion outside the Chamber, that would not have been possible. That is the way forward for the Protection of Badget Setts Bill, and I hope that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) appreciates that. If he were to follow that approach, there is a good chance that the Bill will get on to the statute book, which is what we all want.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We must not anticipate later debates.

Mr. Livingstone: Whatever we do, badgers will not be put at risk by the sexual offences legislation.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Mellor): The hon. Gentleman is being inappropriately skittish. He thinks that it is great fun to be the only hon. Member who is seeking to block the Bill. The only consequences of his doing so is that men who are making a nuisance of themselves and causing genuine problems to women in urban areas will get away wih it, and boys who are committing acts of rape will get away with it because an absurd legal technicality that deems that they are not capable of such acts. If he is determined to talk out the Bill, let him not be skittish. Most hon. Members would look for better things to put on their escutcheon than blocking a Bill such as this. He is getting no help from Labour Front-Bench spokesmen, so if he is determined to do this, let him at least do it with a bit of dignity and in the recognition that 649 hon. Members do not agree with him.

Mr. Livingstone: I am interested by the Minister's intervention. When we last debated this, there were not 649 hon. Members present—indeed, there were not 50 hon. Members present. He cannot invoke the idea that the whole House is happily in favour of the Bill. Leading members of his party have approached me privately to commend my stand because they consider the legislation to be flawed and dangerous.

Mr. Mellor: I suspect that that is a terminological inexactitude. It is easy for hon. Members to devise conversations without fully disclosing them; the hon. Gentleman is a past master at that. He cannot hide behind that evasion. He knows full well that on a Friday many hon. Members are absent with good reason. He also knows full well that no other hon. Member is prepared to block the Bill. He is alone in doing that. I cannot think that he serves any interest very well, not least those of women in his constituency. If he is to block the Bill, let us not have any trivial remarks about badgers not being put at risk. Groups of people who most of us take just as seriously as badgers—women—will be put at risk as a result of what he is doing.

Mr. Livingstone: It is a pleasure to hear the Minister getting so upset. If this legislation is so important, why, after 11 years in office, have not the Government introduced it? If, as he told the House—terminological inexactitude is an understatement—people are committing rape and getting away with it but the Bill will stop them, why have not the Government, after 11 years in office, considered it important enough to introduce legislation? If he is genuinely concerned about women, let him tell the House why the Government are blocking the legislation that will make rape in marriage a crime. I believe that the hon. and learned Gentleman comes close to stretching the credibility of those who must listen to him.

[Mr. Livingstone]

The Minister gave all sorts of commitments at an earlier stage in the debate. What is the basis on which a Government have to give commitments on how legislation will operate to ensure that it is not inaccurately followed? The Government have the ability, in Government time, to produce legislation that does not have those problems.

Mr. Mellor: I am playing the hon. Gentleman's game, but even he is coming to the end of it. We might as well at least hear something on the other side of the case. It is a recognised fact that private Members bring forward legislation with Government support and effect major changes in the criminal law, as was done to increase the sentences for drug trafficking to life imprisonment. That is a well-recognised way to meet the inclinations of not only private Members, because of particular constituency problems, but of the Government and, to be fair, the Opposition. The hon. Gentleman has made a bad and spurious point.

This practice requires people who are prepared to stand within the camp rather then being, like the hon. Gentleman, out of sympathy with the normal way in which business is transacted. The hon. Gentleman knows full well that the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) raised points which I was able to meet to his satisfaction. That is the way things are done. There is nothing unusual about suggesting that the legislation will be monitored and giving the commitments which mean that it could be revoked if the hon. Gentleman's fanciful motions that the Bill will be used oppressively proved true. Some of those who opposed the sus law did not just emote against it but sat on the Committee considering the legislation—as I did—and abolished it.

Even at the 11th hour, the hon. Gentleman has an opportunity to ensure that the predicted consequences of the Bill the last time objection was made to it, five years ago, are erased. It is unfortunate that the hon. Gentleman will not even accept the guidance of his Front Bench but stands apart from every other Member who has participated in the debate, whatever ghostly comments he may have heard in the Corridor.

Mr. Livingstone: It is interesting to hear the hon. and learned Gentleman speculate about what other people might believe or do. If the support for this legislation about which he tells the House exists, it is in his power to move a closure motion and see whether he can find enough Members to vote. If this legislation is that important, why have not the Government gone through the normal nods and winks process and got their supporters here to pass it?

I still want to hear an answer to the question I put to the Minister. Is he telling the House that for 11 years the Government have allowed people to get away with rape and that this legislation will stop that? That was the implication of his comments, but he knows that it is not true. The Government have recognised that the law needs to be tidied up on a technical point. It is clearly nonsense to say that boys under 14 are incapable of sexual intercourse. At the earliest stages, I made it clear that the House agrees that this anomaly should end, not just because someone is getting away with it. All the young boys under 14 who commit rape and are captured by the police are detained under the existing legislation in exactly the same institutions and for exactly the same period as they would have been detained if the law relating to rape applied to young boys.

The Minister came close to misleading the House, and I notice that he does not step up to offer an apology or to give the evidence showing that boys under 14 who have got away with rape would have been caught by this legislation.

Mr. Mellor: I notice that the hon. Gentleman—who has no legal qualifications and had no long-term interest in this matter, until his interest was whipped up by the English Collective of Prostitutes and others—speaks with great authority on matters that do not lie within his ken. I do not propose to carry on making the hon. Gentleman's task of filibustering any easier. The fact that I do not rise to my feet does not mean that I accept any of his points. It is utterly wrong that someone who commits rape should get away with it on a technicality. The idea that such a person can be charged with other offences—as he can—does not go to the point. One could say that any rape involves violence, so why bother to have the offence? I shall not be drawn into that argument. If the hon. Gentleman is so determined to do his dirty business, let him do so without invoking my assistance. I want to put on record the fact that what he is doing this afternoon is thoroughly and utterly discreditable and reprehensible. It is discreditable not only to people, including many of his hon. Friends, with legitimate constituency concerns, but in the eyes of the occupants of his Front Bench, as was made clear on the previous occasion, when they dissociated themselves from what he is trying to do.

Mr. Livingstone: Still the Minister does not provide examples. Is he really saying that for 11 years people have been getting away with rape on a legal technicality, yet the Government have not been prepared to introduce legislation to stop it? What nonsense. If he will not provide examples of cases, it comes close to an attempt to deceive the House and play to the gallery, which is what happened last time. On that occasion I was approached by Conservative Members and told, in effect, "If you block the Bill, we will have a campaign against you and say that you are the loony Left."

I do not give in to such threats. I am blocking the Bill because it would be bad law and would lead to people being convicted for crimes of which they were innocent. I will not be browbeaten by the Minister or be put off by him. My hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) is perhaps more of a gentleman than I am. He believed the assurances that the Minister gave. I do not believe them. I have listened to the hon. and learned Gentleman inside and outside the House, for 10 years and I would not give tuppence for his assurances. Even if he intended to carry them out, I do not believe that he has the necessary control over the judiciary or the police.

The Minister could stop the problem of kerb crawling by using the existing law, under which the police have power to arrest people who offend women in that way. Will the Minister circulate to chief constables and the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis an instruction drawing their attention to the existing legislation and the problem? Will he get to his feet and say what he proposes to do about that?

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman thinks that he is at some management committee meeting of the Labour party, browbeating in the old way. I will not respond to

that, but I must tell him that despite the veneer that he puts on, for our benefit, of bonhomie and sophistication, it does not take much to bring out the sneering and snarling individual to whom we have been listening. He has no reason to accuse me of bad faith. I have been in the House a good deal longer than he has, and I have been a Minister for nine years, regularly giving assurances. Not once has anyone said that my assurances were inaccurate or not well-intentioned. Such a charge has never been levelled against me by the occupants of the Opposition Front Bench because on legislation—for example, in dealing recently with the Broadcasting Bill—I have always been able to work effectively with them.

The ridiculousness of the hon. Gentleman's position is fully exposed, and to defend himself he must make imputations of bad faith which, frankly, say more about him than about anything that has come from his Front Bench.

Mr. Livingstone: Again, the Minister has not answered my question. He is not prepared to give the House the details of alleged cases of boys under 14 getting away with rape. Nor is he prepared to say that he will use the existing legislation and the resources of the police to tackle the problem now. What has the Minister been doing since we last debated this issue? He has heard from hon. Members whose constituents suffer the harassment of kerb crawlers and he knows that under existing legislation he has power to take action now. Why is he not doing that?

The answer is that the Government are playing politics with the issue. They have had all the time in the world to tackle the problems of violence against, and harassment of, women inside and outside marriage, but they are not prepared to deal with that. They have used the procedures that I am using to block a Bill that would have made rape in marriage illegal. Will the Minister now accept that that was a mistake? Are the Government prepared to say that rape in marriage should be a crime and that they will allow that measure to proceed?

One cannot give credence to a Government who, after 11 years in office, have neglected the rights of women and who now pose as the champions of women by hiding behind this measure in the name of the hon. Member for Streatham. They control the state machine, the police and the judiciary. After over a decade in Government those issues are not being tackled, and they must answer for that. I repeat my offer to the Minister to explain why he will not use the Public Order Act 1986 and other legislation to ensure that the issue is dealt with now. We should not wait for the Bill to be passed and crawl its way through the Lords. If the Minister is genuinely concerned about women who are harassed on our streets, he should tell the House why he will not use existing legislation and circulate to the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis and the chief constables a memorandum drawing their attention to this problem and demanding that they put police resources into tackling it.

The Minister will not do so because this is about politics and vote-buying. That is why his party collaborates in the sort of smears that we saw in the gutter press. I will not be browbeaten by the gutter press, and certainly not by the Minister. He has it in his power to tackle the problem, but he is not prepared to do it, any more than the Government have been prepared to do much at all for women in any area during the past decade. The Government are in no sense the friends of women. All that they want out of this is to creep back with a new form of sus law that will allow an individual man to be arrested and convicted solely on the word of a police officer. No self-respecting western democracy has such power and no good police officer wants it. If laws have to rely on such power, they will be more at home in the regimes that we are seeing collapse in eastern Europe and other parts of the world where democracy has no long-term standing or is no more than a sham.

In this country all individuals should be able to rely on the law to defend them. Women are harassed and men who might be innocently driving through an area could be stopped by a police officer who says, "I saw you stop and talk to a woman." No evidence would have to be produced, and the woman involved would not have to be produced, but a conviction could be gained solely on the basis of the police officer's word. No law in this country should give rise to such circumstances. Under this Government there has been far too much of a drift away from the old principles of justice where people are convicted on the basis of evidence, particularly forensic evidence. More and more, convictions are based solely on a police officer's word and the extraction of confessions in the cells.

Our legal system is probably the worst in western Europe in terms of its checks and balances. I do not have the slightest intention of pandering to the Minister. I repeat that I would not believe his assurances on any basis and I am not prepared to accept them now. If I do so and step down, I will not have to put up with the filth that will appear in *The Sun*, the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express* tomorrow, but innocent people will be harassed and the sus law will return. I am not prepared to see that, so I am exercising my right to stand here and oppose a Bill that I think is wrong.

After all this time, there has been no answer to the questions that I put to the Government. Every time the Minister gets to his feet he puts forward another smear or plays to the gallery. No doubt the gutter press are getting their headlines ready for tomorrow. I am not interested in that.

Sir William Shelton: Has the hon. Gentleman ever approached me or considered approaching me to see whether we could reach some agreement on the Bill?

Mr. Livingstone: There is no agreement; there is a basic, fundamental disagreement. The Bill has two simple points. The first, which is completely uncontroversial for hon. Members, is to remove the problem of the law's inability to state that boys under 14 can commit sexual intercourse. In the previous debate on this Bill, I said that if the other part of the Bill were dropped, we would agree to the remaining section and it would be unanimously carried in the House and in the House of Lords. There is no dissent about that.

The problem relates to the other part of the Bill which means that one police officer's word will be able to convict a man, without any corroborating evidence or witness. That is the point of contention and there is no way that that can be compromised away because it is a genuine point of disagreement. I recognise the sincerity of the hon. Member for Streatham, but not that of the Minister.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): My hon. Friend has answered the question asked by the hon. Member for Streatham (Sir W. Shelton). At least my hon.

[Mr. Tony Banks]

Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) is visible when he is talking out the Bill. Everyone knows that if my hon. Friend is still talking at 2.30, the Bill will not proceed. Everyone in the country will know that my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East did it, whereas my Bill —the Protection of Badger Setts Bill—was killed off by one Member, who did not consult me either, but who tried to claim the cloak of anonymity. At least my hon. Friend is not trying to kill the Bill anonymously.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): The hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) is killing the badger Bill.

Mr. Livingstone: After the various diversions that originated from the Minister, I shall return to the place in my speech where I was interrupted by him about 20 minutes ago.

Once again, I must draw the House's attention to the analysis of the Bill that appeared in *The Guardian*. I know that some Conservative Members regard *The Guardian* as an adjunct to the Labour party, but that is not how it appears to us. It analyses the objections that the English Collective of Prostitutes has put up:

"the Collective are concerned at the power this puts into the hands of the police and fear that the bill could be used in an arbitrary and random fashion by unscrupulous officers. It is so open-ended, they feel, that it could soon become a replacement for the notorious 'sus' laws."

Ninety-nine per cent. of police officers are excellent and honourable people. They come into the profession because they want to serve the public and they do so to the best of their ability, often with inadequate resources provided by central and local government. Often they have the task of implementing legislation which has been particularly badly drafted by the House; they can often be the meat in the sandwich between a resistant public and a reactionary Government, but they do the best that they can. Even if we accept that 99 per cent. are honest and honourable——

Sir William Shelton *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 38, Noes 5.

Division No. 284] **[2.11 pm**

AYES

Amess, David
Anderson, Donald
Atkins, Robert
Bermingham, Gerald
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Colvin, Michael
Dorrell, Stephen
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Fraser, John
Gale, Roger
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Janman, Tim
Lawrence, Ivan
McWilliam, John
Maples, John
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Mellor, David
Moate, Roger
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Sackville, Hon Tom
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Squire, Robin
Stern, Michael
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thorne, Neil
Tredinnick, David
Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry

Tellers for the Ayes:
Sir William Shelton and
Mr. Hugo Summerson.

NOES

Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Skinner, Dennis

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Harry Barnes and
Mr. Ken Livingstone.

Whereupon MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *declared that the Question was not decided in the affirmative, because it was not supported by the majority prescribed by Standing Order No. 36 (Majority for Closure).*

Mr. Livingstone: In one sense, I am rather glad that the hon. Member for Streatham called the Division. The result of it puts into perspective the remarks of the Minister of State, Home Office. If the hon. and learned Gentleman bothers to return to the Chamber, he may care to explain why proposed legislation that he says is vital does not attract the support of enough Conservative Members even to force a closure. That puts the reality into perspective.

Sir William Shelton: Will the hon. Gentleman understand that I did not contact any of my colleagues, who would have come to the House gladly? I was unaware until late last night that the Consumer Guarantees Bill would not be on the Order Paper. Will the hon. Gentleman understand also my strength of feeling at his action in killing the Bill, which is desperately needed by many people? If he attracts the label of the friend of the prostitute and the kerb crawler, and the hon. Member who helped to talk out the Protection of Badger Setts Bill, it will be what he deserves.

Mr. Livingstone: I thank the hon. Gentleman for revealing the motives behind the Government's protestations.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): What are the hon. Gentleman's motives?

Mr. Livingstone: Had the Father of the House been in his place earlier, he would have heard me explain that we could immediately tackle the problem of kerb crawling. The Government have the powers that they need under the Public Order Act 1986. Any man approaching a woman and making an offensive or indecent suggestion can be arrested under that legislation. I am sure that the Father of the House will want to know about my proposal and add his weight to it. I said to the Minister of State, Home Office, "Why do you not immediately issue a circular to every chief constable and to the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis reminding them of the 1986 legislation and urging them to get their officers out on the streets to tackle the problem immediately?" The Government have the necessary powers, but they do not have the political will to act. They do not have the commitment to defend women.

What we have seen is a sham and a play for votes. The contribution of the hon. Member for Streatham suggests that more is going on to produce headlines than to tackle the problem of women being harassed. That is exactly what I would expect from a Government whose supporters are blocking the Bill to make rape in marriage illegal.

I am sure that the Father of the House supports that Bill. Let him join me in urging those hon. Members who have been jumping up and down protesting their support for the Sexual Offences Bill to campaign to get the Public Order Act 1986 used immediately, as it can be. The Government could issue an instruction tonight to police forces throughout the country. They could ensure that

time was found to consider the proposed legislation that would make rape in marriage illegal. We require action from the Executive, not a whole load of hot air, with hon. Members playing to the gallery and trying to stir up the *Daily Mail, Daily Express, The Sun* and the other elements of the gutter press that have done nothing in the past decade to put pressure on the Government genuinely to defend the rights of women or genuinely to protect women on our streets and in our homes. Everything that the Government have done has undermined the position of women. The Government are playing politics with this issue.

We should not pass legislation which is, in effect, a new sus law, and which allows the police powers that would not be acceptable in any other modern western democracy with a written constitution or a Bill of Rights. If the Government wish to pursue that line, let them have the courage to find the time in their legislative programme for next Session, and do something about it——

It being half past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Debate to be resumed what day? No day named.

Private Members' Bills

RADIOACTIVE MATERIAL (ROAD TRANSPORT) BILL

Order read for consideration (as amended in the Standing Committee).

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Debate to be resumed what day?

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): On behalf of the hon. Member in charge of the Bill, Monday next.

Consideration deferred till Monday 9 July.

PROTECTION OF BADGER SETTS BILL

Order read for consideration (as amended in the Standing Committee).

Hon. Members: Object.

Consideration deferred till Friday 13 July.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) moved that his Bill be now read a Second Time, I honestly did not hear any hon. Member say "Object"—[HON. MEMBERS: "We did."] If you heard an objection, Mr. Deputy Speaker, could you tell us from whom it came?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We have been round that course on many previous Fridays. As this is the last effective Friday for private Members' Bills, perhaps it would be as well if I were to remind the House that this is a well-established procedure. I clearly heard "Object", which means that the Bill——

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West) *rose*——

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point) *rose*——

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have not finished. I also remind the House that the Select Committee on Procedure has considered this procedure fairly recently and has advised against any change to it. The Committee, of course, gave its reasons for so doing.

It might also be as well if I remind the House that the procedure of objection is not available only at 2.30 pm on a Friday; it is used frequently on main sitting days at 2.30 pm to stop private Bills. It can equally be used to stop Government motions at various times. If an hon. Member shouts "Object" to any of those categories of Bill, that does not necessarily mean that he objects to the Bill as such. He may merely be objecting to the Bill proceeding without debate or scrutiny. I hope that that helps to clarify the position for the House.

Sir Bernard Braine: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am sure that the House is grateful to you for the explanation that you have just given of the present position. You did not call me when I sought to rise a little earlier—I should have shouted that I wanted to make a point of order. Great indignation was felt by my hon. Friends about the way in which the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) sabotaged a Bill—and subsequently glorified in that fact—which is of great social importance and of great importance in terms of law and

[Sir Bernard Braine]

order in many parts of the country. Happily, that is not the case in my constituency, but there is a major problem in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham (Sir W. Shelton) which he was seeking to alleviate, with the support of all of us.

I do not know whether the Select Committee on Procedure can be persuaded to reconsider that matter, but there is something badly wrong with our procedures when a Bill that is desired by many people, by the forces of law and order, and especially by women is sabotaged. The hon. Member for Brent, East gave us a lecture, but he was not even well informed. I shall not go into the details now because this is a point of order, but there must be a strong case for the Select Committee on Procedure being asked to reconsider that matter. Parliament is a living and continuing thing. It may take a view one day, but if abuse continues to occur, I believe that the Select Committee should be asked to reconsider.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I fully understand what the Father of the House, the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), said, but what occurred today was in order. If, however, the right hon. Gentleman feels that the matter should be referred to the Procedure Committee, who better to do that than he?

Mr. Tony Banks: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I say through you, Sir, to the Father of the House, for whom I have infinite respect, that I believe, as a member of the Procedure Committee, that he has made a good point? However, I must point out to him that there was a difference between the way that my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) dealt with the Sexual Offences Bill and the method used by those who objected to my Protection of Badger Setts Bill. My hon. Friend objected openly to the Sexual Offences Bill. He will have to take whatever public criticism comes his way and he will, no doubt, endure it in his customary fashion.

Unlike my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), I clearly heard the objections to my Protection of Badger Setts Bill from the hon. Members for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) and for Devizes (Sir C. Morrison). The difference between them and my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East is that they want to wear the cloak of anonymity. Every hon. Member must in the end be accountable for his or her actions. I respect the views of any hon. Members who wish to use the procedures of the House to kill off a Bill if they believe that that is in the best interests of their constituents, or of whatever other interests they serve. However, they ought not then to be able to claim anonymity.

I was not here at 9.30 when a number of points of order were raised because last week I named the hon. Member for Devizes who objected to my Bill. I understand that he has received a number of threats. I utterly deplore them. Anyone who issues threats ought to realise that, far from the hon. Member for Devizes being criticised by the public, as he ought to be, he could gain their sympathy. I hope that anyone who is considering such foolhardy actions will bear that in mind. The Bill will return to this place, when the hon. Members for Romsey and Waterside and for Devizes will undoubtedly endure public criticism for having killed off the Protection of Badger Setts Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The matter has been well ventilated on both sides of the House. We must now get on.

GAMING (AMENDMENT) BILL *[Lords]*

Considered in Committee.

[SIR PAUL DEAN *in the Chair*]

Clause 1 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 2

SHORT TITLE, COMMENCEMENT AND EXTENT

Amendment made: No. 1, in page 2, line 4, leave out subsection (7). *[Special Entry.]—[Mr. Gale.]*

Clause 2, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Schedule agreed to.

Bill reported, with an amendment; as amended considered; read the Third time, and passed, with an amendment.

REFORM OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.—[Queen's consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified.]

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 20 July.

HUMAN RIGHTS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 20 July.

MISUSE OF DRUGS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 20 July.

WRITTEN CONSTITUTION BILL

Order for Second Reading read.—[Queen's consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified.]

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 20 July.

LONDON GOVERNMENT BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 13 July.

ELIMINATION OF POVERTY IN RETIREMENT BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 13 July.

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I shall take it when I have dealt with the remaining orders.

FUEL AND ENERGY PROVISION BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 20 July.

POLL TAX (ABOLITION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 20 July.

LOCAL AUTHORITY PLAYING FIELDS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Objection taken. Second Reading what day?

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): With the agreement of the Member in charge of the Bill, Friday 20 July.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 20 July.

NUMBERING OF PREMISES BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

CONTROL OF TOXIC WASTE RESIDUES BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 20 July.

DRUG TESTING (SCHOOLS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 20 July.

INJURIOUS AFFECTION (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTORAL REFORM BILL

Order for Second Reading read

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 20 July.

FORMER MINISTERS (INTERESTS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read

Hon. Members: Object

Second Reading deferred till Friday 20 July.

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL (PROTECTION OF GREENFIELD SITES) BILL

Order for Second Reading read

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 20 July.

BEACHES AND COASTLINE (REGULATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 20 July.

SAFEGUARDS FOR RESIDENTS IN REGISTERED HOMES BILL

Order for Second Reading read

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 20 July.

ADOPTION (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 20 July.

DOGS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 20 July.

PRIVATE SECURITY (REGISTRATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 20 July.

PULP AND PAPER PRODUCTS (RESTRICTION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Objection taken. Second Reading what day?

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): I feel lucky. Friday 13 July.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 13 July.

HARBOURS, DOCKS AND PIERS CLAUSES ACT 1847 (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 13 July.

ABOLITION OF DEER HUNTING BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 13 July.

LICENSING OF TICKET SALES BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 13 July.

MOTOR TRADE (CONSUMER PROTECTION) BILL *[LORDS]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Objection taken. Second Reading what day?

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): With the agreement of the Member in charge of the Bill, Friday 20 July.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 20 July.

LONDON LOCAL GOVERNMENT BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 13 July.

POLL TAX (RESTORATION OF INDIVIDUAL PRIVACY) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 13 July.

RAPE IN MARRIAGE (OFFENCE) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 13 July.

TRADE UNION ACT 1984 (AMENDMENT) BILL *[LORDS]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 20 July.

CHLOROFLUOROCARBONS (CONTROL) BILL *[LORDS]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Objection taken. Second Reading what day?

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): With the agreement of the Member in charge of the Bill, Friday next, Sir. That was a disgraceful objection.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 13 July.

Mr. Amess: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My Bill—the Raoul Wallenberg (Memorial) Bill—was not moved. I am pleased to say that the Government have agreed to assist in securing a piece of land in a prominent part of London on which to place a fitting tribute to Raoul Wallenberg, and I shall therefore not be taking the Bill any further. Let me take this opportunity to thank all the hon. Members on both sides of the House who have helped to bring about this unique event.

Sir Bernard Braine: I was a member of the Standing Committee that dealt with the Bill. I was greatly disturbed—for reasons that I have already mentioned—by the way in which objection to the Bill was handled; however, there has been a happy ending to the story. Let me simply say that the Bill was intended to secure a memorial to one of the great heroes of the 20th century, whom the United States made an honorary American citizen. Surely the least that we can do is mark his sacrifice, and his dedication and devotion in saving at least 100,000 lives through personal endeavour by ensuring that the piece of land so generously offered by the Government is sited prominently in our capital city.

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As a particularly observant occupant of the Chair, you will have noticed that, during the slaughter of the innocents that traditionally takes place on this day every July, many hon. Members objecting to ten-minute Bills—most of them Opposition Members—have stood to record their objections. Should not the names of such hon. Members be recorded? At least hon. Members who attempt to say publicly why they oppose certain Bills would then be able to do so.

The Elimination of Poverty in Retirement Bill has been presented seven times in the two most recent Parliaments, and has always been objected to, usually by a member of the Trappist tendency on the Conservative Benches. That has caused grave disquiet to many pensioners who would like to see some light at the end of the poverty tunnel.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is not allowed to discuss the Bill. What is his point of order?

Mr. Corbyn: The point of order is this, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As you know, I am here nearly every Friday at this time to discuss these issues. You must be aware of the disquiet in the House about the anonymity, of objectors: it is tantamount to a secret vote. In an elected Parliament, everything should be open and above board. If the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) wishes to oppose the abolition of deer hunting—or the excellent Bill presented by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) to protect badger setts—let him stand up and say so.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If I deal with the point of order from the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), I may short-circuit later points of order.

This matter was dealt with at length by Mr. Speaker at the beginning of our proceedings today. I have repeated what he said, and made one or two additional points in the light of points of order. There is nothing that I can add.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and on a separate matter, relating to the business that has just gone through.

I realise that silent objections are not a matter for the Chair; you and Mr. Speaker have made that clear. One of this week's issues, however, has been behaviour that discredits Parliament. People outside complain regularly about Bills that are killed rather than being allowed to be voted out. If their future is determined by a vote, people understand; if it is determined by an unnamed objector, they do not, and they do not regard that as a democratic process.

Will you clarify another point, Mr. Deputy Speaker? I understand from the Vote Office that many of the Bills in the long list that has just been read out have not been printed. If that is so, am I right in thinking that, in effect, hon. Members will have no opportunity to move the motion for Second Reading? Would it be possible in future for the Order Paper to show whether a Bill has been printed, and, if it has not, for it not to appear on the Order Paper? There was a long list of Bills that had been printed, but it was made longer by the Bills that had not been printed. The general view is that Bills that are serious attempts at legislation should be printed. They should be seen as serious legislation, whereas that status should not be accorded to Bills of hon. Members who, as it were, fly a kite but never draft or print the Bills.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: May I deal with this, because it is probably a separate point? The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) makes a valuable point, because sometimes the procedure is somewhat confusing. If there were no objection to a Bill that had not been printed, we would not allow its Second Reading to be moved. The hon. Gentleman may wish to put his other point to the Select Committee on Procedure.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): Further to the point of order raised by the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think that the hon. Gentleman has a point. I have no hesitation in objecting, and being identified as somebody who had objected, to the Protection of Badger Setts Bill and the Abolition of Deer Hunting Bill. I do object—I made this point earlier today—to the promoter of the Bill abusing points of order by making a speech about an objection to which, without a further abuse of the points of order procedure, the hon. Member who has objected has no opportunity to reply. The actions and words of the promoter of a Bill can be misconstrued by people outside who have an interest in it. I hope very much, as a result of the many points of order raised this morning and the clarification given from the Chair by you, Sir, and Mr. Speaker, that the public outside will begin to appreciate that objections to Bills are often merely an attempt further to discuss measures such as the Protection of Badger Setts Bill, which I want to see on the statute book in an amended form.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Further to the points of order made by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), Mr. Deputy Speaker. He is right that people should be clear about the procedures of the House. The points that he made were valuable. People are confused not only by the procedure that we have just gone through but about some of the Bills that are brought before the House.

In a point of order, the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) suggested that he did not know who had objected to his Elimination of Poverty in Retirement Bill. Anyone who did not know that I had volubly objected to it would have to be lacking in all sensory perception. The real abuse is that the Bill had no chance of succeeding. It would never have been in the programme of any party and the hon. Gentleman is misleading people, for his own political advantage, into believing that it had any chance of succeeding.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: These are all valid points to put to the Select Committee on Procedure, if the hon. Gentleman so wishes.

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Both hon. Members who are now standing have had a go. I will call them again, but I am extremely anxious to hear what the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) wishes to say in his Adjournment debate. I should like to get on to that pretty quickly.

Mr. Banks: Further to the point of order raised by the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin), Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman was most disingenuous: he said that his only reason for objecting to the Protection of Badger Setts Bill was that he wanted further debate. He knows that there will be no further opportunity to debate it on the Floor of the House unless the Government allocate time for that. He was a member of the Standing Committee that considered the Bill and we had three full sittings, at which he made all the points that he wanted. If he had allowed the Bill to proceed today, it could have gone to the other place, where the further debate could have been held. The hon. Gentleman should not try to pull the wool over the House's eyes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We cannot debate these matters now.

Mr. Martyn Jones (Clwyd, South-West): On a point of order. Mr. Deputy Speaker. Earlier, spurious points of order were made about my Consumer Guarantees Bill. Mr. Speaker ruled that the procedure that I used to change the date from today to 20 July was perfectly in order, but will you confirm that?

I forced a voted on the Road Traffic (Temporary Restrictions) Bill, which resulted in it being dropped and moved to Monday. I believe that this is a genuine point of order. Will you confirm, Sir, that the Government can allow time for a debate on that day and could allow time for my Consumer Guarantees Bill to be considered in Government time? That would show that the Government are concerned about consumers, not about manufacturers who produce shoddy goods.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I should not want to deal with that point off the cuff. I am not exactly sure about that, and I should want to give the hon. Gentleman wholly accurate advice. I suggest that he seek advice afterwards from the Clerks, who I am sure will be able to tell him exactly what happens.

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. Member wish to speak on the Adjournment?

Mr. Corbyn: No, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I should like to raise a point of order. I should like to put on record my gratitude to the hon. Members for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) and for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) for bringing a little glasnost into the Chamber. They have at last said that they are opposed to the debating—not to the passage—of the two Bills with which I am associated.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: That is untrue. Do not tell lies in the House.

Mr. Corbyn: I heard the hon. Member for Harrow, West say something that I believe to be fully out of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The comments by the hon. Members for Harrow, West and for Romsey and Waterside re-emphasise the point that the House needs to debate procedure once again. If a Member who has the support of thousands, if not millions, of people wishes to bring to the attention of the nation the problem of the impoverishment of elderly people, that does not mean that the relevant legislation will be carried by the House. I am pretty sure that Conservative Members would vote against it. I am sure that you agree, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it is the function of the House to debate measures brought forward by individual Members through the proper procedure.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We cannot debate these matters now. I have let the House have a good run.

HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS SHIPPING SERVICES

Ordered,

That the provisions of paragraph (2) of Standing Order No. 84 (Constitution of standing committees), paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 86 (Nomination of standing committees) and Standing Order No. 101 (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.) shall apply to the draft Undertaking by the Secretary of State for Scotland with the consent of Her Majesty's Treasury and of Orkney Line Ltd, and Shetland Line (1984) Ltd. and to the draft Undertaking by the Secretary of State for Scotland with the consent of Her Majesty's Treasury and of Shetland Line (1984) Ltd. as if they were draft statutory instruments; and that the said draft Undertakings be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Islington Health Authority

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

2.56 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I should like to refer to the problems of Islington health authority, which obviously covers my constituency as well as the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) and part of the borough of Haringey, which is covered by the Hornsey and Wood Green constituency.

I am sponsored as a Member by the National Union of Public Employees. I receive no personal income from that organisation, but I have a considerable interest in the health service through that sponsorship and because I represent an inner-city area. My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury cannot be here, because he is away in Brussels on Front-Bench duties. He wishes to be associated with the general thrust of my remarks because he is worried about these matters.

The Islington health authority covers a predominantly impoverished inner-city area. In many senses, the health problems in the area are related either to the poverty of elderly people—there is an aging population—or to housing and social stress, such as alcoholism and various forms of psychiatric illness which largely emanate from social conditions.

It is to the credit of many people and organisations in Islington—the health authority, the council, the community health council, Islington Health Watch and many more—that Healthy Islington 2000 has been launched. It is trying to put into practice what the World Health Organisation has been preaching for a long time. I refer to a paper which was included in the report by Dr. Leila Lessof, the borough's public health officer. Monika Schwartz produced a paper on behalf of Healthy Islington 2000, in which she said:

> "We can recognise that not only do we need to promote healthier life-styles, we also need to create a healthier environment for people who work and live in Islington."

The main points were as follows: to develop relevant health targets and indicators; to address directly inequalities in health, taking account of the health needs of the black and ethnic communities who live in Islington; to co-ordinate health promotion activities between the borough, the district health authority and other agencies; and to encourage an interdisciplinary approach to improving health and collaborative projects.

The Government's funding policies in respect of the needs of Islington health authority do not make many of those achievements possible.

The borough has been poll tax-capped, as have neighbouring boroughs, so there are problems involved in trying to implement the community care policies that have been put forward. There are also problems associated with the lack of ring fencing of community care expenditure, an issue which was extensively debated in the House recently. In addition, there is a great thirst for a better health service in Islington. The social history of the borough reveals—for example, the establishment of the Manor Gardens centre in 1912—the desire of working-class people living in the poor area of Upper Holloway to achieve a degree of communally provided and funded community health care.

There are several health funding issues affecting Islington that I particularly draw to the attention of the House. One is the closure of Friern hospital, a large Victorian institution in the borough of Barnet which is jointly funded by Islington and several other areas. It is due for closure in 1993 and has been the subject of much controversy, particularly since there is no ring fencing of the community care provision of money that will be passed to borough councils.

I do not doubt the intentions of the London borough of Islington to carry out a decent community care policy. It is simply that the pressures on the borough's budget are intolerable. In addition, the borough has been poll tax-capped, as has the neighbouring borough of Haringey. An example of the difficulties facing mentally ill patients came in this story in *The Haringey Independent* of 28 June:

"Forty-nine-year-old Miss Patricia Burbidge of Wood Green was taken to North Middlesex Hospital where she died of multiple injuries."

She was a mentally ill woman who was killed when she was in collision with a train at Bounds Green station.

"Police are not treating Miss Burbidge's death as suspicious and an inquest will be held later this month. They believe Miss Burbidge was an in-patient at Friern Barnet, a mental hospital being run down as part of the Government's care in the community programme. The Voluntary Co-ordinator of the Enfield and Haringey Branch of the Schizophrenia Fellowship, Pamela Maher, criticised the pace of the rundown of long stay psychiatric hospitals in the wake of the tragedy. She said: With the rundown of Friern Barnet Hospital, it's increasingly difficult for staff to cope.'"

That emphasises many of the problems affecting the morale of the staff and the safety of patients, due to the rundown and accompanying loss of staff.

That newspaper carried a further story about the closure of Friern hospital and reported that Dr. Doris Hollander, consultative community psychiatrist at Friern hospital, was deeply worried about the shift of patients from the hospital. They would end up homeless, in prison or committing suicide, she said.

It is important for us to air loudly problems such as that. There are 590 patients at Friern, 200 of whom come from Islington. I am sorry to say that patients from many mental health institutions do not get adequate community care. Instead, they slip through the net, and a tour of people in London who nightly have to sleep near the central heating grilles of offices, alongside the Savoy hotel or in parks in north London reveals the tragic situation of many former in-patients of long-stay institutions. I am in favour of community care, but if it is not properly funded, we shall continue to have the disastrous situation that now exists.

With the possible advance of the closure of Friern hospital, a degree of panic is setting in. Insufficient alternative accommodation will be available if the closure is brought forward two years, the latest proposal to come from the regional health authority. May we be assured that such a speedy closure of Friern will not go ahead without the provision of adequate, full-time, permanent accommodation for those who will be discharged when the hospital finally closes? My second substantive point is the problem of the funding of Islington health authority. The annual report of Islington community health council stated:

"In October last year the health authority agreed cuts in services of 65 beds, and 16 per cent. reductions in operating theatre out-patient sessions."

In November, the health authority announced delays in funding a number of big capital schemes, including Whittington's diagnostic block. The report continued:

"Waiting times for admissions and out-patients' appointments grew. Many patients had appointments postponed, and sometimes postponed again,"

as a result of those decisions. The quality of care received by patients has deteriorated and there are worries that patients are being pushed out of hospitals far too quickly.

As part of the proposals to save money, the authority's search for solutions includes centralising services on the Whittington site, removing all remaining acute beds from the royal northern hospital, a historic hospital just down the road, the accident and emergency department of which was closed some time ago despite the hospital being the borough's war memorial. The more efficient use of out-patient departments has meant that pressure on the hospital has become worse. Last October the number of beds was reduced by a further 60 on top of the considerable cuts that had already taken place.

Doreen Scott, a fine woman who suffers from severe disability and is wheelchair bound, is the chair of Islington community health council. She has done enormous work throughout the borough for many years and, as a patient of the Whittington hospital, she conducted a survey on the effect of those cuts. It stated:

"the food was poor—often not hot enough and often not what I ordered . . . maintenance of the ward was poor—light bulbs were not replaced and the payphone not emptied."

When she was in hospital she witnessed the problems of transferring patients between wards because of the lack of staff. One patient had to go for a test in the diagnostic block across Highgate hill wearing his pyjamas because there was no ambulance available to fetch him. She witnessed a number of elderly patients being discharged who appeared to be still in need of hospital care. She is experienced in such matters.

The long-term problems are that over the decade the health authority has been told to make cuts of about 15 per cent. in real terms and 11 per cent. real terms expenditure has been cut from the Islington health authority since 1983. Dr. John Yudkin, a respected doctor dealing with diabetes at the Whittington hospital, who is well known to many people, presented a fact sheet, which was never denied, to members of the authority and the public last November. It stated that, despite the money granted to Friern hospital and the underfunding of the pay awards, during the past six years there has been a continuous cut in funding. Efficiency savings meant that the increase in expenditure had to be met by a reduction of expenditure in the district. On top of that, the district has had to contribute to the pool expenditure of the Lawson cuts and the regional growth pool. He also explained the problems that he and many others suffer as a result of the severe cuts in the expenditure of Islington health authority. There has been a 34 per cent. bed loss in the past six years. The Whittington hospital is now down to a mere 600 beds. At its height it was a large hospital of 1,500 beds.

At its meeting in October, the district health authority received a list showing the closure of one ward at the royal northern hospital, the closure of further wards at the Whittington hospital, restriction to five-day usage, agency and recruitment costs and the reduction in operating theatre lists. That last item saved £160,000, and the total list added up to savings of £1 million. That saving has resulted in a considerable deterioration of the health care

[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]

available to the people of my constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury.

The health authority's more recent meeting on 6 March 1990 listed proposals for service reductions totalling £980,000 and analysed how the problems had come about. It stated:

"The major problem for Health Authorities with this allocation is that the provision for inflation has only been included at 5 per cent. This is unlikely to be sufficient to meet either pay or price inflation. Pay awards for public sector employees are likely to be settled with a 7·5 per cent. increase being the minimum expectation with price inflation are also running at 7 per cent."

Ludicrous demands are placed on area and regional health authorities, which mean that they cannot meet the targets and needs of patients within the community that they are there to serve.

By contrast, Hornsey central hospital, which is also in the district, demanded £1 million for refurbishment for one part, which was at first refused, and has now been phased over two years with £250,000 being paid in the current year, and £750,000 next year. In the same year that refurbishment of Hornsey central hospital was refused by the regional health authority, about £1 million was spent on the refurbishment of the regional health authority offices: these are serious matters indeed.

A merger has been proposed for Bloomsbury health authority, with part to go to Parkside, but the majority to Islington. There has been strong opposition to the merger for a number of reasons. First, it prevents Camden from having a coterminus health authority and makes coterminosity with Islington much worse—it is already not coterminus and will become even less so. In addition, Bloomsbury health authority is notoriously underfunded. A public consultation document on the merger received 60 responses, which is a large number for such a process. It is arcane to ask somebody to comment on the boundary changes of a health authority; nevertheless there were 60 responses, and only three supported the idea. Two responses were qualified and 55 had serious reservations.

I did not send in an objection or a view on the document because I associated myself with the response put forward by Islington Health Watch, as I chaired the meetings that drew up the response.

In the objections it was claimed that:

"The consultation period is unreasonably short . . . while it is claimed that the plans will improve liaison between Westminster Council and the Health Authority, the same argument has been totally ignored for Islington and Camden . . . Creation of a Camden Health Authority (by merging Bloomsbury and Hampstead Authorities) needs looking into . . .The merger of Islington and Bloomsbury Health Authorities will probably be followed by merging Hampstead Health Authority with them. Thus causing a second upheaval"—

on top of goodness knows how many upheavals in health service reorganisation in the past 15 to 20 years.

I hope that those objections will be taken seriously by the Minister.

My union—the National Union of Public Employees—and the Confederation of Health Service Employees and other unions have shown their objection to the proposal. They are concerned about the problems that will result in the development of community services, mental health services, education and management arrangements. It is interesting that the City of Westminster also sent in an objection which says:

"The issue of coterminostity between health and social services authorities remains important, particularly in view of the legislative proposals in the NHS and Community Care Bill currently before Parliament, for this was the primary justification for the proposed transfer of north-east Westminster to Parkside."

I have had discussions with many people associated with health work in Islington and Camden in preparation for this short debate. They are all concerned about funding, about the closure of Friern, and about the need to develop facilities which will meet the needs of the people of our borough. They are in a difficult position. The Bloomsbury merger has been mooted for some time and there has been some consultation on it. A large number of objections have been sent in.

Will the Minister tell us that the Bloomsbury merger is not going ahead? He and his colleagues have had letters from my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury, with which I wish to be associated, asking that it should not.

Will the Minister instead announce that it is his intention to retain the objective of coterminosity between health authorities and local authorities. It will be difficult to achieve a good standard of co-operation, as has developed between Islington health authority and the London borough of Islington, if one has to deal with two or even three boroughs, which is what will happen.

Also, the Government and Ministers should study the allocation of resources regionally within the health authority. Islington comes within the area of North-East Thames regional health authority, and that area extends from very poor areas of inner London, which need the resource allocation working party formula because they have continuously lost resources over the past decade, all the way to Southend. They are diferent areas with different problems. The authority provides an expensive service. If there is to be health service reorganisation, it would be better to set up a London health planning agency which could direct resources as they are required to health authorities within London. At least that authority would be based on London boundaries rather than on the curious boundaries of the four Thames regional health authorities.

I had discussions this morning with the chairman of Islington health authority, Mr. Moonman, who emphasised the good relationship that had developed with Islington health authority and the need for the Minister to say clearly that the merger will not go ahead and that a new authority will be appointed. I am worried about the lack of democracy in running the health service. There should be rapidly appointed a health authority which reflects the needs and aspirations of Islington's people. We do not need one whose members are drawn solely from the business community, and that seems to be the formula that is developing. We need an authority that represents the borough council, local community and trade union interests and local business people who have a contribution to make. That would genuinely reflect the needs of the borough as a whole. Anything other than that is a receipe for long-term disaster.

Islington requires a recognition of its health needs and support for the good health initiatives that have been taken. Above all, it needs resources. We cannot go on year after year with one ward closure and one bed closure after another in order to meet some ridiculous target set by the

Minister for the regional health authority. We need the resources to meet the health needs of the people that I represent.

3.16 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) has raised a wide range of issues and I have little time in which to respond. I do not think that I can reply to all the questions that he posed, but I shall cover as many as possible.

The hon. Gentleman quoted a call by public health officials for fixing, among other things, targets for the provision of health facilities for ethnic minorities and asked for an improved inter-disciplinary approach to health management. He mentioned a number of other desirable objectives, and I do not disagree with any of them. In terms of those objectives, the hon. Gentleman should be rather more open-minded than some of his hon. Friends to our reforms in the management of the health service. The fixing of health targets, especially for ethnic minorities, is one of the positive results that I expect to flow from the introduction of the purchaser-provider split which is at the core of those reforms. The hon. Gentleman does not have to accept my word for that positive result of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990. He can consult Mr. Chris Ham, who writes for a magazine which I suspect the hon. Gentleman reads more frequently than I do, *Marxism Today*.

Mr. Corbyn: I do not read it at all.

Mr. Dorrell: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman should read it; he could learn how the management of the health service could be improved using the principles contained in our Act. Mr. Ham, who is certainly not a Government supporter, argues that for people who share the hon. Gentleman's political point of view the ideas in the Act present an opportunity—precisely the opportunity that they are intended to present—for health service managers to think specifically about the health needs of people resident in their areas, and then to set out to ensure that those health needs are met.

The Government not only embrace the objective set by the hon. Gentleman but have provided the management framework to turn that objective into reality. Part of the purpose of the health service reforms is that the new health authorities, as prudent purchasers on behalf of their resident populations, should be thinking in a way that has not been necessary in the context of traditonal health service structures. They should think in an ordered manner about the precise health needs of their resident populations and use the budget provided by the national health service to ensure that those priorities are met. The health authority is charged with producing a properly prioritised budget to purchase health care that meets the specific needs of its resident population.

I embrace most of the first part of the hon. Gentleman's speech. The Government seek to do exactly what he urged. That is why we are reforming the structure of health service management to ensure that objectives are more accurately met than was possible in the past.

The hon. Gentleman went on to mention three specific matters that have arisen in his constituency. I shall deal with each of them briefly. The first is Friern hospital. He said that it was part of the Government's programme to run down large mental hospitals as part of their community care programme. As the hon. Gentleman may know, I am the Minister with responsibility for mental illness issues. It is not our policy to run down large mental hospitals. Our policy is to provide mental care that is more accurately targeted to meet the clinical needs of each patient.

Most people in the mental illness world, although not all, recognise that in the past too many patients were put in unsuitable, large-scale hospitals where their clinical needs were not met. It is not our policy to close all mental hospitals. It is our policy to ensure that patients who can most benefit from treatment in the community should have the opportunity to receive it and that those who need more structured support should have that support. The facilities should be available to ensure that the clinical needs of each patient are met.

The context of Friern hospital is interesting. The hon. Gentleman expressed anxiety about patients being discharged without proper support and without a proper treatment programme. That anxiety is precisely the reason why my Department is helping to fund the TAPS—team for the assessment of psychiatric services—programme of research into what happens to patients who are discharged from Friern. We want to be sure that our widely accepted objective of providing more accurately targeted clinical care to individual mental patients is met.

We have set up a research organisation that will act as an informal policeman to ensure that precisely the fears expressed by the hon. Gentleman about patients being discharged from Friern hospital will be examined. We shall find out whether the hon. Gentleman's fears are soundly based. I hope that they are not. We shall do what we can to ensure that they are not. I can give him some comfort by pointing out that the personal social services research unit conducted a research programme into those fears in 28 local schemes. It found that no patient in any of the 28 schemes ended up as the hon. Gentleman described, either on the streets or in prison.

The Government's policy is to ensure that mental patients are treated properly according to their clinical needs. That policy will continue and it will not be changed.

The hon. Gentleman spoke next about what he described as the underfunding of Islington health authority. He alleged that there had been substantial real terms cuts in Islington's health spending. I am glad to assure the House that that is not the case. Between 1982 and 1988-89 real-term spending by Islington health authority rose by 9·5 per cent. The initial cash allocation for this year is up by 9 per cent. on last year.

I prefer to judge the effectiveness of health care in a district by the effect on patients rather than the amount of money spent. The hon. Gentleman may be interested to know that the number of in-patients treated in Islington health authority has risen at an average rate of 1·5 per cent. a year since 1982 and the average number of day cases has risen at an average rate of 6 per cent.

I do not accept that there have been real cuts in the level of health care provided by Islington health authority. I accept, however, that there have been changes in the way in which that health care has been provided. I do not apologise for that, because it is important for any manager in the health service not to insist on managing a service

[Mr. Dorrell]

that is set in aspic. All services should be responsive to the latest opportunities to improve the effectiveness with which health care is delivered.

Thirdly, the hon. Gentleman talked about the proposals on which we have gone out to consultation to change health authority boundaries in the area of London which he represents in part. No decision has yet been taken. We are still considering carefully the 60 responses to the consultative document. My officials have had the advantage, which perhaps the hon. Gentleman has not, of reading all the responses. I am glad to assure him that his presentation of the balance between support, neutrality and opposition is not that which is perceived by my officials who have read the representations.

The hon. Gentleman laid some stress on the coterminosity argument. I understand the concept of bureaucratic neatness, which has some appeal, but those who consider management structure issues within the health service have to approach them more seriously than merely examining lines drawn on a map and then saying "Wouldn't it be nice and neat if all the lines could be drawn down the same streets or the same rivers." There are important issues to be considered and I do not regard coterminosity as an especially important one in terms of the planning of health care in any locality, including that which the hon. Gentleman represents.

The hon. Gentleman laid some stress also on the principle that there should be local representation on district health authorities. That misunderstands the nature of a DHA and its purpose. I would——

The motion having been made after half-past Two o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at twenty-six minutes past Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 25 June 1990

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Archbishop of Canterbury

76. **Mr. Gow:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, what finance has been made available by the Commissioners for the administration of the office of the Archbishop of Canterbury in the current financial year.

Mr. Alison: The Commissioners have paid the stipend of the archbishop and met the costs of his supporting staff and their equipment.

Ordination of Women

77. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, how many priests he expects to be paid redundancy and severance payments in the event of women being ordained in the Church of England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alison: No authoritative projections exist of the numbers of priests likely to leave the Church of England in the event of women being ordained to the priesthood.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Neill Joseph Patterson

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Attorney-General whether he has anything to add to his answer of 19 December 1988, *Official Report*, column *92*, to the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook), on the result of the trial of Neill Joseph Patterson.

The Attorney-General: Yes. The three extraterritorial offences for which Patterson was prosecuted were not tried before a jury. The offences were charged as alternatives to offences allegedly committed in Northern Ireland. As Patterson was convicted of the offences allegedly committed in Northern Ireland the judge did not return a verdict on the extraterritorial offences and ordered them to lie on the file. The result of the trial should therefore read —"No verdict returned; left on file." I regret the inadvertent mistake in the answer.

Criminal Law Jurisdiction

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Attorney-General whether he has anything to add to his answer of 14 May, *Official Report*, column *280*, to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) concerning offences allegedly committed in the United Kingdom.

The Attorney-General: Yes. At the time of my reply the Irish authorities had indicated that the offences alleged against John Brendan Brady were committed in Northern Ireland. However, they have subsequently reported that the offences were committed in the Republic of Ireland, albeit with the intention that offences should be committed in Northern Ireland. I understand that the confusion arose because the offences were charged contrary to provisions of Irish legislation, as amended by the Irish Criminal Law (Jurisdiction) Act, 1976 (CLJA). Whilst the offences could not have been prosecuted but for the amendments to Irish law effected by the CLJA, the prosecution was not an extraterritoral prosecution under that Act.

Mrs. Hanif Bibi

Mr. Madden: To ask the Attorney-General when the appeal of Mrs. Hanif Bibi, TH/9473/88, is to be heard by the immigration tribunal; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The appeal of Mrs. Hanif Bibi is to be heard on 26 June 1990.

Mr. Zabur Khan

Mr. Madden: To ask the Attorney-General when the immigration tribunal is to issue its determination in the case of Mr. Zabur Khan, TH/13322/88; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The determination was issued to Mr. Zabur Khan's representatives in the United Kingdom on 21 June 1990.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Poland

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the total amount of bilateral and EC aid received by Poland from the United Kingdom in 1988.

Mrs. Chalker: Poland received no bilateral aid nor EC attributed aid from the United Kingdom in 1988.

Mekong River Project

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the United Nations commission for the Mekong river project or any of its subsidiary bodies last met; what plans are currently in hand for the furtherance of the programme; and what contribution Her Majesty's Government expect to make to the solving of any problems that are preventing its progress.

Mrs. Chalker: The last meeting of a Mekong commission body was held by the interim Mekong committee from 24 to 27 April 1990. An extensive work programme has been drawn up by the secretariat including some 70 projects planned for implementation in the period 1990-92. These are divided into three main areas: basin planning, data collection and information systems, and resources development.

The British Government already contribute to the cost of various research studies and we have indicated our willingness to consider support to other activities. This could include assistance, with other donors, for a further phase of the water balance study once all members of the committee have agreed the way forward.

Ethiopia

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much food aid has been provided to Ethiopia by the EC and member states since July 1989.

Mrs. Chalker: Detailed information is readily available only for the period since 1 November 1989. This indicates that at least 370,000 tonnes of food aid, worth some £70 million, has been provided or pledged by the Community and its member states in this period for the benefit of the people of northern Ethiopia.

Guyana

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what aid has been given to Guyana, and to what projects, in each of the last 10 years.

Mrs. Chalker: Financial aid to Guyana in project form was suspended in 1983 because of defaults on the repayment of development loans. Financial aid was resumed in 1989 in support of Guyana's economic recovery programme, but in the form of balance of payments support, a grant of £13·7 million being signed for this purpose in June 1989. The technical co-operation programme has continued throughout.

In addition, a bridging loan was agreed, also in June 1989, for the purpose of helping Guyana to clear its arrears to international financial institutions which had led to suggestion of assistance from the institutions concerned. The loan—US$ 10·5 million—was activated on 19 June this year and with bridging finance from other donors and the Bank for International Settlements, has resulted in the clearance of the arrears in question. The World bank and the IMF will shortly be meeting to consider finance for the programme of economic adjustment on which Guyana has embarked.

Expenditure figures for 1980-89 are as follows:

£ '000s

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*
Project										
1. Essequibo sea defences	319	1,188	686	412	31	—	—	—	—	—
2. Tapakuma irrigation	847	397	629	757	10	—	—	—	—	—
3. Dredging equipment	323	152	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
4. Plant and vehicle	15	—	13	4	—	—	—	—	—	—
Programme										
1 Agricultural spares	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	733
2. Fuel oil	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4,942
Technical co-operation	852	738	396	382	378	354	487	635	521	986
TOTAL	2,356	2,475	1,724	1,555	419	354	487	635	521	6,661

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the European Community Council of Development Ministers discussed aid to Namibia at the meeting on 29 May; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave her on 18 June at column *392*.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans the European Community has to grant a beef quota to Namibia under the Lomé agreement.

Mrs. Chalker: We have not yet received the Commission's proposals for Lomé accession arrangements for Namibia. The United Kingdom will support generous terms of accession for Namibia to the Lomé convention. We will give sympathetic consideration to any proposal for a Namibian beef quota.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Reserved Matters

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will introduce measures to ensure that applications for approval of reserved matters are published for consideration by interested parties.

Mr. Needham: I have no plans to change the measures which already exist. Applications for reserved matters are advertised if the proposals have created particular interest at outline stage or where objectors have so requested.

Wages Councils

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to produce for Northern Ireland the information contained in tables in the answers to the hon. Member for Stretford of 24 April, *Official Report*, columns *177-82* and *185-86*, and to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) of 14 March, *Official Report*, columns *251-56*, on wages councils.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is given in the tables. There were no prosecutions in Northern Ireland in 1989 under the Wages (Northern Ireland) Order 1988.

Table 1

Establishments covered by wages councils on register at 1989

Wages council	*Number of establishments*
Baking	286
Boot and shoe repairing	94
Catering	4,404
Clothing manufacturing	140
Laundry	15
Linen and cotton handkerchief and household goods and linen piece goods	49
Paper box	15
Road haulage	1,927
Sugar confectionery and food preserving	21

Wages council	Number of establishments
Northern Ireland totals	6,951

Table 2
Establishments checked and underpayments found in wages council trades—1989

Wages Council	Establishments checked by all methods	Percentage of register checked	Establishments checked by visit	Percentage of register checked by visit	Establishments found underpaying	Percentage of all establishments checked underpaying	Percentage of establishments visited underpaying
Baking	34	11·9	33	11·5	6	17·6	18·2
Boot and Shoe repairing	10	10·6	10	10·6	—	—	—
Catering	912	20·7	714	16·2	96	10·5	13·4
Clothing manufacturing	28	20·0	27	19·3	5	17·9	18·5
Laundry	2	13·3	2	13·3	—	—	—
Linen and Cotton Handkerchief and Household Goods and Linen Piece Goods	7	14·3	7	14·3	1	14·3	14·3
Paper Box	3	20·0	3	20·0	1	33·3	33·3
Road Haulage	415	21·5	207	10·7	11	2·7	5·3
Sugar Confectionery and Food Preserving	2	9·5	2	9·5	—	—	—
Northern Ireland totals	1,413	20·3	1,005	14·5	120	8·49	11·94

Table 3
Workers covered by Wages Councils and results of checks—1989

Wages Council	Number of workers covered by wages Order	Workers whose pay was checked by all methods	Workers whose pay was checked by visit	Workers found under-paid	Percent under-paid of all workers checked	Percent under-paid of all workers checked by visit	Arrears paid £	Arrears not pursued at workers request £	Arrears not assessed for other reasons £	Total arrears as due £
Baking	996	193	146	29	15·03	19·86	8,083·67	—	397·50	8,481·17
Boot and Shoe Repairing	59	7	7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Catering	15,567	2,862	2,337	277	9·68	11·85	6,227·23	234·00	2,238·56	8,699·79
Clothing Manufacturing	9,965	1,834	1,834	20	1·09	1·09	972·42	—	231·13	1,203·55
Laundry	306	19	19	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Linen and Cotton Handkerchief and Household goods and Linen piece goods	1,410	363	362	1	0·28	0·28	35·84	—	—	35·84
Paper Box	841	45	45	2	4·44	4·44	—	—	—	—
Road Haulage	6,904	725	449	16	2·21	3·56	2,896·60	—	252·00	3,148·60
Sugar Confectionery and Food Preserving	226	53	53	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Northern Ireland Totals	36,274	6,100	5,252	345	5·66	6·57	18,215·76	234·00	3,119·19	21,568·95

Table 4
Checks carried out and underpayments found by Northern Ireland Wages Inspectorate—1989

	Number	per cent.
Establishments checked by all methods	1,413	—
Percentage of register checked	—	20·3
Establishments checked by visit	1,005	—
Percentage of register checked by visit	—	14·5
Establishments found underpaying	120	—
Percentage of all establishments checked underpaying	—	8·49
Percentage of establishments visited underpaying	—	11·94

Table 5
Workers whose pay was checked by National Insurance wages inspectorate: 1989

	Number
Workers whose pay was checked by all methods	6,100
Workers whose pay was checked by visit	5,252
Workers found underpaid	345
Percentage underpaid of all workers checked	5·66
Percentage underpaid of all workers checked by visit	6·57
Arrears paid	£18,215·76
Arrears not pursued at workers request	£234·00

	Number
Arrears not pursued for other reasons	£3,119·19
Total arrears assessed as due	£21,568·95

Wages Council	Table 6 Establishments found failing to post wages council notices—1989	Table 7 Establishments found failing to keep adequate records of wages paid—1989	Table 8 Establishments found failing to keep adequate records of hours work—1989
Baking	9	—	3
Boot and Shoe Repairing	4	—	—
Catering	193	4	40
Clothing Maufacturing	3	—	—
Laundry	—	—	—
Linen and cotten Handkerchief and Household Goods and Linen Piece Goods	—	—	—
Paper Box	—	—	—
Road Haulage	87	1	11
Sugar Confectionery and Food Preserving	—	—	—
Northern Ireland Totals	296	5	54

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list those areas which have been declared sites of special scientific interest; and for which other areas he has proposals to become sites of special scientific interest.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The following sites have been declared as areas of special scientific interest:

Carrickbrawn, County Fermanagh
Gortnagory, County Antrim
Moneygal Bog, County Tyrone
Garry Bog, County Antrim
Teal Lough and Slaghtfreeden Bogs, Counties Tyrone and Londonderry
Black Bog, County Tyrone
Glenariff, County Antrim
Cleggan Valley, County Antrim
Monawilkin, County Fermanagh
Lough Beg, Counties Londonderry and Antrim
Beagh Big, County Fermanagh
Garvroa, County Fermanagh
Monaendogue, County Fermanagh
Lergan, County Fermanagh
Drumlisaleen, County Fermanagh
Inner Belfast Lough, Counties Antrim and Down
Glen Burn, County Antrim
Strangford Lough (Part 1), County Down
Ballymacormick Point, County Down
Strangford Lough (Part 2), County Down
Kiltubbrid Loughs, County Armagh
North Woodburn Glen, County Antrim
Dunloy Bog, County Antrim
Strangford Lough (Part 3), County Down
Moninea Bog, County Fermanagh

Proposals for a further five areas are currently under consideration and declarations are likely to be made later this year. Other areas will be designated in the future as a result of continuing survey work, but it is not possible at this stage to predict which sites will be designated.

Rivers (Sewage)

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals he has to separate control of rivers and foul sewage disposal.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The control of river pollution and foul sewage disposal are already separated in the sense that the functions are carried out by separate directorates within the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland. We have not proposed at present to alter that system.

Gargoyles, Newtownards

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answer of 5 June, *Official Report*, column *387*, why some gargoyles at the Old Cross, Newtownards were replaced.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Gargoyles decayed beyond recognition were removed and replaced with new ones based on those remaining. The two original gargoyles, which were better preserved, were retained in order to perpetuate the market cross.

Schools (Selection)

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received about the selection procedure transfer system from primary to secondary level schools.

Dr. Mawhinney: I have received representations about children who have not been admitted to the school of their parents' choice because the school is oversubscribed. It has always been made clear that parental choice is limited by the physical capacity of a school and that an independent appeals tribunal in each education and library board area will consider appeals from parents about the way schools have operated their admissions criteria.

Shopping (Republic of Ireland Residents)

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will raise at a meeting of the Anglo-Irish Ministerial Conference the decision of the European Court to reject the restriction by the Government of the Republic of Ireland on its residents shopping in Northern Ireland; if he will oppose the alternative proposal of a 36-hour restriction on such shoppers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: We have already conveyed to the Irish through a number of channels our anxiety that the European Court judgment should be given early effect and

intend to discuss the matter at the next intergovernmental conference. I have yet to consider the "36-hour rule" proposal with those of my right hon. Friends who have an interest in it.

Cuan Sea Fisheries

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the length of the case of Cuan Sea Fisheries against the Department of the Environment (NI) in the High Court in Northern Ireland; what was the outcome; what payment is being made to Cuan Sea Fisheries; what are the estimated legal costs to the Department; and what legal costs of the claimant will be paid by him.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The case of Cuan Sea Fisheries Ltd. against the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland and others lasted for 85 court days. The plaintiff ultimately agreed to withdraw its claim against the defendants in consideration of an ex gratia payment of £1 million to include costs and outlays. The Department of the Environment maintained its denial of liability. The estimated legal costs to the Department are some £320,000.

Juvenile Crime

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information is available to indicate the length of time between commission and detection of a juvenile offence and prosecution in court; and what has been the trend for such periods over the past five years.

Mr. Cope: The Chief Constable has informed me that the information requested is not held centrally and could not be obtained without disproportionate costs.

The Royal Ulster Constabulary has discretion under the juvenile liaison scheme, through which all such cases are dealt with, to issue a caution as an alternative to prosecution. It does so wherever possible so that not every case reaches court. In cases that are taken to court it is estimated that the average length of time between initiation of proceedings and the final court hearing is three months. I understand that hearings are often adjourned to allow reports on accused juveniles to be obtained from probation officers. An important feature of the juvenile liaison scheme is that juvenile liaison officers visit the parents of the accused juvenile offender before court action is commenced. Sometimes this is not readily possible and, where difficulties arise, alternative arrangements have to be made. Delays of up to a few weeks between detection of a juvenile offence and initiation of court proceedings can therefore occur in certain cases.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether consideration has been given to extending the police juvenile liaison system by establishing a juvenile branch to deal with all prosecutions against juveniles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: Under the juvenile scheme individual sub-divisional commanders have discretion to decide how an offence committed by a juvenile should be dealt with. This is in line with police policy elsewhere in the United Kingdom. Detection of offences by juveniles are therefore often not followed by a prosecution. Cautions are issued whenever possible. The Chief Constable tells me that he has no information to suggest that the use of discretion by sub-divisional commanders is a major factor in delays in the prosecution of juvenile offenders. I understand that he recently examined the desirability of creating a central juveniles branch within the Royal Ulster Constabulary and that he concluded that the case for doing so had not been made out.

Social Fund

Mr. Stevens: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will announce the 1990-91 social fund budget allocations to social security offices in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is as follows:

Social Security Office	*Loans* £	*Grants* £	*Total* £
Andersonstown	915,636	424,212	1,339,848
Antrim	448,449	229,953	678,452
Armagh	317,106	166,613	483,719
Ballymena	383,728	192,327	576,055
Ballymoney	265,554	136,757	402,310
Ballynahinch	48,703	29,384	78,087
Banbridge	162,037	92,455	254,492
Bangor	196,414	108,115	304,529
Carrickfergus	175,273	92,650	267,923
Coleraine	429,403	226,051	655,454
Cookstown	254,167	143,750	397,917
Corporation Street	1,059,369	601,174	1,660,543
Downpatrick	172,124	88,394	260,518
Dungannon	400,736	214,197	614,933
Enniskillen	327,961	194,388	522,349
Falls Road	799,911	387,353	1,187,264
Holywood Road	529,377	291,329	820,707
Kilkeel	61,022	34,367	95,289
Knockbreda	286,501	168,729	455,229
Larne	178,239	92,327	270,566
Limavady	162,347	84,517	246,863
Lisburn	652,879	339,746	992,625
Londonderry	1,204,827	650,955	1,855,783
Lurgan	730,837	400,229	1,131,066
Magherafelt	394,742	237,957	632,699
Newcastle	80,162	45,232	125,394
Newry	678,334	362,648	1,040,982
Newtownabbey	304,808	145,336	450,144
Newtownards	163,269	89,635	252,905
Omagh	394,944	199,907	594,851
Portadown	221,537	121,907	343,444
Shaftesbury Square	586,871	294,472	881,343
Shankill	403,126	214,459	617,585
Strabane	409,558	218,574	628,132

A note explaining how these allocations were calculated has been placed in the Library.

PRIME MINISTER

Economic and Monetary Union

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government on publishing the United Kingdom's proposals relating to economic and monetary union before they are submitted to the EEC; and what notification she has had of the date of the intergovernmental conference at which these proposals are to be considered.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer placed a copy of the Government's most recent proposals on economic and monetary union in the Library of the House on 21 June and reported this to the House in answer to a question

from my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley). The precise date of the intergovernmental conference has yet to be set but we expect that it will be discussed at the forthcoming meeting of the European Council on 25 and 26 June, which I shall attend, and the results of which I shall of course report to the House in the usual way.

Visits, 10 Downing Street

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make arrangements for hon. Members to arrange visits to 10 Downing street.

The Prime Minister: No.

International Atomic Energy Agency

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister what considerations underlay the decision to transfer financial responsibility for the mission to the International Atomic Energy Agency to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office; and to which Department Her Majesty's permanent representative to the International Atomic Energy Agency board of governors in Vienna is responsible.

The Prime Minister: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office traditionally has responsibility for the costs associated with missions to international organisations including those in Vienna. Until recently the Department of Energy paid for 50 per cent. of the costs, including overheads, of Her Majesty's permanent representative to the International Atomic Energy Agency and his personal assistant. These costs were transferred to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in order to bring together responsibility for and control of resources and in the interests of greater efficiency. Her Majesty's permanent representative to the International Atomic Energy Agency is concurrenty permanent representative to other United Nations organisations in Vienna. Although on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office establishment, he also reports, therefore, to a variety of Departments in London.

Economic Advice

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister what provision she makes within her office for the assessment of economic advice from unofficial sources and what estimate has been made of what the cost has been in the last year.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing further to add to the reply I gave the hon. Gentleman on 18 June at column *403*.

Correspondence

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Prime Minister what is her policy with respect to the elapse of time before a letter sent by an hon. Member to the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities should receive a reply; and what action will be taken to staff Department of the Environment Ministers' offices adequately to permit prompt replies to hon. Members' letters.

The Prime Minister: It is the aim of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment that his Department should reply to letters within three to four weeks of receipt. However, the volume of correspondence about the new local government finance system has been very large and I regret that it has taken substantially longer to reply in many cases. A special unit, now comprising 20 staff, has been established to deal with this correspondence and as a result the Department has replied to 58,000 of the 65,000 letters on this subject received from hon. Members and members of the public so far this year. In general, letters from hon. Members on local government finance are being answered at present within about seven weeks and many are being dealt with more quickly than that; with current staffing the aim is to reduce the period significantly as soon as possible.

Global Warming (Diatoms)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister whether she will raise the importance of work on diatoms and related studies at the forthcoming conference on global warming.

The Prime Minister: The work on diatoms is certainly an important component of scientific research into global warming and part of the research work to which I have referred and will continue to refer in speeches and conferences on global warming.

Donna Maguire

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Prime Minister if she will raise with the Prime Minister of the Irish Republic the implications of the failure of the extradition attempt by West Germany of Donna Maguire; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No. This is a matter between the authorities of the Republic of Ireland and West Germany.

Energy Costs

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to her answers of 6 June, *Official Report*, column *615*, and 30 April, *Official Report*, column *385*, what is the square footage of office space to which these figures relate.

The Prime Minister: My answers on 6 June and 30 April relate to holdings of 417,784 and 586,843 sq ft respectively.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister how much was invested in improving the energy efficiency of the Cabinet Office in the latest available year.

The Prime Minister: Energy efficiency in the Cabinet Office has concentrated on encouraging staff to abide by commonsense measures to reduce energy wastage. Details of expenditure on other measures, such as the planned maintenance of boilers and the use of modern energy-saving lighting systems in refurbishment programmes, are not available.

Raoul Wallenberg

Mr. Amess: To ask the Prime Minister if she discussed the case of Mr. Raoul Wallenberg during her recent visit to the Soviet Union.

The Prime Minister: No. But our concerns have been raised with the Soviet authorities on many occasions. The Soviet Union continues to maintain that Raoul Wallenberg died in prison in 1947, but we do not have information about the precise circumstances.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

New Books

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will take steps to direct local education authorities to ensure the recommendations of standards on new book purchase set out in the Bourdillon report;

(2) if he will list those education authorities which *(a)* meet and *(b)* fail to meet the Bourdillon report standards, and what is the number of new books per thousand population purchased for each of the last five years by each.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Bourdillon report deals with the public library service. Neither local education authorities nor my right hon. Friend have any responsibility for this service. Responsibility lies with the Office of Arts and Libraries and local authorities.

Disabled Teachers

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many teachers with disabilities are currently employed in each local education authority in England; and what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of teachers with disabilities.

Mr. Alan Howarth: This information is not held by the Department. Responsibility for the employment and deployment of teachers, including disabled teachers, rests with local education authorities. The Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944 covers all employers with more than 20 employees, including local education authorities.

Overseas Students

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what tuition fees overseas students were charged in each year since 1978-79; and what is the percentage change in real terms in the level of fees currently charged to overseas students compared with that in 1978-79.

Mr. Jackson: Fees are set by institutions and details of the fees actually charged are not held centrally. However, the then Secretaries of State for Education and Science recommended fee levels for all overseas students in 1978-79 and 1979-80 and, in respect of non-EC overseas students who embarked on their courses before 1980-81, between 1980-81 and 1984-85. Since 1980, EC students have been charged fees at the home student rate. In respect of non-EC overseas students embarking on their course in 1980-81 and subsequent years institutions are expected to charge fees sufficient to cover the full cost of the provisions made. The Council of Local Education Authorities and, until 1988-89, the University Grants Committee recommended fee levels to institutions in their respective sectors. Between 1981-82 and 1983-84 the then Secretaries of State also issued similar recommendations to institutions grant-aided by the Department. All the relevant recommendations for the years up to and including 1988-89 were promulgated by the Department. Details are in the Library. Because no information is held centrally on the fees actually charged, it is not possible to answer the second part of the hon. Member's question.

Music

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has for increasing opportunities for children at school to be taught music.

Mrs. Rumbold: Music is a foundation subject in the national curriculum. This means that it will form part of the curriculum for every pupil aged five to 16 in a maintained school in England and Wales. We hope to make an announcement soon on the machinery to be set up to advise on the national curriculum requirements for music.

Primary Schools

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a list of all Her Majesty's inspectorate reports on individual primary schools in England published during the last four years, indicating for each the number of pupils attending.

Mrs. Rumbold: I am today placing in the Library a list of all Her Majesty's inspectorate reports on individual primary schools published between 1 June 1986 and 31 May 1990 showing for each the number of pupils on roll at the time of the inspection.

In a small number of cases that information is not immediately available and I will write to the hon. Member with it in the near future.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much was invested in improving the energy efficiency of his Department in the latest available year.

Mrs. Rumbold: A sum of £10,000 was spent on power factor correction equipment at our Darlington headquarters building in the 1989-90 financial year. This builds on the sum of £28,000 spent by the PSA on electrical lighting control sensors at the same site in the previous financial year.

Capital expenditure on energy saving equipment for the Department's London headquarters site is not justified, as there is insufficient time left to recover the financial outlay that would be necessary before our impending move to new premises.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to the answers of 10 May, *Official Report*, column *217* and 30 April, *Official Report*, column *392* about energy consumption, what is the square footage of office space to which these figures relate.

Mrs. Rumbold: The area of office space to which these figures relate is 540,023 sq ft.

Ministerial Visit

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the ministerial visit to Coventry schools of the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) on 22 June.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I was glad to have the opportunity to visit schools in Coventry on 22 June. I was impressed by

the professionalism and commitment of the teachers I met. It was helpful, following my meeting with representatives of Coventry LEA in February, to be able to see at first hand some of the problems of the physical conditions at these schools. The Department will do everything it can, consistent with the need to be fair to all authorities, to assist Coventry LEA in its task of improving conditions in its schools.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Drug Trafficking (Gibraltar)

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what evidence he has of the use of Gibraltar for drug trafficking.

Mr. Maude: There is no evidence of drug trafficking on a significant scale. But the Gibraltar authorities are always ready to co-operate actively with their Spanish counterparts to investigate all leads which might relate to drug trafficking in, or organised from, Gibraltar.

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures are taken to prevent the use of Gibraltar for the trafficking of drugs into the European Community.

Mr. Maude: Gibraltar's laws against the import, possession, supply and dealing in drugs are as comprehensive as those in the United Kingdom. The laws are rigorously enforced, in co-operation with the Spanish and other EC countries' law enforcement agencies where appropriate.

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have received from the Spanish authorities concerning the use of Gibraltar by traffickers in drugs.

Mr. Maude: The Spanish authorities have raised the problem with us on several occasions. We have repeatedly assured them of the British and Gibraltar authorities' full co-operation in acting against drug trafficking and urged them to supply us with any evidence they have of such activity in Gibraltar.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many meetings of the Council of Ministers there have been since the start of 1979; and if he will list the Ministers who attended each of these meetings.

Mr. Maude: Meetings of the Council of Ministers, with details of the Ministers who attended each meeting, are listed in annex A of the six-monthly White Papers on "Developments in the European Community".

Cyprus

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what effect the United Kingdom's present relationship with northern Cyprus has had on extradition and the effective pursuit of crime.

Mr. Maude: Our policy of non-recognition of the so-called "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" does not preclude operational contacts between British police forces and the Turkish Cypriot police. These are working effectively. The question of extradition has not arisen.

EC (United Kingdom Representation)

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the number of people seconded to the United Kingdom's permanent representation to the European Community in Brussels in each of the years since the United Kingdom entered the European Community; and if he will break these figures down by Department of origin.

Mr. Maude: The exact figures requested are not easily available and their collection would involve a disproportionate cost. Since 1973 more than 150 non-FCO officials have been seconded to the United Kingdom's permanent representation in Brussels. At any one time roughly half the accredited diplomatic staff at the representation are seconded from the home civil service. The largest number are from the Department of Trade and Industry and Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. The Departments of Employment, Energy, Environment, Health, Social Security and Transport, Her Majesty's Treasury, Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland Offices and the Bank of England have also been represented.

Igor Rodionov

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Soviet Government in an effort to secure the release of Igor Rodionov.

Mr. Waldegrave: The case of Igor Rodionov has recently been added to those which we raise in our contacts with the Soviet authorities. We shall continue to press the Soviet authorities until all such cases have been satisfactorily resolved.

Middle East

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment has been made of the implications of the further settlement of Jews in east Jerusalem and the occupied territories on the prospects for a middle east peace settlement.

Mr. Waldegrave: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made clear in the House on 13 June, east Jerusalem is, in our view, occupied territory. We have urged the Israelis to cease their settlement programme in the occupied territories. Such settlements are illegal, provocative and an obstacle to peace.

Bulgaria

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has received a copy of the Council of Europe's observer team's report on the general election in Bulgaria; and if he will congratulate that country on returning to an acceptable form of democracy; and if he will explore ways of encouraging Bulgaria to play a useful role in the European context.

Mr. Waldegrave: We are looking forward to receiving the Council of Europe observers' report. But it is already

clear from the reports we have received from other observers that Bulgaria has made a considerable step towards democracy. This should help Bulgaria to play its full part in European affairs.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the answer of 30 April, *Official Report*, columns *404-05*, about energy consumption, what is the square footage of office space to which these figures relate.

Mr. Sainsbury: The energy consumption figures in my reply of 30 April relate to office space of 137,376 sq m. The figure for the ODA is 21,280 sq m.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much was invested in improving the energy efficiency of his Department in the latest available year.

Mr. Sainsbury: In the year 1989-90 a total of £55,360 was invested in improving energy efficiency in FCO buildings. The old public offices are also being refurbished. It is expected that improvements to the fabric and the introduction of building energy management systems will bring further savings in energy costs.

European Commission

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British citizens are currently employed by the European Commission; and if he will classify them by grade.

Mr. Maude *[pursuant to his reply, 21 May 1990, c. 33]:* The details of United Kingdom staff in the other principal Community institutions are as follows:

	Number
European Parliament	
A grade	69
Linguist grade	59
B grade	32
C grade	84
D grade	17
Total	261
Council Secretariat	
A grade	23
Linguist grade	46
B grade	11
C grade	54
D grade	5
Total	139
European Court of Justice	
A grade	10
Linguist grade	21
B grade	11
C grade	22
D grade	3
Total	67
Economic and Social Committee	
A grade	8
Linguist grade	13
B grade	7
C grade	9
D grade	3
Total	40
Court of Auditors	
A grade	15
Linguist grade	6
B grade	2
C grade	7
D grade	1
Total	31
Grand total	528

Guyana

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many ministerial or other official visits have been made to Guyana, for what duration and for what purpose in each of the last 10 years; what information he has as to the proper conduct of elections scheduled for 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The information requested by the hon. Member in the first part of his question is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The most recent ministerial visit to Guyana was when my right hon. Friend (Mr. Patten), the then Minister for Overseas Development, visited Georgetown from 9-10 July 1989 when he signed a new aid agreement with the Government of Guyana. I reminded the visiting Foreign Minister of Guyana on 21 May of the importance which this Government attach to the principle of free and fair elections and of the need for elections to be seen to be fair.

TRANSPORT

Railway Crossings

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will meet with the chairman of British Rail to discuss the safety of unmanned, no-barrier crossings on provincial lines.

Mr. Freeman: The installation and operation of all unmanned level crossings on public roads must meet stringent safety criteria laid down by the railway inspectorate. The inspectorate liaises closely with British Rail and the appropriate local authorities in all matters of crossing safety. There is the opportunity for discussion of any safety issue with the chairman of British Rail either at our regular meetings or at specific meetings, where necessary.

Channel Tunnel

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether any public funds have been made available towards the cost of a freight terminal linking Scottish industry and commerce with the channel tunnel.

Mr. Freeman: No subsidy is being made available to British Rail under its current plans for the channel freight terminals.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he proposes to make an assessment of the demand for regional freight terminals to link with the channel tunnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: This is a commercial matter for British Rail.

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his statement of 14 June, *Official Report*, column *483*, what information he has on the terms of reference given to Professor Halliday of Durham university and other consultants by British Rail for considering alternative routes for the high-speed rail link to the channel tunnel.

Mr. Freeman: I understand that British Rail is still considering these matters and I will ask it to write to my hon. Friend when it is in a position to provide this information.

Public Transport (Rural Areas)

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he proposes to take any new measures to improve public transport in rural areas.

Mr. Atkins: Public transport in rural areas is mainly a matter for the transport operators. Since deregulation bus mileage outside London and the metropolitan areas has increased by some 21 per cent., with 83 per cent. being run commercially. Local authorities have powers to subsidise additional socially necessary services. In addition, the rural transport development fund receives up to £1 million a year from my Department to support the introduction of innovative services in rural areas.

Cardiff-Wales Airport

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to improve security at Cardiff-Wales airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The United Kingdom aviation security programme is drawn up and administered by the Department of Transport. Its purpose is to protect commercial aviation against terrorist attacks. It is not intended to cover private aviation which is not generally at risk from such activities. The incidents at Cardiff airport which have recently been reported in the local press relate to areas of the airport where private flying takes place, and they have no implications for the security of commercial aviation operations there. In common with other airports, the aviation security arrangements at Cardiff have been tightened considerably in recent months. Further improvements—which will also apply to other airports—are in the pipeline.

Trunk Roads

Mr. Mudd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all trunk road schemes for which public inquiries have been completed but no ministerial decision has yet been made on the inquiry inspector's recommendation, giving the date on which the inquiry was closed; and, where the report has been submitted by the inspector, the date on which the report was presented to the Secretary of State for decision.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 22 June 1990]:* The following schemes in the national programme for England are awaiting a decision following a public inquiry:

		Public inquiry finished	*Inspector's report received*
M6	Widening between junctions 20-21A	May 1990	Awaited
M20	Widening between junctions 5 and 8 (Maidstone bypass)	March 1990	Awaited
M65	Blackburn southern bypass	March 1990	June 1990
A1	Tempsford grade separated junction	December 1989	March 1990
A1	Dishforth-Leeming improvements—Phase 1	November 1989	March 1990
A3	Milford bypass	April 1989	July 1989
A5	Little Brickhill bypass	February 1990	May 1990
A5	Fazeley, Two Gates and Wilnecote bypass	May 1990	Awaited
A11	Besthorpe—Wymondham improvement	June 1990	Awaited
A12	Hackney Wick—M11 link	January 1990	March 1990
A14	M1-A1 link road contracts 8/9	February 1990	Awaited
A14	M1-A1 link road contracts 2/3/5 north	February 1990	Awaited
A16	Ludborough bypass	April 1990	May 1990
A16	Spalding-Sutterton improvement	June 1990	Awaited
A17	Leadenham bypass	January 1990	April 1990
A17	Wigtoft-Sutterton bypass	February 1990	April 1990
A23	Handcross-Pease Pottage improvement	May 1990	Awaited
A27	Crossbush bypass	January 1990	February 1990
A27	Westhampnett bypass	February 1990	March 1990
A30	Oakhampton-Launceston	May 1990	Awaited
A31	Newbury bypass	November 1988	March 1989
A40	Gypsy Circus junction	Joint inquiry August 1989	November 1989
A40	improvement Western Circus junction		
A41	Aston Clinton bypass	May 1990	Awaited
A41/A421	Bicester bypass—Stage 2	November 1989	January 1990
A259	Guestling Thorn diversion	April 1989	July 1989
A406	East of Silver Street—A1010	Joint inquiry November 1988	February 1989
A406	Dysons Road-Hall Lane		
A406	Regents Park Road junction	February 1989	August 1989
A423	Southam bypass	March 1990	May 1990
A428	Bedford Southern bypass	May 1990	Awaited

	Public inquiry finished	Inspector's report received
A629 Skipton-Kildwick improvement	June 1990	Awaited
A650 Airedale route (Crossflatts-Cottingley Bar)	March 1990	Awaited

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Iraq

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what were the main financial constituents of trade protocols one, two and three with Iraq.

Mr. Redwood: The main constituents of the first three financial protocols were as follows:

Year	Amount £ million	To Finance
1983	250	Capital goods/projects
	25	Pharmaceuticals line of credit
1984	250	Capital goods/projects
	50	Pharmaceuticals line of credit
1986	50	Pharmaceuticals line of credit

Under the financial protocols with Iraq, the Export Credits Guarantee Department undertakes to guarantee the repayment of an agreed amount of finance to be used in support of United Kingdom exports to Iraq. This lending is available for particular contracts or projects, or through lines of credit.

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action he proposes to take to ensure that transputers ordered by Jordan are not used as a missile guidance system by Iraq; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 18 June 1990]:* Her Majesty's Government's policy on missile proliferation is well known and all appropriate steps are taken to prevent the proliferation of equipment and technology. A licence is required to export transputers to any destination under the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1989, as amended. Applications for a licence to export transputers for a missile guidance system are considered on a case-by-case basis in accordance with stringent criteria. It has been the practice of successive Governments not to comment on individual licensing matters.

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether all contracts in the United Kingdom for providing sensitive military components for Iraq have now been identified; and what further action his Department intends to take.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 18 June 1990]:* Exporters are responsible for applying for, and obtaining, export licences for goods which are subject to control under the Export of Goods (Control) Order. My officials stand ready to advise whether an export licence is required.

Takeovers

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he plans to alter the scope and emphasis of the work of the takeover panel to take account of the effect of Europewide takeover policies in the run-up to 1992;

(2) if he intends to prepare Europewide takeover regulations as a replacement for the takeover panel.

Mr. Redwood: The draft directive on the regulation of takeovers provides for each member state to designate an authority or authorities to discharge the functions specified in the directive. These matters are regulated in the United Kingdom by the Panel on Takeovers and Mergers through the takeover code. The Commission is currently revising its proposals. When discussions resume, the Government will be seeking to ensure that supervisory authorities in member states can operate with a combination of flexibility and certainty. The takeover panel's experience has shown this to be necessary for effective takeover regulation.

Accountancy Bodies

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether, before granting qualifying body status to an accountancy body, he will *(a)* require it to appoint an independent ombudsman to hear the students' complaints against the body itself and *(b)* seek the comments of its present-day students.

Mr. Redwood: No. However, the Secretary of State will take into account comments received from the public, including accountancy students, when determining applications for recognition of professional qualifications under the Companies Act 1989.

Auditing Standards

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will create a body, independent of the auditing industry, to formulate auditing standards.

Mr. Redwood: I have no plans to do so.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will legislate to ban auditing firms from writing up the board minutes of companies and then auditing the same.

Mr. Redwood: I see no reason to do so. Under existing legislation, a person who is an officer of a company—or a partner or employee of an officer—is prohibited from being appointed as auditor of the company. Moreover, under the Companies Act 1989 the Secretary of State will be able to recognise a supervisory body for auditors only if the body appears to him to have adequate rules and practices designed to ensure that company audit work is conducted properly and with integrity, and that persons are not appointed as company auditors in circumstances in which they have any interest likely to conflict with the proper conduct of the audit.

Departmental Inspectors

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make it his practice to inform the Chairman of the Trade and Industry Select Committee of the number of his Department's inspectors linked to the accountancy firms criticised by disciplinary committees of the accountancy bodies.

Mr. Redwood: No.

Institute of Chartered Accountants

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether, in his consideration of qualifying body status for the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales under the Companies Act 1989, he will require that its students will be made aware of his Department's inspectors' criticisms of auditing firms.

Mr. Redwood: No. The Company Auditors (Examinations) Regulations 1990, which came into force on 20 June, set out the subjects which a qualifying body must test by examination if its qualification is to be recognised under the Companies Act 1989. Although inspectors' reports are not specified as such, the Secretary of State will wish to satisfy himself that the examinations are a proper test of the subject matter, and reflect current best practice, as indicated in inspectors' reports or otherwise.

Riot Control Vehicles

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in what circumstances licences would be granted under the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1989 for the export of riot control vehicles which have been specially designed or modified to be electrified to repel boarders (PL1500(F)).

Mr. Redwood: Licences are required for the export to all destinations of riot control vehicles which are subject to control under the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1989 —SI 1989 No. 2376—as amended. Licence applications are considered on a case-by-case basis, in accordance with stringent criteria, which include an assessment of the human rights record of the country concerned.

It is not the practice to grant a licence for the export of equipment which is likely to be used for internal repression.

English Estates

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what is the overall disposal strategy and mechanism of sale receipts in relation to the sale of assets of English Estates; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what policy will be adopted by English Estates in the disposal of individual terrace units in relation to the sale of its assets; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what is the policy in relation to existing tenants of English Estates who wish to acquire those premises where they are at present tenants; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what is the policy of his Department with regard to asset sales of English Estates; and what policy will be adopted in relation to the sale of assets of English Estates, the manner in which such assets are to be sold and their specific timing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The policy with regard to the sale of English Estates' property portfolio was set out in my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's reply to a question on 26 April. English Estates is currently in the process of drawing up proposals for the conduct of the disposal programme which will best meet the broad objectives that have been laid down.

Home Income Plans

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he proposes to discuss the Life Assurance and Unit Trust Regulatory Organisation report on home income plans with LAUTRO or the Securities and Investments Board.

Mr. Redwood: Home income plans involving investment business are a matter for the SIB and other appropriate regulatory bodies which, I understand, are currently considering them.

North Sea Oil Markets

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will place his Department's joint submission to the New York courts with the Commodity Futures Trading Commission on regulatory jurisdiction over North sea oil markets in the Library.

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) on 24 May 1990.

Investor Compensation Schemes

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the investor and depositor compensation schemes his Department monitors in the financial services industries, together with the compensation ceilings, the date from which they operate, and the criteria for claims.

Mr. Redwood: The Policyholders Protection Act 1975 provides compensation for private policyholders if an authorised insurance company becomes insolvent. A total of 90 per cent. of any admissible claim will be paid. There is no limit on the size of claims. Responsibility for the investors' compensation scheme lies with the Securities and Investments Board.

British and Commonwealth Group

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many representations he has received from creditors of the British and Commonwealth Group.

Mr. Redwood: I am not aware of any representations from creditors. However, some correspondence has been received from and on behalf of shareholders.

Car Imports

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what differences the agreement negotiated in the European Economic Community on 19 June on Japanese car imports makes for the import into the continent of cars produced in the United Kingdom by Japanese-owned or other factories; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: An informal discussion of the future treatment by the Community of cars produced by Japanese-owned companies took place between Ministers on 19 June. Commission officials will shortly participate in further talks with the Japanese authorities. Although formal agreement has still to be reached among member states and with Japan, I remain confident that cars

produced in Britain, including by Japanese-owned companies, will continue to enjoy unlimited free circulation throughout the Community after 1992.

Voluntary Organisations

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list for each inner-city task force those voluntary organisations which have received grants in the current and previous financial years, and make a statement on his policy towards the voluntary sector projects so funded.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 22 June 1990]:* This information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost, since my Department's records do not specify the nature, voluntary or otherwise, of grant-funded bodies.

The task forces work with many different groups, including voluntary organisations, which can help fulfil their enterprise and employment objectives. Moreover, since task forces have a limited life, they devote some of their energy to strengthening local organisations which can step into their role when they leave. Voluntary organisations have an important part to play here, provided that they represent the most cost-effective approach in each case.

Independent Television Franchises

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he is taking to monitor share dealings in companies which hold current independent television franchises.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 22 June 1990]:* None. It is for the Independent Broadcasting Authority to enforce the ownership provisions in section 20 of the Broadcasting Act 1981.

Textile and Clothing Industry

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement outlining the steps which are currently being taken by his Department to ensure that exports by the apparel, knitting and textile industries do not face unfair barriers erected by other countries.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 20 June 1990]:* The question of unfair barriers to exports of all categories of goods is one of the subjects for decision in the current Uruguay round of multilateral trade negotiations. The Government supply information on barriers which we would like to see removed to the Commission, which conducts negotiations on behalf of member states. The Community's aim is to achieve a reduction by all parties in their tariff and non-tariff barriers.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has concerning the level and value of exports of textile and clothing products from the United Kingdom in each of the last 12 months for which figures are available; and what percentage these figures are of those for the same months in the previous year.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 20 June 1990]:* The available figures are as follows:

United Kingdom exports of textiles and clothing by value

1988-89	*£ million*
1988	
April	259·3
May	251·0
June	276·8
July	276·6
August	271·5
September	323·7
October	313·9
November	325·8
December	277·1
1989	
January	234·1
February	273·4
March	321·7

1989-90	*£ million*	*1989-90 percentage of 1988-89*
1989		
April	255·4	98
May	290·2	116
June	289·5	105
July	306·2	111
August	284·0	105
September	353·7	109
October	371·4	118
November	349·7	107
December	320·6	116
1990		
January	277·8	119
February	327·7	120
March	377·8	117

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics (CSO).
Note: Textiles and clothing is defined as divisions 65 and 84 of the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC).

Milford Haven Docks Company

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has received his inspectors' report on the affairs of the Milford Haven Docks Company; and when he expects to publish it.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 21 June 1990]:* The inspectors' report has not yet been submitted. A decision on publication will be taken when it has been received and its contents considered.

Dunsdale Securities

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on what dates and for what periods his Department authorised Dunsdale Securities to conduct business.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 21 June 1990]:* Dunsdale Securities Ltd. was first granted an annual licence to deal in securities on 7 November 1977. Further licences were granted each year until the Financial Services Act came into force on 29 April 1988.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what monitoring was carried out on the firm Dunsdale Securities during the period it was authorised for business by his Department.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 21 June 1990]:* Dunsdale Securities Ltd. provided duly completed monitoring

returns to the Department from September 1983 until it ceased to be licensed by the Department, as required by the Licensed Dealers (Conduct of Business) Rules 1983. Prior to 1 June 1983, there was no requirement for companies to provide returns.

Criminal charges have been brought by the Serious Fraud Office against Mr. Miller, the director of Dunsdale Securities Ltd.

Company Accounts

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will consult the Financial Reporting Council and other interested parties on the need for a statutory definition of true and fair in company accounts.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 21 June 1990]:* It is generally considered that the concept of
"a true and fair view"
is not readily susceptible of definition in a manner suitable for inclusion in a statute. However, I will draw the hon. Member's question to the attention of the Financial Reporting Council.

Chinese Imports

208. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will take action *(a)* unilaterally and *(b)* through the EEC to deal with Chinese imports that infringe the basis of their duty free status.

Mr. Ryder: I have been asked to reply.

As explained in an earlier reply to a similar question, HM Customs and Excise undertakes verification inquiries on imports for which preferential treatment is claimed. Where infringements of the EEC origin rules are detected, appropriate action is taken which includes the charging of full duty.

There is regular exchange of information between the Customs authorities of all EEC member states about infringements of the preferential trade arrangements. That information is used in the control of preferential imports to the EEC.

Manufacturing Investment

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been the level of manufacturing investment in the north-east for each year since 1979 giving 1979 as 100.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have been asked to reply.

The information is not available for investment expressed at constant prices because there are no regional price indices. The table provides the required indices for data at current prices:

Manufacturing investment in the north-east[1] at current prices and expressed as a percentage of the 1979 level

Year	*Percentage*
1979	100
1980	76
1981	53
1982	55
1983	58
1984	69
1985	91
1986	82
1987	90
1988	131

[1] The north-east is not a standard region of the United Kingdom but can be defined as the north less Cumbria. It comprises Cleveland, Durham, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear.

Sports Clubs (Television Rights)

Miss Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will amend the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 to give protection to the governing bodies of sports clubs and associations regarding exclusive television agreements.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are no plans to amend the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 to give legal protection to governing bodies involved in sports events or to change the provisions relating to the copyright protection of television broadcasts.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Mechanically Recovered Meat

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to ensure that all meat products containing mechanically recovered meat are labelled as such.

Mr. Maclean: The Food Labelling Regulations 1984 already require that where a food or an ingredient has undergone a specific treatment, reference to such treatment shall be included on the label if its omission could mislead the intending purchaser. It is for the decision of the courts whether mechanically recovered meat included in a meat product is subject to this rule.

Bovine Somatotropin

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many animal test certificates are still in operation under the Medicines Act for BST, how many *(a)* farms and *(b)* cows the certificates cover; for how long the certificates are valid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: There are currently three animal test certificates. Each one is valid for two years and is renewable. They allow a maximum of 1,287 cows to be treated on 23 sites, although in practice many fewer cows are receiving BST at any one time.

White Tigers

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has concerning the diagnosis of white tigers at Bristol zoo as suffering from spongiform encephalopathy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Spongiform encephalopathy and other lesions were discribed in the brains of four out of six white tigers which died or were killed in Bristol zoo between 1970 and 1977. All six cases had a similar illness of between one and five months' duration with behavioural changes. The changes described by the authors did not resemble those seen in transmissible spongiform encephalopathies. Subsequently, mice and chimpanzees were inoculated with brain material from the tigers but none developed clinical signs suggestive of a transmissible spongiform encephalopathy.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 30 April, *Official Report*, column *458*, what is the square footage of office space to which these figures relate.

Mr. Maclean: The information previously supplied related to all departmental accommodation, not just office space. It related to an area of just under 600,000 sq m—about 6·5 million sq ft.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much was invested in improving the energy efficiency of his Ministry in the latest available year.

Mr. Maclean: A total of £40,000 was spent in the 1989-90 financial year specifically on energy-saving measures. Other maintenance and structural works also contributed to energy saving to a greater or lesser degree without this aspect being a separately identifiable element in the costs.

EC Surplus Food

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will introduce a method of distributing European Community surplus food that ensures all people who are entitled to receive this surplus food do so; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 19 March, *Official Report*, column *444*. An announcement will shortly be made to the House of the names of the organisations that will be designated to distribute this food.

NATIONAL FINANCE

China (Imports)

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps are being taken to investigate infringement of the EEC's generalised system of preferences, country of origin rules in respect of imports from China; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: Her Majesty's Customs and Excise checks the entitlement of imports from China to the beneficial rates of duty under the European Community generalised system of preferences. Some imports are selected for verification, and in the event of any infringement of the European Community origin rules appropriate action is taken, which includes the charging of full duty.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the answers of 14 May, *Official Report*, column *274* and 30 April, *Official Report*, column *443*, about energy consumption, what is the square footage of office space to which these figures relate.

Mr. Ryder: The square footage is as follows:

	sq ft
Government Offices Great George Street SW1	331,536
Chessington Computer Centre, Surrey	86,625
Alencon Link, Basingstoke, Hampshire	16,164
Grosvenor House, Basingstoke, Hampshire	11,851
Riverwalk House, London, SW1	66,851

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answers of 30 April, *Official Report*, column *444*, and 14 May, *Official Report*, column *274*, if he will break down the figures for solid-liquid fuel into solid fuel and liquid fuel.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 22 June 1990]:* The figures shown in both answers refer to liquid fuel.

Skills Training Agency

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will place a copy in the Library of the Treasury guidelines within which the process of receiving bids and the disposal of assets relating to the sale of the Skills Training Agency were carried out.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The general principles covering the disposal of assets are set out in "Government Accounting", a copy of which is in the Library. To ensure that the process of receiving and considering bids reflects best commercial practice, Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte were employed as sale advisers. No general guidance was issued for the bidding process, but Treasury officials were consulted throughout.

Public Finance

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest forecast of the public sector surplus or borrowing for 1990-91.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The latest forecast for the public sector debt repayment in 1990-91 is the Budget forecast of £6·9 billion.

Borrowing Requirement

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the Government's borrowing requirement in May.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The public sector borrowing requirement in May is estimated to have been £1·7 billion.

Efficiency Unit

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out in the *Official Report* a breakdown of the £1,300 million savings by Departments resulting from the work of the efficiency unit referred to in his speech to the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants on 9 May.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 19 June 1990]:* The figure of £1,300 million is a cumulative total of savings agreed by Departments as a result of over 350 scrutinies and multi-departmental reviews carried out since 1979 under the guidance of the Prime Minister's efficiency unit.

Scrutinies and the savings resulting from them are the responsibility of the departmental Minister concerned. However, I am informed by the efficiency unit that, in the period 1983-90, a period for which disaggregated information is readily available, the largest departmental

contributors in absolute terms were the Employment Group, the Departments of Health and Social Security, the Ministry of Defence and the Inland Revenue.

Letters (Cornwall)

Mr. Mudd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne may expect a reply to his letter of 27 March on behalf of Mrs. S. L. Penna, of Laurel Cottage, Greenwith Hill, Perranwell Station, Truro, Cornwall.

Mr. Lilley: I replied to my hon. Friend's letter on 25 June.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Foreign Police (Training)

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers have been trained in the United Kingdom in each of the last five years from (i) Portugal and (ii) Greece; and in how many of these cases the cost of training was met from British public funds.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In 1989, two Portuguese police officers attended training courses in the United Kingdom under central arrangements. The costs were met from public funds. No officers from Greece have made centrally arranged training visits in the last five years.

Animal Experiments

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the total number and names of research establishments where *(a)* cosmetic and *(b)* drug experiments on animals are conducted, the nature of the licence involved and the type of animals used.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The safety testing of cosmetics on animals is authorised at six designated establishments. It is not possible to identify separately establishments at which work on pharmaceuticals is carried out, although research work on medical, dental and veterinary products or appliances involving the use of animals is authorised at about 170 designated establishments.

Details of the number of procedures for the safety testing of cosmetics and for research on medical, dental and veterinary products or appliances are published each year in table 3 and tables 1, 4, 7, 11, 12, and 13 of "Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals, Great Britain" (1988 Cm. 743), a copy of which is in the Library.

It is not our practice to identify individual establishments by name.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many research establishments using live animals in experiments for cosmetic or drug purposes have had their licences rescinded in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: None, other than at the request of the certificate holder.

Female Prisoners

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for the latest date available what was the certified normal accommodation and the actual population for each female prison in England and Wales.

Mr. Mellor: The latest available information on certified normal accommodation and prison population at each of the prison establishments for females in England and Wales is as follows:

	CNA[1]	*Population*[2]
Askham Grange	134	111
Bullwood Hall	126	113
Cookham Wood	120	118
Drake Hall	288	226
Durham	40	35
East Sutton Park	84	81
Holloway	517	481
Low Newton	36	38
New Hall	122	96
Pucklechurch	56	45
Risley	92	98
Styal	208	188
Exeter	5	0

[1] Certified Normal Accommodation as at 11 March 1990.
[2] Population as at 22 June 1990.

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many female prisoners in England and Wales are classified as mentally ill or mentally disordered.

Mr. Mellor: On 30 September 1989, the latest date for which information is available, 19 female prisoners in England and Wales were considered by medical officers to meet the criteria for detention in hospital as set out in the Mental Health Act 1983. Of these, 12 were considered to be mentally ill within the meaning of the Act.

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what facilities exist in female prisons in England and Wales to assist with visits from dependent children.

Mr. Mellor: All female prisons have facilities for inmates to receive visits from their dependent children, including in some establishments play areas with games and toys and baby changing and feeding facilities. As circumstances and resources permit, the opportunity is being taken to improve visits accommodation in prisons. We are also seeking to encourage the provision of visitors' reception centres. The assisted prison visits scheme can in certain circumstances provide financial assistance with the cost of visits by children to their mothers.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on the basis of what energy consumption figures he will be monitoring progress towards the target of 15 per cent. reduction over five years.

Mr. Waddington: The basis for monitoring progress towards the target of 15 per cent. reduction over five years has been set by the Energy Efficiency Office at the Department of Energy. The actual consumption for 1989-90 will be the starting point and the consumption of all fuels will be converted to a common unit of kilowatt hours to enable direct overall comparisons to be made.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the consumption by prisons for each year from 1978-79 of *(a)* kWh of electricity, *(b)* therms of gas, *(c)* litres of liquid fuel and *(d)* tonnes of solid fuel;

(2) what was the spending by prisons for each year from 1978-79 on *(a)* electricity, *(b)* gas, *(c)* liquid fuels, *(d)* solid fuels and *(e)* all energy, expressing the spending in (i) money terms and (ii) real (1990) terms.

Mr. Waddington: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to his question on 5 June, at column *423*.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much was invested in improving the energy efficiency of his Department in the latest available year.

Mr. Waddington: A total of £1·23 million was invested in the financial year 1989-90 in improving the energy efficiency of the prison service estate. I am not able to provide the information on the remainder of the Home Office estate, as the responsibility for most of it rests with the Property Services Agency at the Department of the Environment.

Immigration Offices

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of letters unopened in the *(a)* postroom and *(b)* registry at Lunar house, Croydon and the nationality department at Liverpool on the first day of each month for *(a)* 1988, *(b)* 1989 and *(c)* 1990.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The available information is set out in the table:

Letters unopened in IND

	1988	*1989*	*1990*
January	47,469	976	4,726
February	56,067	779	7,663
March	53,091	2,192	6,996
April	33,347	2,982	3,471
May	7,053	940	5,244
June	545	2,371	4,437
July	226	1,630	—
August	491	855	—
September	253	1,932	—
October	2,889	4,498	—
November	3,281	8,732	—
December	173	4,772	—

On average, letters are being acknowledged within three days of receipt in the Department. There are no unopened letters in the Liverpool nationality office, since correspondence is opened immediately on arrival and passed direct to caseworkers.

Naturalisation Applications

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cheques and postal orders were cashed on each day at his Department in May for applications for naturalisation; and what was the value of the cheques.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Naturalisation fees and registration fees are recorded together. The amounts brought to account on each day in May 1990 and the numbers of applications were as follows:

May	*Applications (Number)*	*Total amount (£)*	*Value of Cheques*	*Postal orders*	*Cash*
1	105	10,645	9,360	645	640
2	93	7,675	7,065	260	350
3	104	10,000	8,940	360	700
4	115	11,820	11,050	660	110
8	127	14,390	12,890	300	1,200
9	120	12,580	11,160	460	960
10	106	9,990	9,390	600	—
11	114	11,795	10,285	870	640
14	115	12,390	9,990	1,175	1,225
15	99	10,725	8,480	875	1,370
16	108	12,450	11,450	590	410
17	87	8,954	8,554	400	—
18	114	10,915	9,665	360	890
21	87	9,565	9,145	180	240
22	125	13,180	11,880	730	570
23	115	11,940	10,385	815	740
24	93	10,122	9,432	400	290
29	96	9,473	9,123	350	—
30	82	8,110	7,470	640	—
31	103	10,400	8,320	690	1,390
Totals	2,108	217,119	194,034	11,360	11,725

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average length of time for dealing with the cases of *(a)* naturalisation, *(b)* variation of leave for visitors, *(c)* political asylum and *(d)* variation of leave for visitors who subsequently apply for indefinite leave.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The available information is given in the following table:

Estimated average length of time between the receipt of an application and the decision, for cases[1] decided in the first quarter of 1990

	Months
Applications for naturalisation	27
Application for variation of leave as a visitor	2
Application for refugee status	9½

[1] Includes, where relevant, cases decided in the Public Enquiry Office as well as in caseworking groups.

Nationality (Registration)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the new target date for the completion of all registration cases made under the British Nationality Act 1981.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Hicks) on 21 March 1990, at column *634*. At that time, we held some 18,000 transitional registration cases where a response from the applicant was awaited. That number has now reduced to 10,000. We cannot set a date for completing these applications as this will depend on how soon applicants respond. For the continuing classes of registration case, our aim is to reduce waiting times below 12 months as soon as practicable.

Energy Costs

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the answers of 18 June, *Official Report*, columns *430-31*, 10 May, *Official Report*, columns *197-98*, and 30 April, *Official Report*, column *400*, what is the square footage of office space to which these figures relate.

Mr. Waddington: The square footage of the buildings is 3,445,664, but this is not all office space, as the buildings listed include offices, stores, laboratories and residential training facilities.

Trafalgar Square (Incidents)

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by age, sex, offence, last known address, and prison, or place of confinement, those people remanded in custody following the incidents in Trafalgar square on 31 March, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Details of the charges preferred against those arrested in connection with the disturbances in central London on 31 March and the readily available information about the age, sex and place of residence of the arrested and charged are set out in my reply to a question from the hon. Member on 13 June at column *192*. I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the other information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Passports

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many passports were held at the Home Office for each day of each month of 1990.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to amend the passport regulations to allow widows and widowers holding joint passports to continue to use them.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The proviso that passports which include particulars of the holder's spouse are not available for use when the spouse (including a widowed spouse) is travelling alone accords with general international practice, and there are no plans to change it.

Immigration

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received from hon. Members on individual immigration cases for each month of 1990.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: For each month of 1990, written representations or queries from hon. Members on individual immigration cases have been received as follows:

	Number
January	532
February	508
March	510
April	430
May	512

Information on the number of representations made orally is not available.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many outstanding applications for *(a)* naturalisation, *(b)* registration, *(c)* variation of leave and *(d)* asylum applications there were in each month of 1990.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The available information relates to casework in B1 and B4 divisions in the immigration and nationality department and is as follows:

	Nationality		*Variation of Leave*[1]		*Asylum and related casework*[1,2]
	Naturalisation	*Registration*	*General immigration casework*	*Eastern European casework*	
January	64,402	47,622	28,023	1,251	14,475
February	65,355	42,791	26,602	1,376	15,031
March	65,050	38,832	26,359	1,609	16,272
April	63,902	35,780	24,581	1,616	17,270
May	64,273	33,755	21,914	1,530	18,150

[1] The casework figures include referred entry clearance applications.
[2] These figures are a total of all work outstanding in the Refugee Unit.

Kurdish Refugees

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to be in a position to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for Glasgow, Central of 5 December 1989, ref. 28762/89, on Kurdish refugees.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the response has been delayed, and I shall reply to the hon. Member in the near future.

Entry Clearance

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases of entry clearance have been referred to him for each month of 1990.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is not available centrally.

Variation of Leave

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to introduce fees for applications for variation of leave; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I am considering how and when the provision for charging for indefinite leave to remain under section 9(1) of the Immigration Act 1988 might be implemented. An announcement will be made at the appropriate time. There are no present plans to introduce fees for applications for other variations of leave.

Distress Warrants

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of distress warrants issued by magistrates courts in 1989.

Mr. John Patten: This information will not be available until around the end of July.

Refugees from China (Permits)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many refugees from the People's Republic of China have been granted *(a)* entry permits and *(b)* residence permits since 4 June 1989.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The available information is given in the following table.

Grants[1] of refugee status or exceptional leave since 4 June 1989 to Chinese nationals who have applied for refugee status

	Number
Granted refugee status	37
Granted exceptional leave	11

[1] Provisional figures which may be underestimates.

These figures do not include Chinese nationals who apply to remain here on an exceptional basis, and are being allowed to stay under the terms of the announcement to the House on 20 December 1989 at column *274*.

Voluntary Organisations

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for each local authority those voluntary organisations in receipt of section 11 funding, money from crime prevention schemes or any other projects administered by his Department.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 22 June 1990]:* Under present arrangements, section 11 funding may be paid only to local authorities. Although posts funded in this way may be based in voluntary organisations no collected information is kept of such posts.

Grants under the safer cities programme are currently made in 16 local authority areas and I will write to the hon. Member with a list of the voluntary organisations that have received funding to date.

Most Home Office grants to voluntary organisations and projects are not allocated by reference to local authority area. The latest available information about Home Office grants was given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) on 11 May at column *254*.

ENVIRONMENT

Nuclear Waste

85. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he was last in communication with Nirex regarding possible sites for a nuclear waste repository.

86. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he was last in communication with Nirex regarding possible sites for a nuclear waste repository.

87. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he was last in communication with Nirex regarding possible sites for a nuclear waste repository.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has not yet been in communication with United Kingdom Nirex. His predecessor last met senior representatives of Nirex on 15 March 1989. Officials are frequently in contact with Nirex on various matters.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much money his Department is spending on research into the storage, treatment, handling and transport of nuclear waste.

Mr. Trippier: My Department plans to spend about £9 million in the current financial year on radioactive waste management research, including the storage, treatment and handling of nuclear waste. The transport of radioactive materials is primarily a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Second Homes

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the number of second homes for each local authority in Britain, on the basis of information collected for the community charge.

Mr. Portillo: I am at present collecting estimates of the number of properties giving rise to a standard community charge.

Suffolk and Norfolk Broads

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the working of the Suffolk and Norfolk Broads Act 1987, and particularly the planning aspect.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Broads Authority submits its five-yearly management plan, annual comprehensive work programmes and quarterly grant-in-aid information to the Department.

Waste Management Conference

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what contribution was made by his Department to the 92nd annual waste management conference held on 12 to 15 June.

Mr. Trippier: I was pleased to address the 92nd conference of the Institute of Waste Management on 12 June. Officials from the Department were present for the rest of the conference.

Ozone-depleting Substances

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals Her Majesty's Government are putting to the second meeting of parties to the Montreal protocol on ozone-depleting substances in London on 20 to 29 June.

Mr. Trippier: The European Community negotiating position, based on that of the United Kingdom, is as follows:

CFCs: 50 per cent. cut on 1986 levels by 1991-92; 85 per cent. by 1995-96; phase out by 1997 or at least before 2000. Halons: 50 per cent. cut by 1995; phase out by 2000 except for a limited number of essential uses. Methyl chloroform: 25 per cent. cut by 1994; 50 per cent. by 2000; consideration in 1994 of further and faster cuts. Carbon tetrachloride: 50 per cent. cut by 1991-92; phase out by 2000.

UN Environment Programme

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he intends to put forward at the United Nations Environment Programme governing council meeting in Nairobi on 1 to 3 August.

Mr. Trippier: I shall be attending the special session of the United Nations Environment Programme governing council from 1 to 3 August which will consider priority evolving environmental issues. I will be calling for international support for action on major issues such as climate change, the ozone layer and biodiversity. I will also seek to ensure that the governing council sends a strong message to the preparatory committee for the 1992 United Nations conference on environment and development about the major issues facing the world today.

Letters (Cornwall)

Mr. Mudd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne may expect a response to the letter forwarded to his Department on 5 March on behalf of Mrs. Barbara Toyne, of 24 Penmere crescent, Falmouth, Cornwall.

Mr. Chope: I replied to my hon. Friend on 16 May.

Mr. Mudd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne may expect a response to the letter forwarded to his Department on 18 April on behalf of Mrs. G. M. Prowse, of 1 Woodview, Woodland avenue, Penryn, Cornwall.

Mr. Chope: I replied to my hon. Friend on 15 June.

Mr. Mudd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne may expect a response to the letter forwarded to his Department on 23 April on behalf of Mr. A. R. Jago, of 5 Lister street, Falmouth, Cornwall.

Mr. Chope: I replied to my hon. Friend on 15 June.

Liverpool (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the recent visit to Liverpool of the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities.

Mr. Portillo: I visited Liverpool on 14 May and 21 June. On the first visit, I met the dean of the Anglican cathedral, to see the development being carried out on the precinct site, below the cathedral, and to hear the dean's ideas for future initiatives in the area. I was encouraged by what I saw and heard. I then visited the Granby-Toxteth task force, and had a quick tour of the area with its leader, before touring the Liverpool part of the Merseyside development corporation's area.

During my visit on 21 June, I met the leaders of the Princes Park and Granby community council. The group recognised the value of programmes being carried by central and local government, but expressed the view that the Toxteth area was not benefiting and that there could be better co-ordination of the programmes of the statutory agencies active in the area, and improvements in consultation with the local community. I found it a helpful and positive meeting. I then met the board of the Merseyside development corporation, to discuss its recently published strategy and its future policies and programmes. I was impressed by the achievements of the corporation so far, and I encouraged it to continue to take a vigorous and dynamic role in its much-expanded area.

I look forward to visiting Merseyside frequently in future, in my roles as Minister with special responsibility for the Liverpool city action team and the Granby-Toxteth task force.

Incinerators

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures he intends to bring forward in response to his Department's study of municipal incinerators, carried out by Warren Spring laboratory; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I am considering an investigation to determine which incinerators can or will be modified to meet the new European regulations on emissions.

Uniform Business Rate

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will consider the fire certificate threshold of six letting bedspaces as a starting point for the imposition of uniform business rate;

(2) if he will seek powers to change the limit of 100 days of opening below which accommodation operators will not be subject to uniform business rate.

Mr. Chope: We have received a number of representations which argue that the threshold at which bed-and-breakfast accommodation provided in an individual's own home comes into non-domestic rating is inappropriate. We are at present considering these representations, and whether there is any case for altering existing provisions.

Water Charges

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will meet the Director General of Water Services to discuss the workings of the water and sewerage infrastructure charges; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend has no plans to meet the Director General of Water Services. The detailed application of infrastructure charges is a matter for individual water and sewerage companies, within the terms of their instruments of appointment. It is the responsibility of the director general to ensure that individual companies are complying with their terms and conditions of appointment.

Water Quality

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all independent research bodies that are carrying out public interest work on water quality and supply, funded by his Department.

Mr. Trippier: During the 1990-91 financial year, the following independent research bodies will be carrying out research on water quality and supply for the Department:

Water Research Centre (1989) plc
Hydraulics Research Ltd.
Altwell Chemistry Ltd.
Public Health Laboratory Service
North West Water Ltd.
Natural Environment Research Council
—Plymouth Marine Laboratory
—Institute of Freshwater Ecology
—Institute of Hydrology
Brunel University
University of Dundee
Atomic Energy Authority Technology

Management Information System

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to place a copy of MINIS 11 in the Library; and if he will make a statement on its conclusions.

Mr. Chris Patten: I expect to place a copy of MINIS 11 in the Library by the summer recess.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answers of 10 May, *Official Report*, columns *189-90* and 30 April, *Official Report*, columns *382-83*, what is the square footage of office space to which these figures relate.

Mr. Chris Patten: The amount of office space to which the figures in my earlier answers relate is 1,209,645 sq ft. This area excludes specialised sites such as the royal parks and palaces which were included in the consumption and expenditure figures but to which the concept area is not appropriate.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what was the consumption by the Property Services Agency for the civil estate of *(a)* kWh of electricity, *(b)* therms of gas, *(c)* litres of liquid fuel and *(e)* tonnes of solid fuel for each year from 1978-79 to 1989-90, breaking the figures down by Government Department;

(2) what was the spending by the Property Services Agency for the civil estate on *(a)* electricity, *(b)* gas, *(c)* liquid fuels, *(d)* solid fuels and *(e)* all energy, expressed in (i) money terms and (ii) real 1989-90 terms for each year from 1978-79 to 1989-90, broken down by Government Department as far as possible.

Mr. Chope: This information can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much was invested in improving the energy efficiency of his Department in the latest available year.

Mr. Chris Patten: Expenditure on energy efficiency measures within my Department for 1989-90 is estimated to have totalled £120,000.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will extend the categories of persons receiving transitional relief for community charge to include the registered disabled.

Mr. Chope: Registered disabled people are not excluded from transitional relief and some may be eligible for extra help. All charge payers, including disabled people, may be eligible for relief where the assumed community charge for the area exceeds the assumed rates bill for 1989-90 by more than £156 a year. In addition, for disabled people who did not previously pay rates or who were not the partner of someone paying rates, extra relief may be available on any amount of assumed community charge that exceeds £156 a year.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps his Department is taking to monitor capital and revenue spending on sport, recreation and leisure services in local authorities following the introduction of the new capital control system for local authorities.

Mr. Chope: Information on local authority spending on sport, recreation and leisure is collected as part of regular statistical returns by authorities. Relevant budget information on revenue spending has now been submitted by most authorities. We plan to collect information on capital expenditure which separately identifies 1990-91 spending on sport and recreation when local authorities report their outturn expenditure after the end of the financial year.

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what would be the estimated cost of allowing transitional relief for community charge to all persons who are registered disabled.

Mr. Chope: Disabled people who were formerly ratepayers qualify for transitional relief on the same basis as other charge payers. Extra help is available for disabled, and elderly, people who were not formerly ratepayers, nor the spouse of a former ratepayer. No estimate is available for the cost of extending the extra help to all persons who are registered disabled.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations have taken place on the proposed changes to the community charge in 1991-92; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The Government have not brought forward any proposals for changes to the community charge.

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to increase Government assistance to local authorities to reduce the community charge bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities on 17 May, *Official Report*, column *508*.

Mr. Flannery: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many suggested alternatives he has received for amending the community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I continue to receive suggestions on all aspects of local government finance.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met representatives of the local authority organisations to discuss possible changes to the community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend met representatives of the main local authority associations on 21 May, when these matters were discussed. Since then there have been a number of informal meetings with association chairmen.

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement about proposed changes in the poll tax legislation.

Mr. Chope: The Government have already announced that they intend to bring forward legislation to amend the law on the standard community charge as it relates to caravans.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to extend universal community charge-capping powers over all local authorities in England and Wales.

Mr. Chope: No.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what would be the capital value rates bill payable on a property in Ealing worth *(a)* £50,000, *(b)* £80,000 and *(c)* £100,000 in the current year assuming a rate to raise the same amount of money as with the community charge.

Mr. Chope: Figures placed in the Library on 4 April show illustrative levels of capital value based rates in 1990-91 were such a system to be used to raise the same amount nationally as the community charge. The implied bills in Ealing for properties worth *(a)* £50,000, *(b)* £80,000 and *(c)* £100,000 are £567, £907 and £1,134 respectively.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of local authorities which received standard spending grant and other grants from central funds which were 50 per cent. or more greater per capita than that secured by Rotherham.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 18 June 1990]:* Twenty-four authorities are expected to receive revenue support grants and other revenue grants from central funds in 1990-91 which were 50 per cent. or more greater per capita than that secured by Rotherham. The authorities are as follows:

Newcastle-Upon-Tyne
Bradford
Knowsley
Birmingham
Liverpool
Manchester
City of London
Lewisham
Greenwich
Hammersmith and Fulham
Wandsworth
Southwark
Camden
Lambeth
Westminster
Kensington and Chelsea
Islington
Hackney
Tower Hamlets
Waltham Forest
Ealing
Haringey
Brent
Newham

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the community charge levied, the standard spending grant given and the total of other grants from central funds for all local authorities which have fixed personal community charges of below £280.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 18 June 1990]:* The information for 1990-91 is as follows:

	Average Charge £	*Revenue Support Grant* £ million	*Safety Net* £ million	*Special Grants*[1] £ million	*Specific Grants* £ million
Bradford	276	157·8	9·8	8·1	64·6
Craven	256	5·0	1·6	0·4	1·5
Easington	278	13·3	6·7	1·9	4·8
East Lindsey	277	17·5	0·0	0·0	7·8
Merton	280	42·9	0·0	0·0	17·4
Richmondshire	276	5·0	0·6	0·0	2·2
Rochester upon Medway	249	22·9	−2·5	0·0	14·0
Scarborough	276	11·4	4·0	0·6	6·8
South Herefordshire	279	5·7	−0·6	0·0	[2]
South Kesteven	279	13·6	0·0	0·0	4·7
Teesdale	245	3·6	0·8	0·5	1·9

	Average Charge £	Revenue Support Grant £ million	Safety Net £ million	Special Grants[1] £ million	Specific Grants £ million
Wandsworth	150	118·1	24·0	11·0	39·9
Westminster	195	116·9	−10·1	7·2	33·5
York	264	11·9	4·0	1·4	[2]

[1] Inner London Education grant and Low Rateable Values grant.
[2] Budget returns are not yet available for south Herefordshire and York.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many ratepayers were summoned for non-payment of rates in 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989 and to March 1990.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 22 June 1990]:* Figures published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting on the number of summonses issued by local authorities in England for non-payment of rates are as follows. These figures do not contain returns from every authority and I have therefore indicated the response rate in each year.

Year	Number of summonses	Response rate (per cent.)
1984-85	1,107,000	96
1985-86	1,147,000	95
1986-87	1,189,349	93
1987-88	1,112,970	85
1988-89	1,102,148	84

Figures for 1989-90 are not yet available.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many cases have been brought by local authorities to date through the magistrates courts against their charge payers under the Community Charges (Administration and Enforcement) Regulations 1989.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 22 June 1990]:* This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many local authorities are employing *(a)* their own bailiffs, *(b)* certificated bailiffs and *(c)* non-certificated bailiffs to enforce the Community Charges (Administration and Enforcement) Regulations 1989; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make it mandatory for local authorities to use only certificated bailiffs to enforce community charge debt through magistrates courts under the Community Charges (Administration and Enforcement) Regulations 1989.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 22 June 1990]:* The rules governing enforcement are clearly set out in the Community Charges (Administration and Enforcement) Regulations 1989. The number and type of bailiffs employed by a local authority is entirely a matter for the authority. My Department's detailed practice note for local authorities on enforcement advised that an authority considering using private sector bailiffs should take up references and ensure that the firm and its employees are reputable and qualified.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment for what periods of time a merchant seaman must be resident in each of the local authorities in England and Wales before being made eligible for community charge; what guidelines are issued to local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 22 June 1990]:* It is initially the responsibility of the individual community charges registration officer to decide whether a person is solely or mainly resident in his area and therefore subject to a community charge. My Department issued guidelines suggesting that merchant seamen be treated in a way consistent with their royal naval counterparts. These informal, non-statutory, guidelines suggest that a home-owning seaman might be deregistered if he is away on board ship for a period in excess of six continuous months, while a single seaman with no permanent address will not be registered for the charge unless he spends periods on shore in excess of 61 days. If a person feels aggrieved by a decision on their sole or main residence then they can appeal to his or her local valuation and community charge tribunal.

Bristol Channel

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will detail in percentage terms water pollution in the Bristol channel for the different sorts of pollution and polluter.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: It is not possible to quantify water pollution in the Bristol channel in percentage terms. Details of discharges to controlled waters, as defined under the Water Act, are held on the public registers maintained by the National Rivers Authority. Details of licences issued for waste disposal at sea are held on the public register of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Further information on water quality including the quality of fish and shellfish is available in the reports compiled by MAFF in the "Aquatic Environment Monitoring" series. These are available in the Library of the House.

Environment White Paper

Mr Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* all those organisations which have made submissions in advance of the Government White Paper on the environment; and if he will deposit in the Library copies of submissions not expressly marked confidential.

Mr. Chris Patten: We have welcomed written and oral contributions from a wide range of individuals and organisations, including the following:

Advisory Group on Recycling
Airfields Environment Federation

Arts Council
Association for the Conservation of Energy
Association of British Chambers of Commerce
Association of Consulting Engineers
Association of County Councils
Association of District Councils
Association of Metropolitan Authorities
British Aggregate Construction Materials Industries
British Agrochemical Association
British Cement Association
British Consultants Bureau
British Maritime Industries Federation
British Property Federation
British Waterways Board
Builders Merchants Federation
Building Employers Confederation
Building Services Research and Information Association
Business in the Environment
Chartered Institute of Building Services Engineers
Chartered Institute of Building
Chemical Industries Association
Civic Trust
Combined Heat and Power Association
Confederation for British Industry;
Consumer Association;
Council for Environmental Education;
Council for the Protection of Rural England;
Country Landowners Association;
Countryside Commission;
Cycling Tourist Club;
English Heritage;
Environment Council;
Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors;
Friends of the Earth;
Garden History Society;
Genetics Forum;
Green Alliance;
Groundwork Foundation and Trust;
Historic Royal Palaces Agency;
House Builders Federation;
Housing Standards Co. Ltd.;
Institute for European Environmental Policy;
Institute of Directors;
Institute of Waste Management;
Institution of Environmental Health Officers;
International Chamber of Commerce;
Landscape Institute;
Marine Conservation Society;
Marine Forum;
National Association of Waste Disposal Contractors;
National Consumer Council;
National Council of Building Material Producers;
National Farmers Union;
National Federation of Demolition Contractors;
National Heritage Memorial Fund;
National Home Improvements Council;
National House Building Council;
National Rivers Authority;
National Society for Clean Air;
National Trust;
Nature Conservancy Council;
Neighbourhood Energy Action;
Noise Abatement Society;
Noise Council;
Office of Water Services;
Open Spaces Society;
Pesticides Trust;
Property Advisory Group;
Ramblers;
Royal Commission on Historic Monuments of England;
Royal Fine Art Commission;
Royal Institute of British Architects;
Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors;
Royal Society for Nature Conservation;
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds;
Royal Town Planning Institute;
Royal Yachting Association;
Rural Development Commission;
Science Museum;
Scottish Environmental Education;
Seas at Risk;
Shellfish Association of Great Britain;
Tidy Britain Group;
Town and Country Planning Association;
Trades Union Congress;
Transport 2000;
UK Petroleum Industry Association;
United Kingdom Environmental Law Association;
United Kingdom Reclamation Council;
Volume Housebuilders Study Group;
Water Research Centre;
Water Services Association;
Wildlife Link;
Worldwide Fund for Nature.

As these contributions were not part of a formal consultation process, we do not have permission from contributors to place their submissions in the Library.

Mineral Extraction

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many appeals against licences for mineral extraction he has considered each year for which records are available.

Mr. Moynihan: The Department records appeals made under sections 36 and 37 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 involving mineral extraction. The number of such appeals decided in each year for which records are available, is as follows:

Year	*Appeals decided*
1984	18
[1]1985	18
1986-87	37
1987-88	36
1988-89	43
1989-90	41

[1] After 1985, records are available only for financial years.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why the decision was taken to include in table 3.2b of the United Kingdom radioactive waste inventory uncommitted low-level waste arisings.

Mr. Trippier: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) on 26 March 1990, *Official Report*, column *12*.

Rural Disadvantage

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what amounts of social policy expenditure have been allocated by his Department and its agencies to combat rural disadvantages.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Rural Development Commission, which is the Government's principal agency in England for carrying forward our policies on the rural economy, is developing and implementing a wide range of initiatives which deal with economic and social problems in the countryside. The Commission's expenditure on its social programmes in 1989-90 was £4·7 million.

District Councils (Searches for Solicitors)

Mr. Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning the length of time taken by district councils *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in Staffordshire to conduct searches for solicitors.

Mr. Chope: Ministers at the Department of the Environment receive occasional representations about the length of time taken by district councils to conduct searches. No recent representation has referred specifically to a council in Staffordshire.

Local Government Salaries

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much he estimates would be added to the local government wage bill if all local government employees were paid at least two thirds of the national average wage in 1990-91.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 12 June 1990]:* My hon. Friend may want an estimate of the cost of paying two thirds of the national average wage to those local authority employees earning less than this figure, or he may also want account to be taken of the consequences for those earning more than this figure, who will want to maintain differentials. However, on either basis, I regret the information is not available centrally.

Council House Sales

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the London borough of Greenwich has applied for permission to run a portable discount scheme for local authority tenants in 1990-91.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 21 June 1990]:* The London borough of Greenwich's bid for resources under the 1990-91 homelessness initiative originally included proposals for a portable discount scheme. This element of the bid was subsequently withdrawn by the council. There is, however, no reason why the council should not consider running a portable discount scheme without such special funding, using its own resources.

Denitrification

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the research which he has commissioned into denitrification technology; what reports he has received; and if he will place copies in the Library.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 21 June 1990]:* The Department has been involved with research into denitrification processes as follows:

(1) 1972-74, research by the Metropolitan Water Board, Middle Lee Main Drainage Department and the Water Pollution Research Laboratory into the denitrification of sewage effluent by the modified activated sludge process (part funding);

(2) 1973-75, research by the Water Research Centre into denitrification by ion-exchange and biological processes;

(3) 1977-79, field studies by the Anglian Water Authority of ion-exchange denitrification using fixed bed and experimental continuous loop plants (part funding);

(4) 1980-82, field trials by the Anglian Water Authority of fluidised bed biological denitrification plant (part funding);

(5) 1987, review by Consultants in Environmental Science Limited of the effects of nitrate removal on water quality in distribution; and collection of information on the operation of denitrification plants in Europe and the United States of America;

(6) 1988-89, studies by the Cranfield Institute of Science and Technology of the combined use of ion-exchange and biological denitrification processes (part funding);

(7) 1988-89, project by the Cranfield Institute of Science and Technology to develop a computer model of the ion-exchange process for optimum operation;

(8) 1990, studies by the Water Research Centre to improve the biological denitrification process.

Reports in various forms on all the projects were received, but not all are readily available.

I am arranging for copies of reports on projects (5) and (7) to be placed in the Library of the House.

New Homes

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to increase the number of homes built in 1990-91.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 21 June 1990]:* The Government do not attempt to forecast output of private housebuilders, who build some 85 per cent. of new houses. Output of subsidised dwellings by housing associations financed by the Housing Corporation in England is expected to rise substantially between 1989-90 and 1990-91, more than offsetting an expected decline in new housebuilding by local authorities.

Toxic Waste

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the ports that received toxic waste in each year since 1987, the quantity of such waste imported, the composition of the waste, and the country of origin and ultimate destination of the waste.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 21 June 1990]:* The information is available in the detail required only since the introduction of Transfrontier Shipment of Hazardous Waste Regulations 1988. Provisional figures for imports of hazardous wastes through English ports in the year to 31 March 1990 by country of origin and destination, and by waste disposal authority, are as follows. Figures for types of waste imported are summarised, as information for individual ports is not available in a concise form.

Imports of hazardous waste 1 April 1989 to 31 March 1990 via ports in England
By country of origin

	Tonnes
Chatham	
Belgium	409
Dartford	
Belgium	1,137
Dover	
France	16
Switzerland	5,144
Total Dover	5,160
Felixstowe	
Australia	279
Austria	29
Belgium	306
Canada	62
Germany	439
Ireland	1
Italy	1,169

	Tonnes
Luxembourg	17
Malaysia	34
Netherlands	5,670
Norway	424
Singapore	39
Switzerland	13
Total Felixstowe	8,480
Fleetwood	
Ireland	154
Flixborough	
United States	4,237
Gravesend	
Austria	25
Grimsby	
Germany	39
Harwich	
Austria	52
Belgium	64
Switzerland	35
Total Harwich	150
Heysham	
Brazil	33
Ireland	582
Total Heysham	615
Immingham	
Belgium	1,712
Denmark	17
Italy	620
Netherlands	4,937
Norway	170
Sweden	1,241
Total Immingham	8,696
Ipswich	
Germany	185
Liverpool	
Canada	506
Ireland	193
Switzerland	37
Total Liverpool	736
Middlesbrough	
Belgium	184
Poole	
Channel Islands	30
Portsmouth	
Spain	2
Purfleet	
Finland	12
Ramsgate	
Belgium	2,958
Seaforth	
Portugal	73
Southampton	
Singapore	5
Teesport	
Switzerland	90
Tilbury	
Brazil	12
Uruguay	3
Total Tilbury	15
Great Yarmouth	
Denmark	8
Total	33,399

Imports of hazardous waste 1 April 1989 to 31 March 1990 via ports in England
By Waste Disposal Authority of destination

	Tonnes
Chatham	
Greater Manchester	171
Torfaen BC	238
Total Chatham	409
Dartford	
Greater Manchester	23
Hampshire County Council	448
Torfaen Borough Council	666
Total Dartford	1,137
Dover	
Greater Manchester	4,778
Torfaen Borough Council	382
Total Dover	5,160
Felixstowe	
Essex County Council	424
Greater Manchester	1,198
Hampshire County Council	163
Suffolk County Council	22
West Midlands	5,401
Torfaen	1,272
Total Felixstowe	8,480
Fleetwood	
Cheshire County Council	110
Greater Manchester	44
Total Fleetwood	154
Flixborough	
Humberside County Council	4,237
Gravesend	
Torfaen Borough Council	25
Grimsby	
Essex County Council	39
Harwich	
Essex County Council	15
Greater Manchester	35
Torfaen Borough Council	100
Total Harwich	150
Heysham	
Greater Manchester	530
Nottinghamshire	1
West Midlands	51
Torfaen Borough Council	33
Total Heysham	615
Immingham	
Greater Manchester	6,714

	Tonnes
Hampshire County Council	72
Nottinghamshire County Council	33
West Midlands	17
Torfaen Borough Council	1,860
Total Immingham	8,696
Ipswich	
Torfaen	185
Liverpool	
Greater Manchester	164
West Midlands	77
Torfaen Borough Council	495
Total Liverpool	736
Middlesbrough	
Greater Manchester	184
Poole	
Lancashire County Council	15
Warwickshire County Council	15
Total Poole	30
Portsmouth	
Torfaen Borough Council	2
Purfleet	
Essex County Council	12
Ramsgate	
Greater Manchester	22
West Midlands	2,936
Total Ramsgate	2,958
Seaforth	
Torfaen Borough Council	73
Southampton	
Nottinghamshire	5
Teesport	
Greater Manchester	90
Tilbury	
Torfaen Borough Council	16
Great Yarmouth	
West Midlands	8
TOTAL	33,399

Imports of hazardous waste 1 April 1989 to 31 March 1990 via ports in England

By type of waste	*Tonnes*
Inorganic acids	10
Alkalis	282
Toxic metal compounds	822
Non-toxic metal compounds	167
Metal oxides	1,644
Inorganic compounds	427
Other inorganic materials	10,894
Organic compounds excluding PCBs	2,080
PCBs/PCB contaminated material	2,986
Polymeric material and precursors	181
Fuels, oils and greases	410
Fine chemicals and biocides	600
Miscellaneous chemical waste	1,426
Filter materials, treatment sludge and contaminated rubbish	5,490
Interceptor wastes, tars, paint, dyes and pigments	3,499
Miscellaneous wastes	2,234
Total	33,399

HOUSE OF COMMONS

European Legislation

81. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Lord President of the Council when the revised arrangements for considering EEC legislation will be implemented; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: In the light of the House's forthcoming debate on the Procedure Committee's report on the scrutiny of European legislation and the Government's response to it, the Government will table motions to make the necessary detailed amendments to Standing Orders. The Government hope that the new arrangements will operate from the start of the next Session.

Natural History Museum

84. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make space available in the Palace of Westminster for an exhibition of the palaeontological, palaeo-botany and diatom work of the natural history museum.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Upper Waiting Hall is available for Members wishing to arrange for an exhibition to be held there. The procedures agreed by the Services Committee are set out in the leaflet "Exhibitions in the Upper Waiting Hall" and I am arranging for a copy to be sent the hon. Member.

Oral Questions

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will bring forward a motion to approve the recommendations of the Select Committee on Procedure's first report of Session 1989-90 on oral questions.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I hope to do so shortly so that, if the House agrees, the recommendations can take effect from the start of the next Session.

Energy Costs

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Lord President of the Council, pursuant to the answers of 30 April, *Official Report*, column *406* and 10 May, *Official Report*, column *199*, about energy consumption, what is the square footage of office space to which these figures relate.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Privy Council Office covers 15,372 sq ft. This area includes office and storage space, and courtroom of the Judicial Committee.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Lord President of the Council how much was invested in improving the energy efficiency of the Privy Council Office in the latest available year.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: No specific part of the Privy Council Office vote is dedicated to improving energy efficiency, but staff are encouraged to be economical in their use of energy resources.

Child Care Facilities

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Lord President of the Council, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Oldham, West, 24 May, *Official Report*, column *297*, if he will make it his policy to ensure that *(a)* the staff unions and *(b)* the staff creche committee are consulted about the design and operation of the feasibility study of the provision of child care facilities in the House.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Extensive consultations over the past few years in relation to the provision of child care facilities have clearly identified the nature of provision desired by both groups to which the hon. Member refers. They will, however, be given the opportunity to update their observations once the feasibility study has been completed.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Official Duties

75. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many official visits he has made as Chancellor of the Duchy since last replying to questions in the House.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: One.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Marginal Tax Rates

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the marginal tax rate incurred by a combination of income tax, national insurance, housing benefit rent withdrawal taper, and the community charge benefit withdrawal taper in 1990; and what is the contribution of each of these to the total.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The marginal tax-benefit withdrawal rate on additional gross income for someone paying standard rate income tax, and national insurance contributions, and receiving both a rent rebate and community charge benefit is 86·8 per cent., from April 1990, where the earner is not contracted out of the state earnings-related pension scheme; and 86·4 per cent. where the earner is contracted out. These overall withdrawal rates break down as follows:

Percentage of additional gross income

	Per cent.
Contracted In	
Income tax	25
National insurance	9
Reduced entitlement to income related benefits	
Rent rebate taper	42·9
Community charge benefit taper	9·9
Contracted Out	
Income tax	25
National insurance	7
Reduced entitlement to income related benefits	
Rent rebate taper	44·2
Community charge benefit taper	10·2

Note: Rent rebate and community charge benefit entitlement is calculated on the basis of net income, after deduction of tax and national insurance contributions. The withdrawal tapers applied to additional net income are 65 per cent. for rent rebate and 15 per cent. for community charge benefit.

War Widows

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will supplement the pensions of war widows whose husbands, while holding United Kingdom citizenship, were killed in the service of a Commonwealth country, whose pensions they now receive, to bring them up to the level of war widows whose husbands were killed while serving in the United Kingdom armed forces;

(2) if he will supplement the pensions of war widows whose husbands, while holding United Kingdom citizenship, were killed in the service of a Commonwealth country during either of the world wars and whose pensions they now receive, to bring them up to the level of war widows whose husbands were killed while serving in the United Kingdom armed forces.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The pensions paid to war widows by other countries are matters for those countries. There is no provision under the war pensions scheme to pay pensions to widows of men who died as a result of service in the armed forces of another country.

Deaf People

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what research his Department has carried out into the additional costs that deaf people face.

Mr. Scott: The Government commissioned the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys to carry out major surveys of disability in Great Britain between 1985 and 1988. The reports include information about the additional costs incurred by people with a range of disabilities, including hearing. The six OPCS reports of the surveys' findings are in the Library. A follow-up study to the family expenditure survey has been carried out to compare the actual spending of disabled and non-disabled people, and the results of that study will be published shortly.

Residential Homes

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to the answer of 23 April, *Official Report*, column *36*, on residential homes, if he will make available such information as is available to him on this subject.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The average total number of income support recipients in residential care homes and nursing homes whose recorded fees were below the appropriate income support limit for the period November 1988 to August 1989 was 22,000 rounded to the nearest thousand. This represents just over one eighth of the average total claimants in such homes in that period.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many claims for income support were received during the last financial year from residents of care homes which had been transferred from local authority to independent management or ownership;

(2) what guidance has been issued by his Department as to the eligibility for income support of residents in care homes managed by charitable trusts set up by local authorities.

Mr. Scott: Eligibility for income support is defined by regulations, which provide that benefit is available in respect of fees, up to certain limits, to residents of registered residential care homes and certain other types of homes. Independent adjudication officers are provided with guidance on the interpretation of the regulations by the chief adjudication officer in the adjudication officers' guide, but no specific guidance has been given on this point. Information on numbers of people living in transferred homes who have claimed income support is not available centrally.

Attendance and Mobility Allowances

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many doctors are employed by his Department for the purpose of assessing attendance allowance and mobility allowance claims in *(a)* Inverclyde, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole; on what basis they are employed; what salaries or fees they receive; and whether such payments are related to the number of claimants they examine.

Mr. Scott: The numbers of doctors who carry out examinations of claimants to attendance and mobility allowances in the areas mentioned are: (a) Inverclyde—30, (b) Strathclyde—428, (c) Scotland—982. The work is of a casual nature, the available cases being allocated among the doctors who are available and have been trained in the work. Payment is from a scale of fees agreed between the Treasury and the medical profession's representatives. A fee is paid for each case completed, individual case fees depending on the time taken to deal with that case.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average and what is the longest delay in hearing of appeals against refusals of mobility allowances, during each of the last five six-month periods for which records are available.

Mr. Scott: Appeals against refusal of mobility allowance can be made to a social security appeal tribunal if the decision was not on medical grounds and to a medical appeal tribunal on medical questions. Information about these appeals is not available in the form requested. The national average clearance times, during the last 10 quarters, for appeals on mobility allowance to social security appeal tribunals, from date of lodgment to hearing, were as follows:

Quarter ending	*Weeks*
30 June 1987	19·1
30 September 1987	20·6
31 December 1987	20·1
31 March 1988	23·3
30 June 1988	20·1
30 September 1988	20·3
31 December 1988	20·8
31 March 1989	21·8
30 June 1989	18·8
30 September 1989	17·6

The Department has recently began compiling information on the clearance times for appeals to medical appeal tribunals, but this has not been running long enough to provide representative figures. Information about the time taken to have a hearing on an appeal to a medical board is not kept.

Information about the longest delay in hearing any of these types of appeal can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Local Government Finance

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole are entitled to poll tax rebate based on claims for refund of rebate received from Strathclyde regional council and other regional and island councils; and what percentage of poll tax payers this represents in *(a)*, *(b)* and *(c)* above.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The caseload returns made by regional councils do not provide information separately for parliamentary constituencies and district councils. The latest available caseload information for Strathclyde regional council shows that at the end of February 1990 about 490,000 community charge rebate cases were in payment—(counting rebates to couples as one case). The latest 1989-90 caseload estimate for Scotland is 930,000. The total number of individual charge payers receiving help with the community charge is not collected. It is not, therefore, possible to show the proportion of individual charge payers helped by benefit.

Office Relocation

Sir George Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on progress on the relocation work from local offices to Glasgow.

Mr. Newton: I am pleased to announce that relocation of all backroom work from the first cluster of four London offices—Ealing, Southall, Acton and Notting Hill—to the social security centre was completed on schedule on 18 June 1990.

My Department recently undertook an evaluation study to establish whether the initiative had resulted in an improved service to our London customers. The results were most encouraging. Claims are being processed much more accurately. The error rate has fallen significantly from 29 to 9 per cent. Work is also being dealt with faster. The average time taken to clear a claim has been reduced by 50 per cent., from 11 days to five days. Caller waiting times have also been reduced, and a sampling exercise revealed that, already, between a third and half of customers have noticed an improvement in the quality of service provided. It is also encouraging that these improvements have been made against a background of greater efficiency: the cost of processing a unit of benefit has reduced by half, from £12 to £6. I am arranging to place a copy of the evaluation study in the Library.

Invalidity Pension

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what representations he has received on the question of members who serve on local authorities and are in receipt of invalidity pension having the invalidity pension disregarded when assessing the payment of allowances etc. for serving on their local council; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has considered disregarding the payment of invalidity pension for those members who serve on local authorities and are disabled, when assessing payment of allowances to councillors; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he has discussed with local authority organisations the question of the disregard of invalidity pension for members of local authorities who are in receipt of invalidity benefit when receiving allowances for local government duties; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The question of entitlement to local authority allowances is the prerogative of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and is a matter over which we have no jurisdiction. I understand, however, that invalidity benefit has no bearing on the amount of local authority allowances payable.

Entitlement to invalidity benefit is dependent upon a person being incapable of work and is not, therefore, normally payable where any work is performed. However, following discussions with hon. Members and councillors' representatives special arrangements were introduced for councillors. These provide that councillors can receive invalidity benefit in full in addition to any local authority allowances to which they are entitled up to the level of the therapeutic earnings limit—currently £35 per week. Where local authority allowances for any week exceed this limit, invalidity benefit is reduced only by the excess. These arrangements have operated since May 1987 and continue unchanged.

Social Fund

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of income support claimants are living below the appropriate scale rate of benefit because they are repaying social fund, or benefit overpayments, or fuel arrears *(a)* nationally, *(b)* regionally and *(c)* in each local Department of Social Security office area.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information is unavailable and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of successful social fund applicants are in paid employment *(a)* nationally, *(b)* regionally and *(c)* in each local Department of Social Security office area.

Mr. Scott: I regret that the information requested is not collected.

Letters (Cornwall)

Mr. Mudd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne may expect a reply to his letter of 7 April, on behalf of Mr. T. G. Harry, of 20 Barripper road, Camborne, Cornwall.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I replied to my hon. Friend on 22 May.

Mr. Mudd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) when the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne may expect a reply to his letter of 7 April on behalf of Mr. P. McKenna, of 8 Greenfield terrace, Portreath, Redruth, Cornwall, reference POS (3) 2223/240;

(2) when the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne may expect a reply to his letter of 28 February on behalf of Mr. and Mrs. H. E. Thomas of 19 Castle View Park, Mawnan Smith, Falmouth, Cornwall.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I replied to my hon. Friend on 20 June.

Retirement Pensions

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether there are any plans to harmonise retirement pensions in the European Community.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: There are no plans to harmonise retirement pensions in the European Community.

Debt Recovery

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 11 June, *Official Report*, column *53*, whether his Department makes any distinction in its treatment of debt collection between moneys owed by *(a)* current social security beneficiaries and *(b)* former social security beneficiaries, liable relatives and national insurance contributors.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Department undertakes a wide range of debt recovery work and seeks to do so in the most cost-effective way possible. The action taken will depend upon the nature of the debt, the individual circumstances of the debtor and the legal powers available. In the case of current beneficiaries, for example, it is possible to recover sums due by deductions from benefit.

Disabled People (Benefits)

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what discussions he is having with disablement groups regarding the proposal to introduce a disability employment credit; and when he last met the Disablement Income Group.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how he proposes formally to consult disability organisations on his proposals outlined in "The Way Ahead—Benefits for Disabled People";

(2) when he expects to publish draft proposals for the disability employment credit.

Mr. Scott: We regularly meet the disability organisations to discuss a wide range of issues. I met the Disability Benefits Consortium—an umbrella group representing over 250 disability organisations including the Disablement Income Group—on 5 April in the second of a series of meetings to discuss their views on "The Way Ahead".

The proposals for a disability employment credit were outlined in "The Way Ahead"; the Government propose to implement these proposals by bringing forward legislation at an early opportunity.

Executive Agencies

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will continue to answer parliamentary questions on the full range of social security issues after the proposed executive agencies for social security are established.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's reply to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 6 June, at column *615*.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish in the *Official Report* the latest estimates of the proportion of *(a)* pensioner households, *(b)* households with dependent children and *(c)* other households who are taking up their entitlement to housing benefit, showing the division between council tenants and others.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) on 29 March at column *300*.

Community Charge (Members' Questions)

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the reasons why he was unable to reply until 14 June to the priority written questions about community charge rebates tabled by the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton for answer on 23 May; and what steps he takes to ensure that answers are provided on the day selected by an hon. Member for priority answer.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: All questions for priority written answer by this Department are answered on the specified day, although some may not receive a full reply on that day. Out of over 1,000 questions tabled for priority written answer this Session, fewer than 150 have been given holding replies: these are given only where the information requested is so detailed or complex that a full reply cannot be provided in the time allowed by the hon. Member concerned. Neither of the questions on community charge rebates tabled by my hon. Friend for answer on 23 May was straightforward. A costing was made as quickly as possible in reply to one question. In the case of the other question, detailed consideration led to the conclusion that no estimate was possible.

Pensioners

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures for *(a)* a single pensioner and *(b)* pensioner couples showing the effects of community charge benefit on their net weekly incomes, assuming a community charge of (i) £300, (ii) £400 and (iii) £500, and weekly incomes other than the relevant state basic pension of £10, £20, £30, £40, £50, £60, £70, £80, £90, £100, £150 and £200.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 17 May 1990]:* The information requested is set out in the tables.

Table 1: Single Pensioner

Gross income[1]	*Net income*[2]	*Annual charge 300·00 CC Benefit per week*	*Net income less Community Charge*	*Annual charge 400·00 CC Benefit per week*	*Net income less Community Charge*	*Annual charge 500·00 CC Benefit per week*	*Net income less Community Charge*
56·90	56·90	3·34	54·49	4·88	54·11	6·41	53·72
66·90	66·90	1·84	62·99	3·38	62·61	4·91	62·22
76·90	75·32	·58	70·15	2·11	69·76	3·65	69·38

Gross income[1]	Net income[2]	Annual charge 300·00 CC Benefit per week	Net income less Community Charge	Annual charge 400·00 CC Benefit per week	Net income less Community Charge	Annual charge 500·00 CC Benefit per week	Net income less Community Charge
86·90	82·82	—	77·07	·99	76·14	2·52	75·75
96·90	90·32	—	84·57	—	82·65	1·40	82·13
106·90	97·82	—	92·07	—	90·15	—	88·23
116·90	105·32	—	99·57	—	97·65	—	95·75
126·90	112·82	—	107·07	—	105·15	—	103·23
136·90	120·32	—	114·57	—	112·65	—	110·73
146·90	127·82	—	122·07	—	120·15	—	118·23
196·90	165·32	—	159·57	—	157·65	—	155·73
246·90	201·52	—	195·77	—	193·85	—	191·93

[1] "Gross Income" comprises, the basic state retirement pension plus £10, £20, £30 . . . £100, £150 and £200.
[2] Net Income is gross income, calculated as at 1, less income tax. For the purposes of independent taxation, it is assumed that in pensioner couples all income other than the wife's state retirement pension is allocated to the husband.

Table 2: Pensioner couple

Gross income[1]	Net income[2]	Annual charge 300·00 CC Benefit per week	Net income less Community Charge	Annual charge 400·00 CC Benefit per week	Net income less Community Charge	Annual charge 500·00 CC Benefit per week	Net income less Community Charge
85·10	85·10	7·78	81·38	10·84	80·60	15·90	79·82
95·10	95·10	6·28	89·88	9·34	89·10	12·40	88·32
105·10	105·10	4·78	98·38	7·84	97·60	10·90	96·82
115·10	115·10	3·28	106·88	6·34	106·10	9·40	105·32
125·10	125·10	1·78	115·38	4·84	114·60	7·90	113·82
135·10	135·10	—	123·60	3·34	123·10	6·40	122·32
145·10	143·83	—	132·33	2·02	130·51	5·10	129·75
155·10	151·33	—	139·83	·90	136·89	3·98	136·13
165·10	158·83	—	147·33	—	143·49	2·84	142·49
175·10	166·33	—	154·83	—	150·99	1·72	148·87
225·10	203·83	—	192·33	—	188·49	—	184·65
275·10	240·04	—	228·54	—	224·70	—	220·86

[1] "Gross Income" comprises, the basic state retirement pension plus £10, £20, £30 . . . £100, £150 and £200.
[2] Net Income is gross income, calculated as at 1, less income tax. For the purposes of independent taxation, it is assumed that in pensioner couples all income other than the wife's state retirement pension is allocated to the husband.

Home Ownership (Pensioners)

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what information he has on the proportion of retirement pensioners who own their own homes *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in those other European Community member states for which information is available.

Mr. Chope: I have been asked to reply.

Comparative information for owner-occupation by age categories appears in table 10.24 of the Building Societies Association's "Housing In Britain", which is in the Library. More recent figures available for some countries are as follows:

Percentage of owner-occupiers among households with a head aged 65 years or over

Country	1984	1985
Great Britain	47	49
Netherlands	—	32
West Germany	—	40
France	56	—

Note:
The West German figure of 63 per cent. for this age category in 1982 appearing in the BSA publication should read 33 per cent.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what information he has on the proportion of retirement pensioners *(a)* aged over 75 years and *(b)* aged 65 to 70 years who (i) own their own homes and (ii) have income from occupational or private pensions.

Mr. Chope: I have been asked to reply.

The available estimates are from the 1988 general household survey and the 1988 family expenditure survey and are as follows.

Age of head of household	[1] Percentage who are owner occupiers	[2] Percentage with income from occupational or private pension
65 to 69	56	66
70 to 74	53	57
75 or over	48	49

[1] Source: 1988 General Household Survey (Great Britain).
[2] Source: 1988 Family Expenditure Survey (United Kingdom). Includes covenants and annuities.

The two surveys used as sources do not cover the institutional population, and so exclude people in nursing homes, rest homes or residents permanently in hospital.

WALES

Eye Tests

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people with glaucoma and diabetes received free eye tests in Wales *(a)* in each quarter in 1988-89 and *(b)* in each quarter in 1989-90.

Mr. Grist: The data requested were not collected centrally before 1 April 1989, since when they have been collected on a six-monthly basis.

The available information is given as follows:

	Estimated[1] number of sight tests paid for by Family Practitioner Committees in the six months ending	
	30 September 1989	*31 March 1990*
Persons aged over 40 who are relatives of glaucoma suffers	2,950	4,910

[1] Estimates based upon a 2 per cent. sample of all such sight tests.

Skomer Marine Nature Reserve

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the progress of his negotiations with the Welsh Yachting Association over the establishment of a marine nature reserve at Skomer.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The draft order in respect of the Skomer marine nature reserve was published in March 1990. Three representations were received during the statutory 28-day objection period including one from the Welsh Yachting Association. The points raised by the representations have been resolved and all the representations have since been withdrawn. We are therefore now proceeding with the designation of the area as a marine nature reserve in accordance with the requirements of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Education Act 1981 (Appeals)

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the number of appeals received under section 5(6) of the Education Act 1981 by local education authority; and what were the decisions taken by the appeals tribunal for each year from April 1983.

Mr. Grist: Appeals under section 5(6) of the Education Act 1981 are made directly to the Secretary of State. Four appeals have been made since April 1983 and in two cases the local education authority concerned was directed to reconsider its decision not to complete a statement of special educational need. The details are:

Local education authority	*Year*	*Number*
West Glamorgan	1983	1
Gwent	1986	1
South Glamorgan	1987	2

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the number of appeals received under section 8(6) of the Education Act 1981 by local education authority; and what were the decisions taken by the appeals tribunal for each year from April 1983.

Mr. Grist: Appeals under section 8(6) of the Education Act 1981 are made directly to the Secretary of State. Nine appeals have been made since April 1983. The Secretary of State found in favour of the local education authorities in respect of seven cases; the remaining two are still under consideration. The details are:

Local education authority	*Year*	*Number*
Clwyd, Mid Glamorgan	1985	2
Clwyd, South Glamorgan	1987	2
West Glamorgan	1988	1
Gwynedd, South Glamorgan	1989	2
Clwyd, Gwynedd	1990	2

Disabled Teachers

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the number of students with disabilities who have entered initial teacher training in Wales for each of the last 10 years; and what percentage of the total number of student teachers these represent.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This information is not collected centrally.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many teachers with disabilities are currently employed in each local education authority in Wales; and what steps his Department is taking to increase the numbers of teachers with disabilities.

Mr. Grist: Information on the numbers of teachers with disabilities is not held centrally. The initiatives being taken by the Government to increase the supply of teachers are directed at all prospective teachers, including those with disabilities.

Schools (Access)

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what specific funding has been available to Welsh local education authorities to enable access to school and college buildings for pupils and teachers with disabilities in each of the last 10 years; and if he has any plans to make specific grants available to local education authorities to carry out necessary capital works to facilitate physical access for people with disabilities.

Mr. Grist: Under the arrangements agreed with local authorities in Wales, capital resources are not hypothecated to specific services. It is for the authorities themselves to determine priorities between and within services, and therefore to decide how much to spend on facilitating physical access to educational buildings for people with disabilities.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what advice he gives to local education authorities in Wales on the standards of access for people with disabilities for new designs for and adaptations to school and college buildings; and whether he will consult interested parties regarding statutory provision for standards of access for new school and college buildings.

Mr. Grist: Guidance is given to local education authorities in design note No. 18 (1984) "Access for disabled people to Educational Buildings" and in building bulletin 61. The design note is based on the recommendations of a working party comprising representatives of interested parties.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many nursery, primary and secondary schools in Wales are fully accessible to pupils and teachers with disabilities; what are these figures as percentages of the total number of schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is not held centrally.

Clwyd TEC

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take steps to enable Alyn and Deeside district council to have direct representation upon the Clwyd TEC; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: No. The Government's White Paper "Employment for the 1990s" said that training and enterprise councils were to be employer-led. Two thirds of the directors, including the chairman, must be local business leaders from the private sector. The balance may be drawn from other sectors including local authorities, but this is for individual TECs to determine. The TECs will need to work closely with all relevant groups in the community, including the local authorities, and must demonstrate that they have widespread support before their plans will be approved.

Deeside High School

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet *(a)* Shotton town council, *(b)* Queensferry community council and *(c)* Haversden community council to hear their views concerning the proposed closure of Deeside high school.

Sir Wyn Roberts: No. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 7 February 1990, column *661*.

Children Act 1989

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the expected date or dates for implementation of the provisions of the Children Act 1989 in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: Some minor provisions covering the admissibility of hearsay evidence, the meaning of "parent" for certain provisions of the Child Care Act 1980 pending its repeal, and tests to establish paternity came into effect on Royal Assent to the Children Act on 16 November 1989. An amendment to the Education Act 1981 in respect of provision outside England and Wales for certain children came into force on 17 January 1990. We expect to bring the remaining provisions into force in October 1991.

Community Health Councils

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to make a decision on community health council reform in Wales.

Mr. Grist: I hope to announce a decision shortly.

Obstetric Accidents

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if, in the light of recent evidence published in the *British Medical Journal* of 26 May on the causes of certain obstetric accidents, he will undertake a review of the training of junior doctors in Wales in relation to foetal heart monitoring and the use of obstetric forceps.

Mr. Grist: Standards of training are laid down by the General Medical Council and the content of training programmes for junior doctors in this specialty is essentially a matter for the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists.

Nursing Homes

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of private and voluntary residential care and nursing homes the independent sector provides for each year since 1980 in Wales.

Mr. Grist: Private and voluntary residential homes are all in the independent sector.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people are employed by *(a)* voluntary registered homes, *(b)* private registered homes and *(c)* local authority homes in Wales; and, in each case, what appropriate formal qualifications they have.

Mr. Grist: The number of people employed by voluntary and private registered homes is not held centrally. The number of people employed in local authority homes as at 30 September 1989 is shown in the following table. Information on their appropriate formal qualifications is not held centrally.

Group and type of staff	*WTE Staff of residential accommodation for elderly and elderly mentally infirm people*	*WTE Staff of residential accommodation for younger physically handicapped people*	*WTE Staff of residential accommodation for mentally ill people*	*WTE Staff of residential accommodation for mentally handicapped adults*	*WTE Staff of residential accommodation catering primarily for mentally handicapped children*
Officers in charge or equivalent	193·0	4·0	12·0	32·0	11·0
Deputy officers in charge or equivalent	229·2	8·6	9·0	22·6	9·8
Other care staff[1]	435·7	21·8	5·5	133·8	38·7
Care assistants	1,586·4	46·3	53·7	187·9	24·4
Other staff	1,427·0	41·1	32·4	72·5	17·9
Total	3,871·3	121·8	112·6	448·8	101·8

[1] Including trainee care staff but excluding care assistants.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many persons aged 65 years and over were in accommodation for the elderly in each local authority in Wales, and how many in each local authority were in accommodation provided by *(a)* local authorities, *(b)* voluntary homes and *(c)* private homes in each year since 1980; and if he will estimate what the change will be in these figures in the future due to changes in community care policy.

Mr. Grist: The number of residents aged 65 years and over in accommodation for elderly people in local authority and private and voluntary residential homes is shown in the following table:

	As at 31 March									
	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*
Clwyd										
Local authority	887	914	976	955	946	886	868	814	787	690
Voluntary and private homes[1]	757	821	830	985	1,249	1,484	1,698	1,893	1,998	2,069
Dyfed										
Local authority	1,042	1,081	1,101	1,117	1,157	1,143	1,131	1,152	1,116	1,086
Voluntary and private homes[1]	76	78	86	91	157	275	447	531	631	790
Gwent										
Local authority	955	967	962	979	958	951	945	948	962	929
Voluntary and private homes[1]	62	67	59	130	208	235	260	321	447	422
Gwynedd										
Local authority	812	802	822	814	826	813	824	809	813	787
Voluntary and private homes[1]	184	198	249	276	367	523	639	767	916	1,021
Mid Glamorgan										
Local authority	1,154	1,180	1,203	1,198	1,192	1,209	1,222	1,242	1,231	1,207
Voluntary and private homes[1]	85	100	96	131	172	247	320	357	517	611
Powys										
Local authority	380	371	369	383	395	396	381	394	397	398
Voluntary and private homes[1]	32	35	69	100	115	143	168	195	224	241
South Glamorgan										
Local authority	909	928	921	890	870	851	781	747	747	748
Voluntary and private homes[1]	405	410	457	496	659	748	987	1,168	1,297	1,375
West Glamorgan										
Local authority	833	859	857	837	829	840	888	874	836	777
Voluntary and private homes[1]	118	122	129	130	158	253	296	317	361	368
Wales										
Local authority	6,972	7,102	7,211	7,173	7,173	7,089	7,040	6,980	6,889	6,622
Voluntary and private homes[1]	1,719	1,831	1,975	2,339	3,085	3,908	4,815	5,549	6,391	6,897

[1] Separate figures for the voluntary and private sectors are not available prior to 1989.

Changes in patterns and volumes of care will take place on the basis of social care plans which are to be produced by social services authorities working with health authorities and other interests and which are to be published by April 1991.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many residents in voluntary and private homes were sponsored by local authorities for each year since 1980; and what information he has on the proportion accounted for by supported residents in *(a)* voluntary homes and *(b)* private homes in Wales.

Mr. Grist: The data as at 31 March are shown in the following table:

	Supported residents in private and voluntary homes	*Percentage of these in voluntary homes*	*Percentage of these in private homes*
1980	729	77·4	22·6
1981	586	81·6	18·4
1982	577	86·1	13·9
1983	576	83·7	16·3
1984	519	88·1	11·9
1985	422	93·4	6·6
1986	217	99·5	0·5
1987	128	99·2	0·8
1988	162	98·8	1·2
1989	182	100·0	—

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many (i) private registered homes, (ii) voluntary registered homes and (iii) local authority homes for the elderly there were in each local authority in Wales *(a)* how many places these provided and *(b)* how many residents there were, for each year since 1980; and what estimate he has made of the likely change in these figures as a result of changes in community care.

Mr. Grist: The information required is shown in the following table. Changes in patterns and volumes of care will take place on the basis of social care plans which are to be produced by social services authorities working with health authorities and other interests, and which are to be published by April 1991.

Homes, Places and Residents for Elderly People as at 31 March 1980-1989

	Clwyd	*Dyfed*	*Gwent*	*Gwynedd*	*Mid Glamorgan*	*Powys*	*South Glamorgan*	*West Glamorgan*	*Wales*
(a) Registered Private and Voluntary[1]									
1980									
Homes	45	5	4	22	2	2	16	5	101
Places	801	94	67	266	102	67	435	137	1,969
Residents	775	78	63	184	85	49	409	127	1,770

	Clwyd	Dyfed	Gwent	Gwynedd	Mid Glamorgan	Powys	South Glamorgan	West Glamorgan	Wales
1981									
Homes	55	5	5	27	3	2	16	5	118
Places	1,043	95	74	306	131	68	448	142	2,307
Residents	839	80	68	198	100	56	417	130	1,888
1982									
Homes	59	5	5	27	4	3	20	7	130
Places	1,131	95	109	360	135	88	511	155	2,584
Residents	846	88	60	250	96	89	464	133	2,026
1983									
Homes	68	7	7	31	6	4	24	9	156
Places	1,359	124	155	393	147	123	558	156	3,015
Residents	1,012	92	132	279	131	110	502	135	2,393
1984									
Homes	86	10	11	45	9	5	35	11	212
Places	1,672	173	245	550	201	139	732	182	3,894
Residents	1,282	161	212	372	175	127	671	163	3,163
1985									
Homes	101	21	15	49	15	7	41	21	270
Places	1,921	307	315	716	303	162	815	278	4,817
Residents	1,517	282	269	540	252	151	754	259	4,024
1986									
Homes	117	42	16	53	18	8	63	23	340
Places	2,197	545	328	753	374	194	1,166	318	5,875
Residents	1,741	466	284	645	326	170	999	306	4,937
1987									
Homes	135	46	19	64	22	11	72	25	394
Places	2,371	621	352	892	421	232	1,303	343	6,535
Residents	1,929	557	328	778	363	207	1,181	321	5,664
1988									
Homes	147	50	25	75	30	12	78	28	445
Places	2,453	721	501	1,090	609	242	1,472	404	7,492
Residents	2,035	653	457	926	522	229	1,309	366	6,497
1989									
Homes	151	63	23	87	33	15	84	28	484
Places	2,620	895	473	1,220	684	280	1,559	422	8,153
Residents	2,102	814	431	1,037	618	256	1,390	379	7,027
(b) Local Authority									
1980									
Homes	23	28	25	26	32	15	27	22	198
Places	943	1,164	1,049	853	1,281	418	975	898	7,581
Residents	916	1,108	1,011	843	1,238	394	936	860	7,306
1981									
Homes	23	29	25	26	33	15	27	22	200
Places	946	1,208	1,047	852	1,305	417	976	909	7,660
Residents	937	1,149	1,027	826	1,257	387	942	893	7,418
1982									
Homes	24	29	25	26	33	15	27	22	201
Places	1,011	1,207	1,047	853	1,311	418	976	909	7,732
Residents	1,001	1,161	1,019	840	1,271	385	933	891	7,501
1983									
Homes	23	29	25	26	33	14	27	21	198
Places	1,003	1,212	1,043	854	1,318	414	956	882	7,682
Residents	976	1,186	1,026	833	1,266	400	907	861	7,455
1984									
Homes	24	29	25	26	33	14	27	21	199
Places	1,032	1,257	1,038	853	1,326	417	954	881	7,758
Residents	966	1,219	1,004	845	1,263	410	889	855	7,451
1985									
Homes	23	29	25	26	33	14	27	22	199
Places	958	1,224	1,041	855	1,329	434	949	910	7,700
Residents	904	1,211	996	834	1,273	410	865	863	7,356

	Clwyd	Dyfed	Gwent	Gwynedd	Mid Glamorgan	Powys	South Glamorgan	West Glamorgan	Wales
1986									
Homes	23	29	24	27	34	14	27	23	201
Places	962	1,273	1,010	883	1,373	434	949	960	7,844
Residents	881	1,188	982	842	1,287	394	795	902	7,271
1987									
Homes	22	29	24	27	34	14	24	23	197
Places	899	1,266	1,029	866	1,372	440	868	929	7,669
Residents	830	1,199	982	824	1,293	404	764	895	7,191
1988									
Homes	21	29	24	27	34	14	24	23	196
Places	861	1,258	1,030	860	1,364	440	846	900	7,559
Residents	797	1,155	986	841	1,271	410	756	851	7,067
1989									
Homes	20	27	24	27	34	14	24	22	192
Places	794	1,148	1,026	848	1,349	440	838	907	7,350
Residents	703	1,123	953	810	1,248	404	758	793	6,792

[1] Separate figures for the voluntary and private sectors are not available prior to 1989.

Toxic Algae

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about the effect in Wales of toxic algae upon water resources and those who use them.

Mr. Grist: The National Rivers Authority has commenced a major programme, concentrating on public supply reservoirs and inland waters regularly used for water contact sports, to monitor for blue-green algae. If algae is identified in any waters, the authority immediately informs the district council health authority and the owner. Responsibility for taking any necessary precautions and bringing the matter to the attention of water users and other members of the public lies with the owners.

To supplement the information provided by the NRA, Dwr Cymru Cyf is also carrying out routine monitoring of all susceptible water resources used for public supply. Dwr Cymru advises me that, to date, blue-green algae has been reported in four such reservoirs but the algal scums have been limited to small areas on the surface of the water and have thus not adversely affected the water used for public supply.

Clinical Waste

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to improve security arrangements for the collection and disposal of clinical waste in Wales.

Mr. Grist: All district health authorities in Wales have been made aware of the provisions contained in the Environmental Protection Bill, which will introduce revised standards for the disposal of clinical waste by incineration.

Discussions with senior managers of Welsh health authorities have already taken place to focus attention on this subject and a seminar on the new standards and requirements has been arranged for health authority staff and local authority environmental health officers on 4 July.

Each health authority was also given the opportunity to comment on the consultation document reviewing the operation of the Control of Pollution (Special Waste) Regulations 1980 and which proposes that clinical waste should be classified as special waste. If implemented this would require a consignment note procedure to be applied to the disposal of clinical waste.

Provision is incorporated in the Environmental Protection Bill imposing on producers of waste the duty to ensure the adoption of proper methods of control in its handling and this duty would apply to producers of clinical waste.

Homelessness

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give an estimate of the current number of homeless in Wales; and, of those, how many suffer from *(a)* alcoholism or drug dependency, *(b)* AIDS and *(c)* mental illness.

Mr. Grist: There were 4,208[1] households accepted as homeless during the quarter ending 31 March 1990. Of these, 26 households were classed as in priority need because a household member was considered vulnerable as a result of mental disability. Information on the number of persons in households accepted as suffering from alcohol or drug dependency or AIDS is not collected centrally.

[1] This figure includes an estimated 2,000 households made homeless in Colwyn as a result of the major flooding incident in February 1990.

Home Helps

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many and what percentage of persons aged 65 years and over received home help service in each local authority in Wales since 1980; and what estimate he has made of the likely change in these figures as a result of changes in community care.

Mr. Grist: The information is shown in the following table:

Persons aged 65 and over receiving home help

	Clwyd	Dyfed	Gwent	Gwynedd	Mid Glamorgan	Powys	South Glamorgan	West Glamorgan	Wales
				(a) Numbers[1]					
1980	3,401	3,640	6,567	2,946	11,044	1,006	5,585	4,773	38,962
1981	4,063	3,707	6,775	3,065	11,160	923	5,343	5,024	40,060
1982	4,252	4,001	6,867	3,319	11,898	794	5,816	5,107	42,054
1983	4,437	3,983	7,409	3,438	12,863	808	7,118	5,794	45,850
1984	4,496	3,752	7,769	3,309	13,177	906	6,373	6,588	46,370
1985	4,618	3,891	6,512	3,256	13,661	860	7,095	7,154	47,047
1986	5,031	4,134	8,136	3,557	14,009	873	7,298	7,742	50,780
1987	5,128	4,452	8,559	3,297	14,237	979	7,559	8,009	52,220
1988	5,661	3,869	9,643	2,997	16,431	952	5,208	7,526	52,287
1989	5,878	4,956	9,713	3,273	16,711	986	5,249	6,837	53,603
				(b) As a percentage[2]					
1980	5·2	6·7	10·6	7·0	14·7	5·3	9·9	8·4	9·0
1981	6·1	6·6	10·7	7·1	14·7	4·8	9·4	8·7	9·1
1982	6·3	7·2	10·9	7·6	15·6	4·2	10·1	8·7	9·5
1983	6·6	7·0	11·6	8·0	16·9	4·2	12·4	10·0	10·4
1984	6·7	6·6	12·4	7·7	17·4	4·7	11·1	11·2	10·6
1985	6·9	6·8	10·3	7·6	18·0	4·6	12·3	12·3	10·7
1986	7·5	7·0	12·6	8·2	18·2	4·5	12·5	12·9	11·3
1987	7·5	7·5	12·9	7·5	18·1	4·9	12·7	13·2	11·4
1988	8·2	6·4	14·2	6·8	20·5	4·7	8·5	12·2	11·2
1989	8·5	8·0	14·1	7·3	20·7	4·8	8·5	11·0	11·4

[1] During the year ended 31 March.
[2] Expressed as a percentage of estimated population aged 65 and over at 30 June in preceding year.

Changes in patterns and volumes of care will take place on the basis of social care plans which are to be produced by social services authorities working with health authorities and other interests and which are to be published by April 1991.

Elderly People (Day Centres)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many day centres for the elderly there were, and how many places were available in these day centres in each local authority in Wales in each year since 1980; and what estimate he has made of the likely future change in these figures as a result of changes in community care.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is shown in the following table. Changes in patterns and volumes of care will take place on the basis of social care plans which are to be produced by social services authorities working with health authorities and other interests and which are to be published by April 1991.

As at 31 March

	Clwyd		Dyfed[1]		Gwent[1]		Gwynedd		Mid Glamorgan		Powys[1]		South Glamorgan		West Glamorgan		Wales	
	Centres	Places	Centres	Places	Centres	Places	Centres	Places	Centres	Places	Centres	Places	Centres	Places	Centres	Places	Centres	Places
1980	3	145	—	—	—	—	8	128	33	1,386	—	—	12	990	—	—	56	2,649
1981	3	145	—	—	—	—	8	128	33	1,364	—	—	13	1,060	—	—	57	2,697
1982	—	—	—	—	—	—	10	183	27	1,277	—	—	13	1,060	—	—	50	2,520
1983	—	—	—	—	—	—	10	185	27	994	—	—	13	1,060	—	—	50	2,239
1984	—	—	—	—	—	—	12	250	26	871	—	—	13	1,060	—	—	51	2,181
1985	—	—	—	—	—	—	14	284	26	866	—	—	13	1,060	1	20	54	2,230
1986	2	68	—	—	—	—	14	281	25	752	—	—	9	800	3	60	53	1,961
1987	2	71	—	—	—	—	14	287	24	663	—	—	9	800	5	123	54	1,944
1988	3	86	—	—	—	—	14	288	26	673	—	—	9	800	6	153	58	2,000
1989	3	86	—	—	—	—	15	330	34	794	—	—	9	800	8	208	69	2,218

[1] Dyfed, Gwent and Powys provide day centres but they cater for a variety of client groups although elderly people are the predominant attenders.

Primary Schools

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a list of all Her Majesty's inspectorate reports on individual primary schools in Wales published during the last four years, indicating for each the number of pupils attending.

Mr. Grist: Her Majesty's inspectorate reports on individual primary schools to 21 June 1990 are listed in the following tables, by local education authority, with the number of pupils on the school roll in January of the year of publication.

Dyfed

	Report issued	Number on roll January
Prendergast Junior	1986	241
Lakefield County Primary	1986	218
Ysgol Gymraeg Rhydaman	1986	125
St. Francis Roman Catholic	1987	127
Plascrug County Primary	1987	352
Tenby Junior	1987	189
Aberporth County Primary	1988	166
Pwll County Primary	1988	122
Ysgol Gynradd Eglwyswrw	1988	133
Llangunner County Primary	1988	255
Grove Junior School	1988	235
Llangeitho County Primary	1988	72
Whitland County Primary	1988	156
Penparcau Junior School	1988	95

	Report issued	Number on roll January
Ysgol Gymraeg Tielo Sant	1988	127
Llandovery County Primary	1988	198
Barn Street Junior	1989	204
Parc Y Tywyn	1989	101
St. Padarns Roman Catholic Primary School	1989	136
Penygroes County Primary	1989	143
Peniel County Primary	1989	118
St. David's Church in Wales Primary School	1989	96

Gwent

	Report issued	Number on roll January
Cwmfelinfach	1986	220
Mathern CP	1986	76
Durham Road Junior	1986	325
Briery Hill CP	1987	151
Pengam CP	1987	292
St. Dials Infants and Welsh unit	1987	197
Llanfair Kilgeddin voluntary controlled	1987	29
Cyltha CP	1988	200
Nantyglo Junior and Infants	1988	164
Henllys Junior and Infants	1988	28
Cwmffrwdoer CP	1988	175
Llangattock Nigh Usk CP	1988	25
Willowtown Junior	1988	242
Ty Sign Junior School	1988	293
St. Woolos PS	1989	184
St. Andrews Infants	1989	216
Libanus PS	1989	256
Alway Junior	1989	222
Dukestown Junior	1989	141
Sofrydd Junior (and Welsh unit)	1989	147
St. Andrews Junior	1989	184
Llwynu Junior	1990	183

Gwynedd

	Report issued	Number on roll January
Llandefgan	1986	201
Coed Mawr Infants	1986	72
Glan Adda CP	1987	82
Bodlondeb Voluntary Controlled Infants	1987	113
Dolgellau Voluntary Controlled	1987	92
Ysgol Y Morfa	1987	41
Candnant VC Junior	1987	160
Ysgol Treferthyr	1988	148
Dolgellau Junior	1988	99
Ysgol Morfa Rhianed	1988	151
Beamaris PS	1988	165
Nefyn Infants School	1988	171
Nefyn Junior School	1988	
Ysgol Fridd Y Llyn	1988	24
Ysgol Gynradd Y Bala	1988	90
Ysgol-Y-Borth	1988	24
Treffos Independent	1988	63
Ysgol Gynradd Y Parc Holyhead	1989	230
Ysgol Cae Top	1989	192
Ysgol Llanfairpwllgyngyll	1990	355

Clwyd

	Report issued	Number on roll January
Ysgol Gymraeg Bodhyfryd, Wrexham	1986	397
Glynceiriog CP	1986	67
St. Mary's Voluntary Aided, Ruabon	1986	233
Park Junior CP, Llay	1986	236
Borras Park CP	1986	224
Old Colwyn Junior CP	1986	252
Ysgol Caer Drewyn, Corwen	1987	106
Wat's Dyke Infants, Mynydd ISA	1987	233
Ysgol Mair RC, Rhyl	1987	523
Penley Madras VP	1987	117
Ysgol Bro Cynllaith	1988	51
Ysgol Heol Gaer, Flint	1988	234
Ysgol Emmanuel CP, Rhyl	1988	421
Ysgol Gynradd Bro Cernyw, Abergele	1988	97
Ysgol Derwen, Kinnerton	1988	168
St. Mary's Aided, Overton	1988	98
Bronington VP, Whitchurch	1988	110
Ysgol Dewi Sant, Rhyl	1989	319
Ceiriog Junior CP, Chirk	1989	175
Chirk Infants CP	1989	187
St. Elfod Junior CP, Abergele	1989	246
Penmaenrhos Infants School, Old Colwyn	1990	131

West Glamorgan

	Report issued	Number on roll January
Birchgrove Infants	1986	290
Duffryn Afan CP	1986	38
Tirmorfa CP	1986	263
Ynystawe Primary	1987	181
Coedfranc Infant	1987	282
Garnswllt CP	1987	25
Crynallt Junior	1987	322
Llangyfelach	1987	133
Central Junior	1988	282
Glyncorrwg PS	1988	174
Blaengwrach CP	1988	149
Gors Infants School	1988	228
CWM Nedd Welsh PS	1988	290
Bryncoch C in WPS	1988	162
Portmead PS	1988	360
CWM Gors CP	1989	96
Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Bryniago	1989	124
Tywyn PS	1989	308
Baglan PS	1989	234
Pennard CP	1990	207

South Glamorgan

	Report issued	Number on roll January
Llanilltud Fawr Primary	1986	254
Ysgol Gymraeg Sant Ffrancis	1986	203
Lakeside County Primary	1986	371
Ysgol Gymraeg Sant Baruc	1986	135
Hywel DDA Junior	1986	165
Pendolylan Church in Wales	1986	74
Llansannor and Llanhari Church in Wales	1986	98
Hawthorn Junior	1986	112
Trowbridge County Infants	1986	243
Gwenfo Church in Wales Controlled	1987	130
Bryn Hafod County Primary	1987	357
Gabalfa Primary	1987	307
Glan yr Afon Infants	1987	195

	Report issued	*Number on roll January*
Christ the King Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided	1987	234
Danescourt Junior	1988	170
St. Anne's Church in Wales Infant	1988	23
Murch Junior School	1988	254
Glan yr Afon Junior School	1988	210
Llysfaen County Primary	1988	324
Radnor County Primary	1988	297
Eaglewell Infants	1989	190
Rhws Primary School	1989	252
St. Francis Roman Catholic Junior	1989	182
Holton Junior	1989	300
Ysgol Gymraeg Penarth	1989	289
Ysgol y Wern	1990	221

Powys

	Report issued	*Number on roll January*
Radnor Valley County Primary	1986	75
Irfon Valley County Primary	1986	106
Trefonnen Church in Wales	1986	246
Llandysilio Voluntary Controlled	1987	49
Machynlleth Junior	1987	141
Llangynidr County Primary	1987	136
Gurnos Infants	1987	56
Pentwyn Independent	1988	11
Llanerfyl Church in Wales	1988	22
Crossgates County Primary	1988	127
Ysgol Trefeglwys	1988	109
Penrhos County Primary	1989	129
Ysgol Pennant	1989	74
Buttington/Trewern County Primary	1989	68
Ffynnon Gynydd Church in Wales Primary School	1989	35
Ysgol Maes-Y-Dre	1989	235
Trecastle County Primary	1989	41
Ysgol Gymraeg Ynys Cedwyn, Powys	1990	87
Priory Church in Wales Primary	1990	179

Mid Glamorgan

	Report issued	*Number on roll January*
Bryncethin Junior	1986	166
Llwyncrwn Primary	1986	497
Ysgol Penybont	1986	364
St. Brides Major Church in Wales	1986	136
Ty'n-y-Wern Junior	1986	125
Twyn Junior	1986	253
Hendenny Park County Primary	1986	247
Creigiau County Primary	1987	356
Parc Primary	1987	199
St. Helens' Roman Catholic	1987	304
Cymmer Junior	1987	213
Derwen Deg County Primary	1987	301
Penrhiwceiber Junior	1987	196
West Park	1987	186
Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Llantrisant	1987	279
St. Gwladys Junior School	1988	154
Penywaun Junior School	1988	184
Coed-Yr-Esgob Primary School	1988	120
Glantaf Infants	1988	148
Newtown Primary School	1988	39
Ton Pentre Junior	1989	150
Hengoed Infants	1989	103
Trelewis Primary School	1989	189
Ffynnon Taf County Primary	1989	160
Cwm Ifor Infants	1989	165
Cefn Glas Infants	1989	299
Marlas Infants	1990	126
Lansbury Park Infants	1990	257
St. Mary's and St. Patrick's Primary School	1990	193
Peny-Y-Graig Junior	1990	112

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a list of those primary schools which *(a)* have closed in Wales during the last three years, *(b)* have been considered by him and their closure approved and *(c)* have been considered by him and their closure rescinded; and if he will give for each school the number of pupils attending.

Mr. Grist: The information is as follows:

Primary Schools Closed 1987

Clwyd
[1] Llangwm Church in Wales VC Primary
[1] Llanrhaeadr Yn Cymmerch VC Primary
[1] Shotton County Nursery

Dyfed
[1] Model VC Primary

Gwent
[1] St. Mary's RC VC Infants—Amalgamation
[1] St. Mary's RC VC Junior—Amalgamation
[1] Llanfair Discoed County Primary
[1] Trellech VC Primary
[1] Penallt VC Primary
[1] Catbrook County Primary
[1] The North County Primary
[1] Llanishen County Primary
[2] Beaufort Hill County Infants—Amalgamation
[2] Beaufort Hill County Junior—Amalgamation

Gwynedd
[2] Nefyn County Primary—Amalgamation
[2] Nefyn County Infants—Amalgamation
[2] Ysgol Maenon (County Primary)

West Glamorgan
[2] Bishopstown County Junior

Primary schools closed 1988

Dyfed
[2] Penwaun County Primary
[2] Carmarthen County Nursery
[1] Llandewi Velfrey VC Infants
[1] Priory Street Church in Wales VC Primary
[1] Pentrepoeth County Infants
[1] Pentrepoeth County Junior

Gwent
[2] Tredegar Wharf County Primary
[2] Alexandria County Primary
[2] Bolt Street County Primary
[2] Belle Vue County Nursery
[1] Caerwent VC Infants

Gwynedd
Ysgol Capel Curig

Mid Glamorgan
[2] Glynogwr County Primary

Powys
[1] Cray County Primary

West Glamorgan
[2] Morriston County Junior

Primary schools closed 1989

Clwyd
[1] Rhuallt County Primary
[1] Golftyn County Infants

Dyfed
[1]Adpar County Primary
[1]Newcastle Emlyn VC Primary
[1]Park County Infants
[1]Pembroke Dock County Junior
[2]Penparcau County Infants—Amalgamation
[2]Penparcau County Junior—Amalgamation
[2]Trimsaran County Infants—Amalgamation
[2]Trimsaran County Junior—Amalgamation

Gwent
[1]Mathern County Primary
[1]St. Arvans VC Primary
[2]George Street County Nursery
[2]George Street County Junior and infants

Gwynedd
[1]Ysgol Glanypwll (County Primary)

Mid Glamorgan
[2]Llanilltud Faerdref County Junior—Amalgamation
[2]Llanilltud Faerdref County Infants—Amalgamation

Powys
[2]Llanfrynach Church in Wales VC Primary

West Glamorgan
[2]Cadle County Infants

[1] Proposal approved by the Secretary of State.
[2] Proposal determined by the maintaining authority.

During the period one proposal, by Clwyd LEA, to close Cornist Infants School, was rejected by the Secretary of State in 1989.

The Department does not maintain records of primary school closures by size of school.

Community Care

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what the additional costs will be following the implementation of the proposals of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill in Wales; and how much will be attributable to community care.

Mr. Grist: The estimated additional recurrent costs in Wales of the implementation of the proposals for the national health service which were included in the explanatory and financial memorandum to the National Health Service and Community Care Bill are £10·85 million. The estimated costs for community care in Wales are being considered in the current public expenditure survey.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had with local authority representatives from Wales of the financial implications of the new community care policy.

Mr. Grist: Our officials have had extensive discussions with local authority representatives in Wales under the aegis of the Welsh consultative council on local government finance (WCCLGF) to consider the expenditure implications of the arrangments proposed in the White Paper "Caring for People" (Cm 849). My right hon. Friend will be discussing this matter with the local authority associations at the meeting of the WCCLGF on 4 July.

Village Schools

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on his policy on small village schools.

Mr. Grist: Our school reforms are intended to improve the quality of education in all schools irrespective of size or location. It is for local education authorities to determine the pattern of education in their areas.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to the answers of 10 May, *Official Report*, column *196*, and 30 April, *Official Report*, columns *426-27*, about energy consumption, what is the square footage of office space to which these figures relate.

Mr. David Hunt: The figure is 717,960 sq ft.

Mental Illness

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what sums of money have been or are being made available by his Department to support the implementation of the all-Wales strategy for mental illness in each relevant financial year.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) on 30 April, columns *425-26*.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether projects concerned primarily with mental illness will be eligible for grant aid under the urban programme in Wales for the 1991-92 financial year.

Mr. Grist: No. As proposed in the White Paper "Caring for People: Community Care in the Next Decade and Beyond" (Cm. 849) and confirmed in Welsh Office circular No. 22/90, a copy of which is in the Library, urban programme resources for community care projects are being transferred to more appropriate Welsh Office funding programmes. This change includes special funding for mental illness services which, from April this year, is allocated solely under the Welsh Office mental illness strategy.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much was invested in improving the energy efficiency of his Department in the latest available year.

Mr. David Hunt: Energy efficiency is taken into consideration when building works and maintenance schemes are undertaken in my Department's offices, and expenditure relating to energy efficiency is not separately identified.

HEALTH

Immunisation

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to complete the pilot study of parent-held child immunisation cards.

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to publish the results of the pilot study of parent-held child record immunisation cards.

Mr. Dorrell: The British Paediatric Association published the report of a joint working party on

professional and parent-held records used in child health surveillance in May and launched the record itself on 12 June. Copies of the report and a specimen of the child health record, which includes a record of immunisations, have been placed in the Library.

Drugs

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what compensation other than through civil action is available to families of somebody who had died from the effects of a particular drug when that drug has begun to show unexpected side-effects.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The question of whether compensation is payable depends on the detailed circumstances of the case. The means by which parties pursue issues between them either by discussion, negotiation, or litigation must also be determined by the circumstances. The Medicines Act 1968 makes no provision for compensation, being a measure aimed at providing safety, quality and efficacy of marketed medicines. Decisions made under the Act are based on the best possible scientific judgment on available information and are monitored carefully, but the possibility of unexpected side-effects cannot be totally excluded.

Mr. Ken Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he plans to bring forward legislation which will allow a victim of a drug injury to claim compensation without having to prove negligence on the part of the manufacturer; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Under the Consumer Protection Act 1987 any person injured by a defective product (including a medicinal one) may seek redress through the courts without having to prove negligence on the part of the manufacturer of that product.

Health Education

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what will be the total expenditure on health education in 1990-91 by *(a)* the Health Education Authority, *(b)* each regional health authority in England and *(c)* other agencies; and what proportion of the budget of each regional health authority is devoted to health education.

Mr. Dorrell: The planned expenditure on health education in 1990-91 by the Health Education Authority is £26·8 million.

It is not possible to quantify the proportion of total regional allocations spent on health education by each regional health authority since so much of it is integral to health service activity.

The Department also provides funding under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968, for a large number of voluntary bodies, many of which undertake health education as part of their overall role.

Joint Finance

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list, for each regional health authority in England, *(a)* the total sum available for joint finance for each year 1984-85 to 1990-91, *(b)* what this sum represents as a percentage of the total regional health authority budget and *(c)* what proportion of joint finance was allocated to projects relating specifically to the closure of long-stay hospitals.

Mr. Dorrell: Information on the sums allocated for joint finance (revenue and capital) and the proportion that represents of regional health authorities' total initial allocations (revenue and capital) is shown in the tables. Information on sums allocated to projects relating specifically to the closure of long-stay hospitals is not held centrally.

1984-85

Regional health authority	*Joint finance allocation £ million*	*Percentage of total initial allocation per cent.*
1. Northern	6·526	1·1
2. Yorkshire	7·356	1·1
3. Trent	9·097	1·1
4. East Anglia	3·910	1·1
5. North West Thames	7·034	1·0
6. North East Thames	8·293	0·9
7. South East Thames	8·649	1·1
8. South West Thames	6·710	1·1
9. Wessex	5·982	1·1
10. Oxford	4·315	1·1
11. South Western	7·055	1·1
12. West Midlands	9·821	1·0
13. Mersey	5·297	1·0
14. North Western	8·844	1·0

1985-86

Regional health authority	*Joint finance allocation £ million*	*Percentage of total initial allocation per cent.*
1. Northern	6·732	1·0
2. Yorkshire	7·702	1·0
3. Trent	9·707	1·1
4. East Anglia	4·107	1·1
5. North West Thames	7·464	1·0
6. North East Thames	8·692	0·9
7. South East Thames	9·443	1·1
8. South West Thames	7·129	1·1
9. Wessex	6·320	1·1
10. Oxford	5·031	1·2
11. South Western	7·456	1·1
12. West Midlands	10·875	1·0
13. Mersey	5·924	1·1
14. North Western	9·360	1·0

1986-87

Regional health authority	*Joint finance allocation £ million*	*Percentage of total initial allocation Per cent.*
1. Northern	7·132	1·0
2. Yorkshire	8·310	1·0
3. Trent	9·958	1·0
4. East Anglia	4·236	1·0
5. North West Thames	7·989	1·0
6. North East Thames	9·220	0·9
7. South East Thames	10·030	1·1
8. South West Thames	7·327	1·1
9. Wessex	6·536	1·1
10. Oxford	4·869	1·1
11. South Western	7·867	1·1
12. West Midlands	10·845	1·0
13. Mersey	5·465	1·0
14. North Western	9·998	1·0

1987-88

Regional health authority	Joint finance allocation £ million	Percentage of total initial allocation Per cent.
1. Northern	7·397	1·0
2. Yorkshire	8·305	1·0
3. Trent	9·942	1·0
4. East Anglia	4·506	1·0
5. North West Thames	7·897	1·0
6. North East Thames	9·010	0·9
7. South East Thames	10·354	1·1
8. South West Thames	7·499	1·0
9. Wessex	6·647	1·1
10. Oxford	4·782	1·0
11. South Western	8·099	1·1
12. West Midlands	11·292	0·9
13. Mersey	5·828	1·0
14. North Western	9·357	0·9

1988-89

Regional health authority	Joint finance allocation £ million	Percentage of total initial allocation Per cent.
1. Northern	7·268	0·9
2. Yorkshire	8·383	0·9
3. Trent	10·564	0·9
4. East Anglia	4·784	1·0
5. North West Thames	7·899	0·9
6. North East Thames	9·362	0·8
7. South East Thames	9·762	1·0
8. South West Thames	7·538	0·9
9. Wessex	7·121	1·0
10. Oxford	4·912	0·9
11. South Western	8·293	1·0
12. West Midlands	11·516	0·9
13. Mersey	5·819	0·9
14. North Western	9·628	0·9

1989-90

Regional health authority	Joint finance allocation £ million	Percentage of total initial allocation Per cent.
1. Northern	7·623	0·8
2. Yorkshire	8·774	0·9
3. Trent	11·114	0·9
4. East Anglia	5·067	0·9
5. North West Thames	8·279	0·8
6. North East Thames	9·800	0·8
7. South East Thames	10·235	0·9
8. South West Thames	7·894	0·9
9. Wessex	7·506	1·0
10. Oxford	5·218	0·9
11. South Western	8·732	1·0
12. West Midlands	12·104	0·8
13. Mersey	6·094	0·8
14. North Western	10·051	0·8

1990-91

Regional health authority	Joint finance allocation £ million	Percentage of total initial allocation Per cent.
1. Northern	8·004	0·8
2. Yorkshire	9·213	0·8
3. Trent	11·669	0·8
4. East Anglia	5·321	0·9
5. North West Thames	8·693	0·8
6. North East Thames	10·291	0·7
7. South East Thames	10·747	0·9
8. South West Thames	8·289	0·8
9. Wessex	7·882	0·9
10. Oxford	5·478	0·8
11. South Western	9·169	0·9
12. West Midlands	12·708	0·8
13. Mersey	6·399	0·8
14. North Western	10·533	0·8

Child Accident Prevention

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total level of Government spending on child accident prevention via *(a)* the Health Education Authority, *(b)* the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents and *(c)* other agencies.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Health Education Authority and the Child Accident Prevention Trust, both of which are funded by the Department, expect to spend £127,000 and £107,000 respectively on child accident prevention in 1990-91. The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents receives funding from a number of Government Departments; the largest grant is from the Department of Transport, which has allocated it £389,000 in the current financial year for its road safety activities. These extend beyond child accident prevention.

Friedreich's Ataxia

Mr. Ted Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will establish a separate unitary fund for research into Friedreich's Ataxia.

Mr. Dorrell: We have no plans to do so. The Medical Research Council (MRC), which receives grant in aid from the Department of Education and Science, is the main Government agency for the promotion of biomedical and clinical research in the United Kingdom. In 1988-89, the last financial year for which figures are available, the MRC spent £197,000 on research projects which were relevant to Friedreich's Ataxia. The council is always willing to consider soundly based proposals for research funding in competition with other applications. In addition to this, university departments and medical schools, with support from University Funding Council block grants and health authorities, may be undertaking research into Friedreich's Ataxia; information on this is not collected centrally.

Committee on Safety of Medicines

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health of the current members of the Committee on Safety of Medicines how many have declared that they are given *(a)* private consultancy fees from pharmaceutical companies and *(b)* research grants to their medical departments.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Interests are declared in accordance with the code of practice published with the annual report of the Medicines Commission. A copy is in the Library. Under the code, personal interests involve payments to the member personally, for example, consultancies or other fee-paid work. Non-personal

interests involve payments to a department for which a member is responsible, but does not benefit the member personally, for example, commissioned research. Currently there are 21 members of the Committee on Safety of Medicines (CSM) and the interests they have declared are as follows:

	Members
(a) A personal and non-personal interests	11
(b) Non-personal interests only	7

It is vital that committees providing expert scientific advice on medicines have members with practical experience of research and up-to-date scientific knowledge. By following the ethical standards set by the code of practice members are able to avoid conflicts of interest which might otherwise impair the objectivity of the advice they give. We have full confidence in the personal integrity of the members of the CSM.

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will list the names of those members of the Committee on Safety of Medicines who are specialised in allergenic diseases.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The membership of the Committee on Safety of Medicines and its sub-committees covers a wide range of specialties. Additional experts may be consulted or appointed as temporary members as and when necessary. A table showing the membership of the committee and its sub-committees has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how the Committee on Safety of Medicines voted in respect of the drug Corwin.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The deliberations of the Committee on Safety of Medicines are confidential.

Tampons

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research is currently being undertaken by the Government into toxic shock syndrome; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: For several years the staphyococcal reference laboratory of the public health laboratory service has gathered information about the occurrence of toxic shock syndrome and has characterised the strains involved from this and other conditions. Work in this field is also being carried out in universities and national health service hospitals and at the centre for applied microbiological research, Porton Down.

Waiting Lists

Miss Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the function of waiting list funds and initiatives.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The waiting list initiative and waiting list fund provides targeted resources to enable health authorities to treat additional patients from the waiting list, and to reduce the number of patients who wait excessively long times. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) on 18 January 1990 at columns *403-4*.

GPs (Computer Software)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on progress on the provision of computer software for general practitioners' budgets.

Mr. Dorrell: We are continuing our discussions with the computer companies, many of which have been directly consulted during the development of the technical specifications for the software package. We are unable to give any details about these discussions at this stage as to do so would be a breach of commercial confidentiality.

Eye Tests

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many relatives of glaucoma sufferers in each district health authority area of England received free eyesight tests in each quarter of 1988-89 and in each quarter of 1989-90.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Statistics prior to 1 April 1989 were not broken down by patient group. Since then family practitioner committees have collected data on sight tests paid for under the general ophthalmic services on a six-monthly basis. District health authorities do not collect such information. The table gives estimated numbers by patient group and regional health authority for the period in question:

NHS sight tests paid for during April-September 1989
Relatives of glaucoma sufferers

	Relatives over 40
Regional health authority	
Northern	2,700
Yorkshire	3,950
Trent	9,260
East Anglia	3,900
North West Thames	3,500
North East Thames	5,190
South East Thames	4,150
South West Thames	4,800
Wessex	5,860
Oxford	3,250
South Western	4,950
West Midlands	5,650
Mersey	2,520
North Western	5,360

These figures are based on a 2 per cent. sample of NHS sight test application forms processed by family practitioner committees. They do not take into account sight tests paid for after 1 April 1989 but conducted before that period.

Family Practitioner Committees

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) when he expects to receive a report from the Bolton family practitioner committee of the inquiry into the financial background and other related matters of its general manager; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has any plans to change the reference and vetting procedures for recruitment of officials to posts involving responsibility for public resources to require that their past financial and other relevant history is available to the interviewing committee.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I understand that Bolton family practitioner committee dismissed its general manager on 14 June with immediate effect. This decision was a matter for the committee as employing authority.

Under the terms of health circular HC(FP)(89)9, which governs FPC general manager appointments, regional health authorities were asked to provide a complete service to family practitioner committees for the recruitment and appointment process. This service was provided to Bolton family practitioner committee by the North Western regional health authority. I understand that the authority is re-examining the procedures applied in this case. If more general lessons emerge, we shall ensure they are brought to the attention of other national health service authorities.

A copy of health circular HC(FP)(89)9 has been placed in the Library.

Residential Homes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what demographic and social changes were taken into account in his Department's calculation of the numbers of elderly persons likely to need local authority support to live in residential homes after 1991.

Mr. Dorrell: It will of course be for local authorities to decide how many elderly people should receive residential care with their support in future years. Each year the local authority associations will provide the Department with estimates of the number of people whom they consider are likely to receive such care, taking into account demographic and other factors and those estimates will be taken into account by the Government in determining the level of revenue support grant to local authorities.

"Face the Facts"

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will obtain for his departmental library a copy of the transcript of the BBC Radio Four programme, "Face the Facts", broadcast on 13 June.

Mr. Dorrell: No. Whilst the Department is aware of its content, the programme was concerned in the main with compensation claims in respect of families who had been in some way connected with the operations of the Sellafield reprocessing plant. Matters relating to nuclear safety are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy.

Ambulance Dispute

Miss Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) when regional health authorities were notified of charges arising from the military assistance during the ambulance dispute; and when the costs were notified to each district health authority of the sums they would have to pay towards costs incurred during the ambulance dispute;

(2) what is the total amount of money that each regional health authority has been asked to pay for costs incurred during the ambulance dispute for military assistance; and what is the amount apportioned to each district health authority budget by regional health authorities.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The total costs that each regional health authority has been asked to pay for military assistance during the ambulance dispute are given in the table. Regional health authorities were notified of amounts due in respect of the period to 31 December 1989 on 7 March 1990, and in respect of the period January to 31 March 1990, on 14 June 1990. Information is not held centrally about the amount apportioned by regions to district health authorities nor when such amounts were notified.

Region	*Total amount (£ thousands)*
Northern	474
Yorkshire	534
Trent	654
East Anglian	284
North West Thames	520
North East Thames	646
South East Thames	581
South West Thames	480
Wessex	399
Oxford	319
South Western	475
West Midlands	764
Mersey	379
North Western	649
Total	7,158

Children Act 1989

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the expected date or dates for implementation of the provisions of the Children Act 1989.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Some provisions of the Children Act 1989 are already in force. We plan to implement the remaining provisions in October 1991.

Night Working

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment has been made of the implications for care homes of the proposed European Community directive on night working.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The European Commission has not yet issued a draft of its proposed directive on working time; however, we understand that the Commission is likely to propose restrictions on night and shift working. Clearly this may have implications for a wide range of workers, including those in care homes, and in other health services, where there is a need to maintain care on a 24-hour basis. We will not be able to assess the full implications until the Commission has published its detailed proposal.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what further representations he has received regarding hospitals opting out of the present national health service management structure.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 16 May at column *418*. Since then a further six units have expressed interest in national health service trust status. This brings the total number of units which have expressed interest in trust status to 199.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the national medical organisations which have

made representations to him expressing support for proposals for national health service hospitals to become self-governing.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Since the White Paper was published in 1989 it has attracted a great deal of interest from the medical profession at national and at local level. Much of the discussion with the national organisations has been about the detailed implications and practical details of the implementation of the proposals. At local level there is substantial interest and support from the medical profession on the proposals for establishing NHS trusts.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how far his decision on whether a hospital will become self-governing will depend on the number of individuals and organisations in the area who have been involved in the consultation process concerned being in favour of such a step being taken.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will consider applications for national health service trust status individually in the light of all relevant information, including any views expressed in the local consultation exercise.

Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research, Porton

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) of 19 April, *Official Report*, column *990*, if he will make a statement on the state of negotiations with Porton International on the future of the centre for applied microbiology and research, Porton.

Mr. Dorrell: I have nothing to add to the reply my hon. Friend the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State gave my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) on 19 April at column *990*.

NHS Pay Bargaining

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his reply of 12 June, *Official Report*, columns *150-51*, whether he intends to issue guidance in respect of pay to protect specific groups of workers and to prevent shortages in specialisms across the country.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There are no plans to issue guidance on pay in national health service trusts. Guidance will be issued on non-medical education and training to ensure an adequate supply of suitably trained staff throughout the national health service.

Sheppey General Hospital

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in the assessment made regarding the proposals to cut acute geriatric and acute medical provision at Sheppey general hospital, what regard was made to questions of *(a)* population influx to Sheppey in the summer months, *(b)* future housing development in Sheppey, *(c)* the nature of access to the island and *(d)* the availability of an ambulance service on the island.

Mr. Dorrell: Medway health authority is currently consulting locally on its proposals for Sheppey general hospital.

The hon. Member should contact the chairman of Medway health authority for information about the factors taken into account in the authority's assessment of the future use of Sheppey general hospital.

Clinical Waste

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to improve security arrangements for the collection and disposal of clinical waste in England.

Mr. Dorrell: Collection and disposal of clinical waste is governed by the Control of Pollution Act 1974 and the related Collection and Disposal of Waste Regulations 1988 (S.I. 1988, No. 819).

It is the responsibility of health authorities to ensure adequate arrangements are made for the safe storage, collection and disposal of clinical waste from their premises. The responsibility for collection and disposal of clinical waste from private dwellings rests with the local authority.

Obstetric Accidents

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if, in the light of recent evidence published in the *British Medical Journal* of 26 May on the causes of certain obstetric accidents, he will undertake a review of the training of junior doctors in relation to foetal heart monitoring and the use of obstetric forceps.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The training of junior hospital doctors in the use of techniques such as foetal monitoring and the application of forceps is a matter for the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, and the individual consultants under whose supervision such junior doctors work. However, issues like those identified in the recent article in the *British Medical Journal* will, as a matter of course, be raised during the regular meetings held between the Department and the college.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much was invested in improving the energy efficiency of his Department in the latest available year.

Mr. Dorrell: For the whole of the period for which information is available, the Department of Health was part of the Department of Health and Social Security. I refer the hon. Member to the reply my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security gave him today.

SCOTLAND

Flooding, River Tay

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the expert hydrologists who will carry out the independent survey of the causes of the flooding in the River Tay valley on Sunday 5 and Monday 6 February will have powers to investigate the operation of the hydro board water control measures on these dates.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The independent study will be overseen by a working group of interested parties

and the consultants will be free to investigate any matters within the agreed terms of reference. Scottish Hydro-Electric plc is represented on the working group and we would expect any relevant information to be made available.

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the powers *(a)* under which the independent survey of the flooding in February in the River Tay valley will be carried out and *(b)* under which his Department is funding the survey.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The independent consultant is to be appointed by Tayside regional council which has powers under the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to investigate, and collect information relating to, any matter concerning its area.

The Government's contribution towards the cost of the survey will be made under the authority of the Small Landholders (Scotland) Act 1911 and the Appropriation Act.

Fishing Industries

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the likelihood of haddock quotas being exhausted before the end of 1990; and whether he has any plans to ensure that excess landings in any producer organisation's area do not lead to closures in other areas where quotas are not in danger of being exceeded.

Mr. Lang: The objective of the fisheries departments is to ensure maximum uptake in the United Kingdom's haddock fisheries without exceeding national quotas. Fisheries departments, therefore, closely monitor uptake as well as operating established penalty and compensation arrangements for overfishing. Departments are implementing in full special arrangements introduced in March in the North sea haddock fishery with the aim of spreading uptake more evenly throughout the year, thus minimising the risk of premature closure. At that time departments wrote to producer organisations setting a limit of the amount of fish they could take by 30 June. A further limit was set on the amount that could be taken by 30 September. To enforce this measure fisheries departments will, as a minimum, suspend the North sea haddock licence of any producer organisation which looks as though it will breach its 30 June limit (or 60 per cent. of the more recently circulated interim allocations, whichever is the greater) and are considering whether more stringent action is required if the 30 September limit is breached. Such suspensions will apply to individual producer organisations and can be effective for differing periods of time. To date none of the Scottish, and only one of the English producer organisations is likely to have problems remaining within its 30 June limit.

I believe that the measures that departments have already taken considerably reduce the risk of United Kingdom catches getting out of hand, but it would be wrong of me to guarantee under any circumstances a full 12-month fishery since this will depend on self-discipline being exercised by fishermen and their organisations.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if all cattle arriving at Scottish abattoirs are subject to examination for BSE.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Since 1961 all cattle slaughtered in Scottish abattoirs have been subjected to statutory ante-mortem inspection by suitably qualified meat inspectors or veterinary surgeons in order to determine whether they are showing symptoms of any disease, including BSE, or signs of injury, disease or stress. This applies equally to export approved abattoirs and those producing meat for domestic consumption only.

GP Budgets

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the general practitioner practices in *(a)* Inverclyde and *(b)* Strathclyde which have indicated that they wish to become fund holders.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available centrally.

Ambulance Services

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which ambulance services have expressed an interest in becoming self-governing trusts.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Chief ambulance officers, in common with a number of others working in the national health service, have asked for, and been given, background briefing on self-governing status.

Schools (Access)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what specific funding has been made available to local education authorities to enable access to school and college buildings for pupils and teachers with disabilities in each of the last 10 years; and if he has any plans to make specific grants available to local education authorities to carry out necessary capital works to facilitate physical access for people with disabilities;

(2) what advice he gives to local education authorities on the standards of access for people with disabilities for new designs for and adaptations to school and college buildings; and whether he will consult interested parties concerning statutory provisions for standards of access for new school and college buildings;

(3) how many primary and secondary schools in *(a)* Inverclyde, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland are fully accessible to pupils and teachers with disabilities; what are these figures as percentages of the total number of schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Authorities are responsible for funding educational building work and other capital programmes within the broad limits set each year on the total capital expenditure which each authority may incur. Authorities have wide discretion in the use of capital resources and the limits set are not hypothecated to particular projects or limited to use for individual programmes.

Since 1985, the Building Standards (Scotland) Regulations have required that the design of most new or altered or extended buildings, including schools, take proper account of the needs of disabled people. The Scottish Education Department published guidance to education authorities on access to educational buildings for disabled people in educational building note 19 in 1984. Copies of the regulations and the building note are in the Library.

Information about local authority buildings which are accessible to the disabled is not held centrally.

Nursing Homes

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has received any representations from *(a)* COSLA and *(b)* other interested parties on the provision of nursing home care; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In responding to the White Paper "Caring for People" the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities suggested that the lead responsibility for the registration of nursing homes should lie with local authorities, rather than with health boards as at present. The Government remain of the view that, since nursing homes accommodate people who have a need for health care, health boards are best placed to ensure that standards in nursing homes are maintained.

I also receive from time to time representations from Members of Parliament and members of the public about various aspects of nursing home care, including the provision of care in individual homes.

Housing (Elderly People)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consultations he proposes to have on the housing needs of the elderly.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Development Department has recently carried out a research project into the housing needs of elderly people in Scotland. This involved interviews with elderly people themselves and consultation with various interest groups. A circular will be published later this year, based on this research and further informal consultation, giving new guidance on meeting the housing needs of the elderly and other groups who require care in the community.

Civil Servants (Outside Appointments)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all beneficial appointments and non-governmental paid positions for which officials and former officials of his Department sought, and were granted, permission to accept since June 1979.

Mr. Rifkind: Since June 1979, 55 officials and former officials have sought and received such permission. It is not my Department's practice to release details of individual cases.

Manufacturing Industry

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the figures in constant value of the output in manufacturing industries in *(a)* Strathclyde and *(b)* Scotland as a whole (i) in 1979 and (ii) at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Lang: Output figures in constant value terms are calculated for Scotland as a whole only in index form. Output figures for Strathclyde are not available. The table shows manufacturing output of Scotland at constant prices, indexed with 1985 = 100.

Manufacturing output index (1985 = 100)

Year	*Index*
1979	103·3
1980	96·4
1981	93·8
1982	94·5
1983	93·5
1984	97·8
1985	100·0
1986	97·9
1987	100·8
1988	108·8
1989	112·9

Source: Index of Industrial Production for Scotland.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table, using 1979 at a value of 100, of investment in real terms in manufacturing in *(a)* Strathclyde and *(b)* Scotland as a whole for each of the last five years.

Mr. Lang: Figures are not available in the form requested because there are no separate price deflators for Scotland and the use of United Kingdom deflators for Scotland does not give sufficiently reliable constant price estimates.

The following table gives estimates of gross domestic fixed capital formation by manufacturing industry in Scotland at current prices for each year from 1979 to 1987, the latest year for which estimates are available.

Separate figures for Strathclyde region are not available.

Gross domestic fixed capital formation
Manufacturing industry: Scotland

Year	*£ millions*
1979	561
1980	645
1981	586
1982	541
1983	470
1984	597
1985	861
1986	788
1987	738

Source: Central Statistical Office.

Labour Statistics

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing by district council ward the numbers unemployed in the constituency of Greenock and Port Glasgow in 1979, 1983, 1987 and for the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Lang: The table gives the number of unemployed claimants by district council wards for Greenock and Port Glasgow constituency for May 1990, the latest figures available, May 1987 and June 1983, the earliest figures available. Figures on the number unemployed by ward are not available before June 1983.

Ward	*1990*	*1987*	*1983*
Port Glasgow East	397	759	695
Port Glasgow South	337	671	487
Clune Brae	305	642	433
Port Glasgow West	274	357	277
Gibshill	407	838	723
Blairmore	262	420	489
Bellville	310	493	368

Ward	1990	1987	1983
Greenock East Central	525	663	561
Broomhill	192	330	235
Gateside	208	322	213
Bow	342	572	462
Larkfield	286	567	414
Upper Larkfield	323	643	641
Greenock South	251	493	403
Greenock West Central	160	356	239
Greenock West End	123	205	120

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the percentage change in employment in *(a)* the service sector, *(b)* self-employment and *(c)* manufacturing industry between 1979 and 1990.

Mr. Lang: Between December 1979 and December 1989, the latest date for which figures are available, the number of employees in employment in the service sector increased by 10·5 per cent., and the number of employees in employment in the manufacturing sector decreased by 29·0 per cent. Over the same period the number of people who are self-employed is estimated to have increased by 54·1 per cent.

Dyslexic Children

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what new measures he intends to undertake to assist dyslexic children in schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Responsibility for dyslexic children within schools lies with education authorities, which employ learning support teachers to provide for their special educational needs. Additionally the Scottish Education Department has commissioned a research study of policy, practices and provision for children with specific learning difficulties, including dyslexia, which will identify any gaps in provision and offer guidance to teachers of such children. The research will be completed by spring 1992.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many dyslexic children are educated in each of the education authorities; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many specialist teachers of dyslexics there are in post in each of the education authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is not available.

Disabled Teachers

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of students with disabilities who have entered initial teacher training for each of the last 10 years; and what percentage of the total number of student teachers this represents.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is not available centrally.

Local Government Finance

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of COSLA to discuss possible changes to the poll tax; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend and I met representatives of COSLA on 6 April when several aspects of the community charge, including possible changes to the system, were discussed.

Homelessness

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* families and *(b)* single people are accepted as homeless within (i) Inverclyde district, (ii) Strathclyde and (iii) Scotland as a whole.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The number of applicants under the homeless persons legislation assessed by local authorities as homeless, as recorded in the returns submitted to the Scottish Development Department in the year ended 31 March 1989, are as follows:

	Number
Inverclyde district	111
Strathclyde region	4,494
Scotland	9,561

These returns do not record information on the composition of applicants' households. It is not therefore possible to say how many were from families and single people respectively.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give an estimate of the current number of homeless in Scotland, and, of those, how many suffer from *(a)* alcoholism or drug dependency, *(b)* AIDS and *(c)* mental illness.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information on which to base such an estimate is not held centrally.

EC (Civil Servants)

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of people seconded from the Scottish Office to the United Kingdom's permanent representation to the European Community in Brussels, in each of the years since the United Kingdom entered the European Community; and if he will break these down by Scottish Office department.

Mr. Rifkind: Scottish Office staff on secondment to the United Kingdom's permanent representation to the European Community in Brussels in each year since 1973 are listed in the table, by department.

Department	Year	Number
Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland	1973	1
Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland	1974	1
Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland	1975	1
Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland	1976	1
Industry Department for Scotland	1977	1
One Industry Department for Scotland, One Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland	1978	2
One Industry Department for Scotland, One Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland	1979	2
One Industry Department for Scotland, One Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland	1980	2

Department	*Year*	*Number*
One Industry Department for Scotland, One Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland	1981	2
Two Industry Department for Scotland, One Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland	1982	3
Industry Department for Scotland	1983	1
One Industry Department for Scotland, One Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland	1984	2
One Industry Department for Scotland, One Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland	1985	2
One Industry Department for Scotland, One Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland	1986	2
One Industry Department for Scotland, Two Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland	1987	3
Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland	1988	1
Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland	1989	1
Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland	1990	1

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the numbers, ranks and departments within the Scottish Office of those civil servants who work exclusively on European Community affairs; which are monitoring European Community activities; and which are administering and advising on grants.

Mr. Rifkind: Information in the form requested is not available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Legal Services

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from the Scottish Consumers Council about the possible decline of legal services in rural areas.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The council has expressed concern about the possible effect of the Bill on rural legal services, and has welcomed our initiative in monitoring the position. The council welcomes the proposals in the Bill to widen consumer choice as something for which there is demand in Scotland.

Energy Costs

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the answers of 30 April, *Official Report*, column *453*, and 10 May, *Official Report*, column *214*, about energy consumption, what is the square footage of office space to which these figures relate.

Mr. Rifkind: The figure is 1,241,664.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much was invested in improving the energy efficiency of his Department in the latest available year.

Mr. Rifkind: About £62,000 in 1988-89.

Water Pollution

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what instructions he has issued to regional councils, environmental health departments and other relevant authorities in Scotland regarding the dangers posed by freshwater algae.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 22 June 1990]:* Regional councils are responsible for providing wholesome drinking water and they, together with environmental health and other relevant authorities in Scotland, are aware of the potential problems arising from certain types of freshwater algae. No specific advice has been issued as there is no evidence of a significant problem in Scotland, but the matter is under consideration.

EMPLOYMENT

Eastern Europe

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures he is undertaking to assist the new democratic regimes in eastern Europe.

Mr. Howard: The reforming countries of eastern Europe urgently need practical help to develop their labour markets, to fight unemployment, to increase training and retraining, and to generate a spirit of enterprise. My Department is giving a high priority to providing such help, working with and through the Government's know-how fund.

In recent weeks I have visited Czechoslovakia and Hungary, and have signed agreements of co-operation in the labour market area with both Governments. This week I shall be in Poland, where I shall sign a similar agreement with the Polish Government. These individual agreements set out specific, practical measures, based on each country's particular needs, in a number of areas where my Department can help, including training and retraining, support for the development of small firms and enterprise, and the management of unemployment.

Departmental Public Relations Adviser

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he intends making an appointment to his Department of a public relations adviser.

Mr. Howard: I have no plans to appoint a public relations adviser.

Wages Inspectorate

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the annual publicity-promotional budget allocated to his Department's wages inspectorate for each year since 1979.

Mr. Nicholls: The cost of publicity and promotional activities undertaken by the wages inspectorate is not distinguishable from general running costs.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the number of people employed by his Department's wages inspectorate in the north-west region for each year since 1979.

Mr. Nicholls The information requested is given in the table:

Year	Number of staff employed in the north-west in September of each year
1979	38
1980	36
1981	28
1982	27
1983	29
1984	29
1985	30
1986	28
1987	[1]21·5
1988	[1]19·5
1989	[1]20·5

[1] Since 1987, staff employed in the north-west have also had responsibility for advisory and enforcement work in north Wales.

Wages Councils

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment where he distributes literature about wage council protection.

Mr. Nicholls: Notices giving details of minimum rates are distributed to all establishments where workers covered by wages councils are thought to be employed. These notices and supplementary literature are also issued to other organisations and individuals, in particular those offering advisory services.

Technical and Vocational Education Initiative

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list those local education authorities participating for the first time in TVEI extensions in 1990-91; when each such authority was informed by the Training Agency of their budget for 1990-91; and when they were informed of their budget for 1991-92.

Mr. Eggar: Education authorities starting TVEI extension in 1990-91 are as follows:

Avon
Barnet
Central
Doncaster
Dorset
Harrow
Highland
Hillingdon
Humberside
Knowsley
Lancashire
Lincolnshire
Merton
Newham
Nottinghamshire
Redbridge
Rotherham
St. Helens
Strathclyde—districts of Ayr
Dumbarton
Lanark
Tayside

These authorities were given approval on 25 May 1990 to start extension. They were informed of their budgets shortly afterwards.

Authorities have not yet been given their budgets for 1991-92.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide the TVEI extensions budget for 1990-91 for each local education authority in *(a)* the north-west, *(b)* Yorkshire and Humberside, *(c)* Northern Ireland, *(d)* Wales and *(e)* Scotland.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on Wednesday 20 June. TVEI does not operate in Northern Ireland.

Employment Training

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of employment training places are not filled.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are estimated to have been on employment training courses since the inception of the scheme; what has been the cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: About 700,000 people have entered employment training at a cost of about £1·6 billion. This is indicative both of the programme's success in attracting large numbers of unemployed people and the Government's significant investment in adult training.

Fatal Accidents

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the latest figures for fatal accidents at work per million employees and the comparable figure for 1979.

Mr. Nicholls: The figure for 1979 was 27 per million employees. The latest available figure, for 1988-89, was 24 per million employees—provisional—which includes the fatalities from the Piper Alpha disaster.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the number of women *(a)* in full-time work, *(b)* in part-time work and *(c)* self-employed for the current year and for 1979.

Mr. Nicholls: The information is as follows:

Female employment—Great Britain
Thousands seasonally adjusted

Period	Workforce in employment Full-time	Workforce in employment Part-time	Self-employed
June 1979	5,960	3,837	348
December 1989 (latest available)	6,709	4,997	775

Skill Centres

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total expenditure involved in the payment to METEL for the acquisition of the Liverpool skill centre.

Mr. Eggar: No payment was made to METEL for its acquisition of Liverpool skill centre. METEL paid the Government £65,000 for the centre.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total payment to the Training Business Group Ltd. for the acquisition of the Lambeth skill centre.

Mr. Eggar: The sale of the training businesses at Lambeth skill centre to the Training Business involved a payment of some £800,000 from the Government to the consortium.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the members of the Lakin consortium who successfully bid for skill centres.

Mr. Eggar: The members of the consortium, headed by Mr. Christopher Lakin, who successfully bid for the training businesses at Cumbria, East Lancashire, Ipswich and St. Helens skill centres, are:

Mr. Christopher Lakin
Mr. Howard Lien and
Mr. Clive Ibbison-Steele

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which skill centres have achieved approved training organisation status for employment training.

Mr. Eggar: Employment training providers have two years to achieve approved training organisation status. The assessment process for organisations which joined employment training at its outset on 5 September 1988 is still under way. No skill centres have as yet been fully assessed.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total payment to Mr. Lakin for acquisition of skill centres.

Mr. Eggar: The sale of the training businesses at Cumbria, East Lancashire, Ipswich and St. Helens skill centres to the consortium headed by Mr. Christopher Lakin involved a payment of some £2·1 million from the Government to the consortium.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many of the dismissed staff at Liverpool skill centre have been offered re-engagement by the METEL group; and under what terms and conditions of employment.

Mr. Eggar: Merseyside Education Training Enterprise Ltd.—METEL—purchased Liverpool skill centre on 14 May 1990. From the completion of the sale contract, responsibility for the continuing employment of former STA staff, and the terms and conditions of their employment passed to it. It is understood that four former STA staff were offered re-engagement, but I am not aware of the terms and conditions which are a matter for METEL.

Employment Service Offices

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what is the total number of full-time employment exchanges; and if he will list the full-time employment exchanges which his Department is currently considering closing for Scotland, Wales, the standard regions of England and Great Britain;

(2) what is the total number of local employment exchanges; and if he will list any part-time local employment exchange which his Department is currently considering closing for Scotland, Wales, the standard regions of England and Great Britain;

(3) what is the total number of part-time unemployment benefit offices; and if he will list the part-time unemployment benefit offices which his Department is currently considering closing, for Scotland, Wales, the standard regions of England and Great Britain;

(4) what is the total number of full-time unemployment benefit offices; and if he will list the full-time unemployment benefit offices which his Department is currently considering closing, for Scotland, Wales, the standard English regions and Great Britain.

Mr. Eggar: The Employment Service became an executive agency on 2 April 1990. Mr. Mike Fogden, the Employment Service agency's chief executive, will be replying in writing to the hon. Gentleman.

Skills Training Agency

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total amount paid to Mr. Bishell, Mr. Kent and Mr. Wells for consultancy fees on the sale of the Skills Training Agency; if he will list the consultants involved; whether the advance has been repaid; and for what period consultancy advice was given.

Mr. Eggar: As I informed the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) on 3 April 1990, *Official Report*, column *585*, Mr. Bishell, Mr. Wells and Mr. Kent appointed Coopers and Lybrand to advise on their bid for the Skills Training Agency and Irwin Mitchell to provide legal advice.

Following the announcement by my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) on 13 March 1989 that he intended to make financial assistance available to members of STA staff contemplating a buy-out, Messrs Bishell, Wells and Kent applied for help. This was offered on 31 March 1989. A total of £82,500, excluding VAT, was made available to them as a contribution to their costs, and this has now been repaid in accordance with the terms on which it was offered.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total estimated expenditure involved in the payment of fees to Deloitt Haskins and Sells for work done on the privatisation of the Skills Training Agency, for the most recent dates for which figures are available.

Mr. Eggar: Similar questions were recently posed by the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer). I have nothing to add to the answer which I gave to him on 27 March, *Official Report* column *158* which was reiterated on 3 April, *Official Report* column *585*. Total expenses in connection with the sale of the Skills Training Agency in 1989-90, including professional fees and expenses paid to Deloittes and other advisers will be available in the appropriation accounts—class VI, vote 5—to be published in the summer.

Health and Safety Executive

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were employed by the Health and Safety Executive at the latest available date.

Mr. Nicholls: At 1 April 1990 the Health and Safety Executive employed 3,698 staff.

Employment Schemes

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which of the Government schemes to increase employment he has assessed as producing the best results.

Mr. Eggar: Indicators of the cost-effectiveness of Government measures to assist unemployed people into work are published in chapter 6 of "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1990-91 to 1992-93" (Cm. 1006). Since the nature of the measures and the characteristics of their respective client groups differ, it is not possible to single out any one as producing results which are better than the others.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to the answer of 30 April, *Official Report*, column *448*, what is the square footage of office space to which these figures relate.

Mr. Nicholls: The square footage is 16,913,143.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 30 April, *Official Report*, column *448*, if he will break down the figure of £0·578 million into spending on solid fuels, liquid fuels and any other categories.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 22 June 1990]:* Cost details were not collected in the form requested and this information is not readily available.

ENERGY

Energy Efficiency

2. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he has made of the effect of the top limit of 90 per cent. of the grant available under the home energy efficiency scheme, especially to households in the lowest income brackets.

Mr. Baldry: A number of representations have been received about the 90 per cent. limit as part of the consultation process. These are currently being considered.

8. **Mr. Hanley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what steps he is taking to promote energy efficiency in business and industry.

Mr. Hague: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what steps he is taking to promote energy efficiency in business and industry.

Mr. Baldry: The Energy Efficiency Office encourages the adoption of energy efficiency measures in the home and the workplace, through a comprehensive marketing strategy at national and regional levels. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State is currently hosting a series of seminars for key energy users throughout the country.

28. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many homes he expects to be provided with energy conservation improvements via the home energy efficiency scheme in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* the United Kingdom as a whole in the next financial year.

65. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the number of homes he expects to be provided with energy efficiency improvements via the home energy efficiency scheme in the next financial year.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The home energy efficiency scheme will increase the take-up of basic insulation measures in low-income households. Final targets for the number of homes to be treated will be set following finalisation of the details of the scheme in the light of the consultation process.

53. **Mr. Rost:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what calculations his Department has made of the potential reduction in greenhouse gases which would result from the improved thermal efficiency achievable by industrial, commercial and city combined heat and power; and if he has any plans to provide stronger market signals.

Mr. Peter Morrison: "An Evaluation of Energy Related Greenhouse Gas Emissions", published as energy paper No. 58 estimated that growth in CHP could, based on plausible assumptions, lead to reductions of 5 to 10 per cent. of United Kingdom carbon dioxide emissions.

Interest in CHP is already increasing rapidly in response to direct market signals. These are supplemented by my Department's encouragement of the use of combined heat and power through its best practice programme and by the industry's own marketing initiative, under the auspices of the Combined Heat and Power Association.

63. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what steps he has taken to ensure Government Departments practise greater energy efficiency.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Since the details of a campaign to promote energy efficiency within Government Departments were announced on 20 July 1989, Ministers with special responsibility for departmental energy use have met three times to discuss progress towards the Government's aim of achieving savings rising to £45 million per annum—15 per cent. of the current bill—over five years. The first report on the campaign will be published shortly.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how much was invested in improving the energy efficiency of his Department in the latest available year.

Mr. Wakeham: Investment in items expected to make a significant contribution to the energy efficiency of the new headquarters building into which my Department moved in September 1989 is estimated by the Property Services Agency to have cost around £1 million. It includes an up-to-date electronic building energy management system, and additional air conditioning and secondary glazing beyond that specified by the developer.

Offshore Energy Production

6. **Mr. Quentin Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proportion of the total stock of fixed capital investment in offshore oil and gas fields has been invested since 1979.

Mr. Baldry: Of the £65,000 million capital investment in offshore oil and gas fields, over 60 per cent. has been invested since 1979.

10. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the current output of oil and gas from the United Kingdom sector of the continental shelf.

Mr. Baldry: Oil and gas production in the first quarter of this year were, respectively, 24·2 million tonnes and 5,700 million therms.

18. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what level he expects exploration and appraisal drilling on the United Kingdom continental shelf to reach in the current year.

30. **Mr. Allan Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what level he expects exploration and appraisal drilling on the United Kingdom continental shelf to reach in the current year.

Mr. Baldry: A survey of company intentions by my Department showed that a record number of more than 200 exploration and appraisal wells could be drilled in the United Kingdom continental shelf this year.

Renewable Energy

19. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he uses on the comparative costs of renewable sources of energy, fossil fuel and nuclear power to guide his conduct of energy policy.

Mr. Baldry: In the pursuit of energy policy I make use of information from the energy industries and a variety of other sources.

21. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy by how much investment by the Government in the development of renewable sources of energy has risen since 1979.

Mr. Baldry: Annual expenditure since 1979 by the Department of Energy on its renewables programme has more than doubled from £8·2 million to £17·9 million.

I will arrange for a table of annual expenditure to be published in the *Official Report*.

Department of Energy research, development and demonstration expenditure on renewable energy (£ millions)

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
Wind	0·6	0·8	0·9	2·5	2·5	4·8	5·4	3·7	4·0	3·9	4·8
Wave	3·0	3·3	4·4	3·1	1·0	0·4	0·4	0·1	0·2	0·1	0·1
Geothermal Aquifers	1·3	1·7	2·6	1·5	1·8	1·1	0·3	0·1	0·0	0·1	0·2
Geothermal hot dry rocks	0·0	0·6	5·6	3·0	2·9	4·6	3·5	3·5	3·6	3·5	3·3
Solar	1·2	0·9	0·7	1·4	0·9	0·5	0·7	0·9	1·1	1·4	1·9
Biomass[1]	0·1	0·4	0·4	1·2	0·7	1·1	0·8	1·3	2·2	1·5	1·4
Tide	0·6	1·4	0·4	0·0	0·0	0·3	0·1	0·1	1·4	1·2	1·1
Hydro/General studies	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0·8	0·8	0·8
Technology transfer and promotion	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0·7	1·0	1·6
ETSU services	1·4	2·2	2·3	2·0	1·9	2·1	2·0	2·3	2·3	2·5	2·7
	8·2	11·3	17·3	14·7	11·7	14·9	13·2	12·0	16·3	16·0	17·9

[1] Includes expenditure on "waste as a fuel" under the Energy Efficiency Demonstration Scheme.

Note:

Up to 1986-87 total for R & D also includes expenditure on low head hydro and general studies. These are separately identified for 1987-88 and include work carried out by the Chief Scientist's Group, ETSU.

44. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans to reassess the potential for wave power; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: As I announced to the House on 13 November 1989, an updating study to review cost, technical and commercial viability and prospects for wave energy in the United Kingdom is currently under way. The views of all interested parties are welcome and I will ensure that they are all taken into account. Further consultation will take place as work progresses and the final report will be published.

45. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the development potential of Salter's Duck.

Mr. Peter Morrison: While my Department has no current plans for additional funding of this project, an updating study to review wave energy in the United Kingdom is currently under way. Interested parties will be consulted fully as this study progresses; indeed, only last week I met Professor Salter to ensure that I was personally aware of his views.

48. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what plans he has to encourage the generation of wind power.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Government will continue to support a major research and development programme on wind power aimed at developing its commercial viability and environmental acceptability for electricity generation. In addition, wind-generated electricity should benefit from the non-fossil fuel obligation and, at the present time, the public electricity suppliers are examining a number of possible schemes which have been submitted for inclusion under the renewables order to be made in the late summer.

50. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how much his Department allocated in 1989 to research and development for *(a)* nuclear fission and *(b)* renewable energy sources; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Provision for research and development into nuclear fission in 1989-90 was £135·4 million. This includes research and development into nuclear materials and radioactive waste management. Provision for renewable energy research and development in the same year was £17·9 million. Of the total expenditure of £153·3 million, some 35 per cent. was spent in Scotland.

54. **Sir David Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has made an assessment of the appropriateness for the development of renewable energy of placing the energy technology support unit at the Atomic Energy Authority's research site at Harwell.

62. **Sir Russell Johnston:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has made an assessment of the appropriateness in respect of the development of renewable energy sources of locating the energy technology support unit at the Atomic Energy Authority's research site at Harwell; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Responsibility for the research and development programme on renewable sources of energy remains with my Department. The energy technology support unit is responsible for the day-to day-management of the programme. On that basis, the Advisory Council on Research and Development, set up independently to advise the Secretary of State for Energy on matters of research and development for fuel and power, has reviewed and endorsed my Department's programme on renewables.

Electricity Generation

20. **Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the most up-to-date estimate of the share of electricity generation in England and Wales fuelled by *(a)* coal, *(b)* nuclear, *(c)* gas and *(d)* oil in the year 2000.

Mr. Wakeham: Future fuel shares are uncertain and will depend largely on decisions taken by the market. Two possible scenarios for 2005 were published in energy paper No. 58—table 4.10—a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

69. **Mr. John P. Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his best estimate of the level of gas burn in electricity generating power stations in 1995, 2000 and 2005.

Mr. Baldry: The future levels of gas burn in electricity generating power stations are highly uncertain and will depend on future electricity demand, relative fuel prices, and the investment decisions in the privatised electricity supply industry. Two scenarios of the future gas burn levels in the United Kingdom were published in energy paper No. 58—table 4.11—a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Flue Gas Desulphurisation

22. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairmen of National Power and PowerGen regarding flue gas desulphurisation.

Mr. Wakeham: I meet the chairman of PowerGen and chief executive of National Power frequently and discuss a wide range of issues, including flue gas desulphurisation.

EC Ministers

23. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to meet his European Community counterparts to discuss energy and environment issues.

Mr. Wakeham: I expect energy and environment issues to feature regularly at future meetings of the Energy Council. Community Energy Ministers will be meeting informally in Rome next month.

43. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to attend a meeting of the European Community Council of Energy Ministers.

Mr. Wakeham: The next meeting of the European Communities Council of Energy Ministers is due to take place on 29 October 1990. The United Kingdom representation at this Council will be decided on nearer the time. In addition, Energy Ministers of member states will meet informally in Rome on 16 July.

Electricity Privatisation

24. **Mr. Jack Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has recently met, or is planning a meeting with, the chairman of Nuclear Electric to discuss privatisation.

Mr. Wakeham: I meet the chairman of Nuclear Electric plc regularly to discuss various matters.

25. **Mr. Alan Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next proposes to meet the chairmen of electricity distribution companies to discuss privatisation.

32. **Mr. Frank Cook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairmen of the area electricity distribution companies to discuss privatisation.

37. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to meet the chairmen of electricity distribution companies to discuss privatisation.

56. **Mr. Cunliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairmen of the area electricity distribution companies to discuss privatisation.

Mr. Wakeham: I meet regional electricity company chairmen regularly to discuss a range of matters.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairmen of the area electricity distribution companies to discuss privatisation.

Mr. Wakeham: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin).

Coal Production

26. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the level of national average production in the coal industry in the year ending 1989-90.

57. **Mr. Arbuthnot:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the level of national average production in the coal industry in the year ended 1989-90.

Mr. Baldry: During 1989-90 the estimated production of the coal industry, including both deep-mined and opencast coal, was 95·2 million tonnes.

64. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the increase in labour productivity in the coal mining industry since 1983-84.

Mr. Baldry: The output of coal per man-shift in the British Coal Corporation has increased by over 75 per cent. since 1983-84.

Sellafield

27. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proportion of Britain's energy output is produced at Sellafield.

Mr. Baldry: A total of 0·2 per cent. of Great Britain's energy output in 1989 was produced by the Calder Hall power station at Sellafield.

Atomic Energy Authority

29. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proposals his Department has to assist the Atomic Energy Authority to maintain its atomic energy research capabilities and to develop new non-nuclear business.

Mr. Baldry: AEA Technology has launched a major drive to become more commercial, more efficient and to reduce costs. This initiative offers the AEA the opportunity of exploiting its research capabilities and of developing new business.

Offshore Installations

31. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the number of accidents involving injury to personnel on offshore installations for the first three months of 1990.

Mr. Peter Morrison: One fatal accident, 16 serious accidents and 129 accidents causing disablement from work for three days or more were reported to this Department between 1 January 1990 and 31 March 1990.

59. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the director of the United Kingdom Offshore Operators Association to discuss safety on offshore installations.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I meet the director of the United Kingdom Offshore Operators Association regularly to discuss a range of issues concerning safety on offshore installations. In addition, my safety directorate is in regular contact with the association about measures to improve offshore safety.

Lead-free Petrol

33. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy by how much the sales of lead-free petrol have increased since 1979.

55. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy by how much the sales of lead-free petrol have increased since 1979.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Sales of unleaded petrol have increased substantially over the last two years. In 1979 there were no sales of unleaded petrol, whereas currently about one third of petrol sold is unleaded.

Sizewell B

34. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many representations he has received in favour of the construction of Sizewell B; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: My Department has received several representations in favour of constructing Sizewell B.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last reviewed the cost of construction and the resulting cost of electricity from the Sizewell B nuclear power station.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave to the hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) earlier today.

British Coal

35. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of British Coal to discuss the future of the coal industry.

Mr. Wakeham: I meet the chairman of British Coal regularly to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

47. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of British Coal to discuss investment funding for new pits in the east midlands.

Mr. Wakeham: I meet the chairman of British Coal on a regular basis to discuss all aspects of the coal industry. I have recently announced a capital allocation for the corporation for 1990-91 of £445 million. Within this allocation investment in particular projects is a commercial matter for the management of British Coal, but I would of course expect to be consulted about any major new investment project.

49. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to see the chairman of British Coal to discuss productivity.

Mr. Wakeham: I meet the chairman of British Coal on a regular basis to discuss all aspects of the coal industry, including productivity in which the corporation has achieved excellent improvements since 1985.

Pollution

36. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he has made of the impact on consumer prices of the measures taken to reduce pollution of the environment from power stations.

Mr. Baldry: Measures to reduce pollution from existing power stations are likely to increase costs. The extent to which measures to reduce pollution will increase consumer prices will depend on a number of factors, including the cost and availability of alternative, cleaner sources of supply.

Methane Discharges

38. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on methane discharges from gas terminals.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Methane cannot be released unignited into the atmosphere from gas terminals unless a consent under section 12 of the Energy Act has been given by the Secretary of State for Energy. Consents are issued only when it has been demonstrated that it is necessary for the safe operation of a particular plant.

Industrial Gas Prices

39. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy by how much industrial gas prices have risen since 21 November 1986; and by how much they rose between 1974 and 1979.

40. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy by how much industrial gas prices have risen since 21 November 1986; and by how much they rose between 1974 and 1979.

51. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy by how much industrial gas prices have risen since 21 November 1986; and by how much they rose between 1974 and 1979.

Mr. Peter Morrison Data on average prices are available only quarterly. Between the fourth quarter of 1986 and the fourth quarter of 1989 the latest period for which figures have been published there was a fall of 21 per cent. in real terms in industrial gas prices. From 1974 to 1979 there was an increase of 83 per cent. in real terms.

Electricity Prices

41. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has made a recent assessment of the respective costings of electricity generated from *(a)* nuclear power and *(b)* renewable energy sources.

Mr. Baldry: The Department's latest estimates for the generating costs of renewable technologies are published in energy paper No. 55, a copy of which is in the Library of the House. Nuclear costs are a matter for the industry.

Radioactive Material (Transport)

42. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will outline his Department's responsibilities in respect of the transportation of radioactive material.

Mr. Baldry: My Department's responsibilities are concerned with the security measures necessary to ensure the safe transportation of radioactive materials in the United Kingdom.

Nuclear Electric

46. **Mrs. Heal:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to receive the auditor's report on the accounts of Nuclear Electric plc.

Mr. Baldry: Nuclear Electric plc's review of its accounting policies is continuing. The company's opening report and accounts will be published during the summer.

Pipelines

52. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy which pipeline systems in the United Kingdom continental shelf are to be shut down for maintenance in the current year; and for how long.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Three pipelines on the United Kingdom continental shelf are due to be shut down for maintenance work during 1990. These are:

(i) Ivanhoe/Rob Roy, Gas Pipeline (Amerada Hess).
(ii) Cleeton to Dimlington, Gas Pipeline (BP).
(iii) Hewitt 48/29 FTP to Bacton, Gas Pipeline (Phillips).

In addition, emergency shutdown valves are to be installed or repositioned in 110 pipelines to comply with SI 1989/1029, and sub-sea isolation systems installed in 10 pipelines during 1990. The pipelines will be shut down for varying periods, from a minimum of four days to a maximum of several months while this work is carried out.

Offshore Industry (Exports)

58. **Mr. Bright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his estimate of the value of export orders won by the British offshore industry in 1989.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The British offshore supplies industry is estimated to have won export orders worth around £2 billion in 1989. I have every hope that the value of these exports will continue to grow over the next few years now that the United Kingdom is established as a major centre of technological excellence.

Gas Privatisation

60. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many gas bill vouchers issued at the time of the privatisation of British Gas have still to be used.

70. **Mr. Wilshire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many gas bill vouchers issued at the time of the privatisation of British Gas have still to be used.

Mr. Peter Morrison: On 31 May 1990, a total of 50,790 gas bill vouchers worth £1,297,440 had yet to be used. All gas bill vouchers are valid until 30 September 1990.

Geothermal Energy

61. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his most recent estimate of the potential for geothermal energy production in Cornwall.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The most recent estimate of the potential for geothermal energy production in the United Kingdom was published in energy paper No. 55, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House. A review of progress of the geothermal programme and future possibilities is currently in hand. I hope to visit the project myself next month.

Coal Privatisation

66. **Mr Gow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will bring forward proposals to give to the mineworkers the opportunity to own their industry.

Mr. Baldry: No decisions have yet been taken on the future structure of the privatised coal industry, but all options, including employee participation, will be considered.

Gas Leaks

67. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has made a recent assessment of leakage levels from the gas distribution system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) on 23 April 1990 at column *96*.

Nuclear Safety (France)

68. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what steps he has taken to improve co-ordination between the nuclear installations inspectorate and the French civil nuclear safety authorities.

Mr. Baldry: The Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate has frequent contact on topics of

mutal interest with its French counterpart, the Service Central de Surete des Installations Nucleaires, under a formal exchange of information arrangement. This co-operation is currently being enhanced by the formation of two new working groups to discuss safety standards, and advanced computer protection systems.

Energy Conservation

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on his Department's efforts to improve energy conservation in the home.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Energy efficiency in the domestic sector is promoted by my Energy Efficiency Office through a number of programmes and initiatives. These include the provision of authoritative and targeted information via the best practice programme; marketing and publicity initiatives targeted on low-income householders and those moving house or undertaking improvements; proposals for a new scheme of grants for insulation measures and advice in low-income households; and support for home energy labelling schemes.

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his estimate of the further energy savings which could result from the wider adoption of contract energy management systems.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Government see contract energy management as a very important option available to help industry, commerce, and the public sector to improve their energy efficiency. It allows consumers access to expertise and capital. Its uses range from heavy industry through hospitals and offices to groups of dwellings. My Department, together with Property Holdings, is currently looking at the potential for contract energy management in its headquarters building.

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many homes have been insulated by community insulation projects since 1982.

Mr. Peter Morrison: More than 750,000 homes have been treated by the projects since their work began in 1982.

Sulphur Dioxide Emissions

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if the United Kingdom will comply with the European Community's directive on sulphur dioxide emissions from large combustion plants.

Mr. Baldry: Yes.

Greenhouse Effect

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what recent evidence he has received casting doubt upon the importance of the greenhouse effect.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The report of the science working group of the intergovernmental panel on climate change is clear that, without some change in the rate of man-made greenhouse gas emissions, there will inevitably be some consequent warming of the earth's atmosphere. Considerable uncertainty remains as to the scale and timing of such a warming, but, potentially, it could be of the highest importance for our future. I have seen no authoritative evidence to the contrary. However my right hon. Friend has received a number of letters expressing an alternative view. All but one of these have been from my hon. Friend.

Coal Imports

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the level of imported coal for the latest month for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Coal imports to the United Kingdom in April 1990 amounted to 1·12 million tonnes.

Nuclear Power Stations (Decommissioning)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he has made of the third-stage decommissioning costs of nuclear power stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The Government do not make estimates of the cost of decommissioning nuclear power stations. The work of decommissioning nuclear power stations and estimates of the cost of that work are matters for the operators of nuclear power stations.

National Grid Company

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans to increase Government control of the National Grid Company.

Mr. Wakeham: No. In the new structure NGC is owned, through a holding company, by the 12 regional electricity companies.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to the answers of 10 May, *Official Report*, column *201* and 30 April, *Official Report*, columns *414-15* about energy consumption, what is the square footage of office space to which these figures relate.

Mr. Wakeham: The total area of office space occupied by the Department in 1989-90 to which the energy consumption figures relate was 259,683 sq ft.

DEFENCE

Security Clearance

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list the main factors which are considered to present a security risk among those working for sub-contractors to his Department;

(2) in how many cases in the last 12 months sub-contractors' employees working at Faslane have failed to gain security clearance; and what was the average length of time such employees had been working at the base before they were informed of this.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I am unable to give the information requested, owing to national security considerations.

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what rights of appeal exist for sub-contractors' employees working at Faslane who fail to gain security clearance;

(2) what procedures his Department adopts when sub-contractors' employees fail to gain the necessary clearance to work at Faslane;

(3) what steps his Department takes to vet sub-contractors' employees working at Faslane.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not the policy of this or any previous Administration to release details of security clearance procedures.

Aircraft Accidents

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what was the total cost of the repairs to the Hawk aircraft, tail number XX227, following its accident on 21 April 1983; and where the repairs were carried out;

(2) what was the total cost of the repairs to the Tornado aircraft, tail number ZA597, following its accident at RAF Honington in November 1983;

(3) what was the total cost of repairs to the Tornado aircraft, tail number ZA412, following its accident at RAF Wildenrath on 14 April 1987.

Mr. Neubert: Exact repair costs for these aircraft are not available, but estimated figures are as follows:

Aircraft	*Date of Accident*	*Estimated cost of repair £K*
Hawk XX227	21 April 1983	35
Tornado ZA597	14 November 1983	91
Tornado ZA412	14 April 1987	23

Hawk XX227 was repaired at RAF Scampton and repainted at RAF St. Athan.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the rate of major accidents per 10,000 flying hours for Royal Air Force fast jet aircraft in *(a)* 1988 and *(b)* 1989.

Mr. Neubert: The rates of major accidents per 10,000 flying hours for Royal Air Force fast jet aircraft, defined as Buccaneer, Harrier, Jaguar, Lightning, Phantom and Tornado aircraft, were 0·79 for 1988 and 0·59 for 1989.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all accidents to Royal Air Force fast jet aircraft since 1979 in which an aircraft was assessed to have category 4 damage, providing for each such accident *(a)* the date, *(b)* the type of aircraft and *(c)* the tail number of the aircraft.

Mr. Neubert: There have been eight accidents to RAF fast jet aircraft since 1979 where the damage has been assessed as category 4. Details are as follows:

Date	*Aircraft type*	*Tail number*
6 June 1979	Harrier	XW767
19 August 1980	Hawk	XX243
12 May 1982	Tornado	ZA330
8 June 1982	Harrier	XZ989
14 November 1983	Tornado	ZA597
19 November 1985	Harrier	XW922
10 December 1986	Tornado	ZA611
24 June 1988	Hawk	XX304

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of the total number of Hawk aircraft procured for the Royal Air Force has been lost in accidents over the aircraft's service life so far.

Mr. Neubert: Of the total number of Hawk aircraft procured for the RAF, 14·2 per cent. have been lost in accidents.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the rate of major accidents per 10,000 flying hours for the Tornado GR1 aircraft since its entry into RAF service, as at the latest available date; and how many RAF Tornado aircraft have been destroyed in flying accidents.

Mr. Neubert: Twenty-four Tornado aircraft have been lost in accidents since the aircraft's entry into service (23 Tornado GR1, and one Tornado F3).

On major accident rates, I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) on 26 June 1989, column *361*.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of the total number of Harrier aircraft procured for the Royal Air Force has been lost in accidents over the aircraft's service life so far.

Mr. Neubert: Of the total number of Harrier aircraft procured for the Royal Air Force, 27·4 per cent. have been lost in accidents.

Royal Maritime Auxiliary Service

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration is being given to contractorising the mooring services functions of the Royal Maritime Auxiliary Service.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The mooring and salvage work undertaken by the Royal Maritime Auxiliary Service is currently the subject of studies to determine future requirements. Whether this work should be offered to competitive tender will depend upon the outcome of those studies.

Air-to-Surface Missiles

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to make a statement on the deployment of a tactical air-to-surface missile on British soil.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) on 15 June at column *379*.

Soviet Union (Official Visit)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what matters were discussed by him or his officials with their Soviet counterparts during his recent visit to the Soviet Union.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend had extensive discussions with Soviet leaders on a wide range of defence and security issues including future European security, German unification, arms control, confidence and security-building measures and bilateral defence relations.

Nuclear Non-proliferation

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has made any proposals recently to his counterpart in the Soviet Union concerning the international non-proliferation regime.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No, but we continue to keep non-proliferation issues under close review.

Atomic Weapons Research

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will ensure that any legislation on the contractorisation of the atomic weapons research establishment, Aldermaston, and other atomic weapons research establishment sites will contain a clear statement of legal accountability and public responsibility between Government and contractor in the event of a serious accident;

(2) if he will make it his policy to ensure that legislation on the contractorisation of the atomic weapons research establishment, Aldermaston contains a firm commitment to the safety of those working on the site.

Mr. Neubert: The Government's proposals for the future management of AWE recognise the primary importance of safety at AWE's sites. Appropriate arrangements will be made to ensure that safety standards are maintained and that the responsibilities of both the MOD and the contractor in this area are carefully defined. It would, however, be inappropriate to anticipate the detailed content of proposed legislation at this stage.

Civil Servants (Workplaces)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessments under The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations have been undertaken at all workplaces used by civil servants and members of Her Majesty's armed services in his Department.

Mr. Neubert: Assessments of workplaces under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988 were initiated on 1 October 1989. The assessments are carried out in accordance with the guidance given by the Health and Safety Executive.

Combat Aircraft (Warsaw Pact)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish figures showing the trends in rates of production of tactical combat aircraft by Warsaw pact countries since 1983.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Tactical combat aircraft are produced by the USSR, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Poland. The aircraft manufactured by the east European countries are mainly combat capable trainers. The Soviet aircraft industry is dominant, both in terms of the volume of output and the capability of the aircraft being produced.

Estimated annual production of tactical combat aircraft by Warsaw pact countries, 1983-1989 (including combat capable trainers)

	Number of aircraft
1983	1,000
1984	1,000
1985	950
1986	1,000
1987	1,000
1988	925
1989	875

Wardlaw Hill, Ayrshire

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the role of the Royal Air Force facility on Wardlaw hill, Ayrshire; what construction has taken place there in the past five years; and what new facilities are planned there.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Royal Air Force facility on Wardlaw hill, Ayrshire, provides a communications link between the mainland and the Scottish islands. It was constructed during the last five years and consists of two aerial masts, a building housing the associated communications equipment, and power supplies.

We have plans to erect a further radio mast and an unmanned digital telephone exchange by the end of 1992.

Construction Projects

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date it became his Department's policy to produce environmental impact statements for new defence construction projects; and if he will list all such environmental impact statements produced to date.

Mr. Neubert: My Department first undertook an environmental impact assessment in 1984. Since then it has been the practice to consider their preparation wherever the submission of a notice of proposed development to a local planning authority might give rise to local concern. In so doing, we now adhere to the guidelines issued in 1988 by the Department of the Environment, the Scottish Office, and the Welsh Office.

To date we have produced environmental impact statements in relation to the following proposed developments:

Clyde Submarine Base—Overall development proposals;
Clyde Submarine Base—Glen Fruin Road;
Clyde Submarine Base—Northern Access Road and Garelochhead Bypass;
Clyde Submarine Base—Rhu Narrows;
Clyde Submarine Base—Magnetic Treatment Facility;
NATO Pipeline—Colne to Purton to Fairford;
Otterburn Training Area—New Military road.

Soviet Nuclear Submarines

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what trends have been observed in the rate of production of nuclear-powered submarines by the Soviet Union since 1985.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Following a low in the mid-1980s as newer types were introduced, Soviet output of nuclear-powered submarines recovered in 1987 and since then it has remained at about five a year.

ROF, Bishopton

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contracts his Department has with the royal ordnance factory at Bishopton; and what is their financial value.

Mr. Alan Clark: There are currently a total of 24 headquarters contracts placed with the royal ordnance site at Bishopton and these have a total value of £17 million. It is not our practice to disclose details of individual contracts for reasons of commercial confidentiality.

Options for Change

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence hether any academics have been asked to work on the udy of options for change.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence) whether any staff are at present working full-time on ie study of options for change;

(2) pursuant to his reply of 14 June, *Official Report*, olumn *329*, what is the number of staff from *(a)* the office management and budget and *(b)* the defence staff, who e engaged in work on the study of options for change.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Several dozen staff within the linistry of Defence have been involved at various times in rtain aspects of the options for change work in addition their normal duties.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence nether any staff from the Procurement Executive have en involved in the study of options for change.

Mr. Alan Clark: Several dozen staff within the Ministry Defence have been involved at various times in certain pects of the options for change work as part of their rmal duties, and this will include staff from the ocurement Executive.

Military Threats

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence iat is the current assessment of the nature of the military reat from *(a)* Iraq, *(b)* Libya and *(c)* Iran; and what sessment of the potential military threats from each of ese countries has taken place as a result of the study of tions for change.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: All potential threats are kept der constant assessment, but it is not our practice to give tails of such assessments. The implications of changing ernational circumstances are being considered in our mination of options for change.

Tornado

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence at communications have taken place between his partment and British Aerospace plc *(a)* prior to 18 June and *(b)* since 18 June this year regarding the economic and industrial consequences of the decision not to authorise work on the order for the eighth batch of Tornado aircraft.

Mr. Alan Clark: We are in constant communication with British Aerospace on a range of topics. The industrial consequences of procurement decisions—18 June 1990, column 771—are a matter for the companies concerned.

Mr. Douglas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the costs to his Department, on cancellation charges, of the reduction in the orders for Tornado aircraft announced on 18 June.

Mr. Alan Clark: There are no cancellation charges as such. Rundown costs will be negotiated with the contractors.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much was invested in improving the energy efficiency of his Department in the latest available year.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In 1988-89 the Ministry of Defence invested some £9 million in energy-saving measures throughout the defence estate and a smaller but unquantifiable sum of money on the civil estate.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer of 5 June, *Official Report*, column *429*, whether he has any plans to increase the number of energy managers.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no current plans to increase the number of energy managers, but we keep the matter under review.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answers of 30 April, *Official Report*, column *429* and 10 May, *Official Report*, columns *213-14* about energy consumption, what is the square footage of office space to which these figures relate.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Information regarding the floor area of buildings comprising the defence estate is not held centrally. However, the floor area of buildings on the civil estate is estimated to be 6·5 million sq ft.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 26 June 1990

WALES

Eye Tests

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many relatives of glaucoma sufferers in each district health authority area in Wales received free eyesight tests in each quarter of 1988-89 and in each quarter of 1989-90.

Mr. Grist: Estimates of numbers of sight tests for different types of patient are based on a 2 per cent. sample. This sample is not sufficient to make robust estimates by patient type within district health authority areas.

Schools (Mid Glamorgan)

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he has any plans to help fund the replacement of dilapidated temporary classrooms with permanent structures in Mid Glamorgan;

(2) what plans the Welsh Office has for helping Mid Glamorgan county council to meet its ongoing annual commitment on repairs and maintenance of the county's schools;

(3) if any provision will be made for the captial building programme to provide funds to replace any of the Mid Glamorgan schools.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Local education authorities are responsible for the provision, repair and maintenance of their schools. As in previous years the level of potential capital investment for 1990-91 is sufficient to enable all Welsh education authorities, including Mid Glamorgan county council to continue to meet their obligations according to their own priorities. Nationally the 1990-91 capital settlement included an allowance of £53·7 million for education, a 60 per cent. increase over the equivalent 1985-86 figure. Mid Glamorgan had its fair share of that allowance.

Children Act 1989

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the circulars and other documents of guidance he has issued on the workings, implementation or interpretation of the Children Act 1989 in Wales.

Mr. Grist: The following documents have been issued in Wales:

Circulars

Welsh Office Circular 62/89: the Children act 1989: Notice of Royal Assent and the provisions to take immediate or early effect.

Welsh Office Circular 10/90: Training Support Programme 1990-91—Children Act 1989.

Welsh Office Circular 12/90: The children Act (Admission of Hearsay Evidence) Order—Statutory Instrument 143/90.

Other Documents

Children Act 1989: Training Together—Training and Curriculum Model.

An Introduction to the Children Act 1989.

The Care of Children: Principles and Practice in Regulations and Guidance.

Consultation Paper No.1—Secure Accommodation (Guidance and Regulations.)

Obstetricians

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many consultant obstetricians are employed by the national health service in Wales; and what is the number on a full-time equivalent basis *(a)* in Wales and *(b)* in each district health authority in Wales in the current year and in each of the past five years.

Mr. Grist: The available information, which relates to consultants in obstetrics and gynaecology, is given in the following table:

Consultants in post as at 30 September[1]

	1984		1985		1986		1987		1988		1989[3]	
	No.	*WTE*	*No.*	*WTE*	*No.*	*WTE*	*No.*	*WTE*	*No.*	*WTE*	*No.*	*WTE*
Clwyd	6	5·4	6	5·9	6	5·9	6	5·9	6	5·9	7	6·9
East Dyfed	7	3·2	7	3·3	8	3·9	8	4·3	8	3·7	7	4·1
Gwent	6	5·7	7	7·0	7	7·0	7	7·0	7	7·0	7	7·0
Gwynedd	6	3·0	6	3·2	7	3·1	7	3·1	7	3·1	7	3·2
Mid Glamorgan	9	8·5	8	7·8	9	8·8	10	9·8	11	10·8	11	10·4
Pembrokeshire	2	2·0	2	2·0	2	2·0	2	2·0	3	3·0	3	3·0
Powys	5	0·5	5	0·5	5	0·8	5	0·5	4	1·0	8	0·3
South Glamorgan	8	6·4	8	6·6	8	6·6	8	6·6	9	7·6	10	8·2
West Glamorgan	6	4·6	6	5·5	6	5·5	6	5·5	6	5·5	7	7·0
Wales[2]	44	39·3	44	41·8	46	43·7	47	44·7	50	47·7	53	50·1

[1] Excluding locums.
[2] Individual authority numbers will not add to Wales total as consultants working in more than one authority are counted in each.
[3] Provisional.

Mental Illness

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what criteria have been used by his Department to determine how sums of money allocated to support the all-Wales strategy for mental illness should be distributed.

Mr. Grist: Allocations are made on the basis of individual county plans, having regard to their quality and the extent to which they are in line with the principles of the all-Wales strategy. Allocations for the current year have been targeted particularly to help establish the

essential infrastructure for the new patterns of services, including the development of community mental health teams, the provision of accommodation and of community-based services such as drop-in centres.

Planning Appeals

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 16 May, *Official Report*, column *472*, if he will give for each year and each district the number of planning appeals *(a)* determined, *(b)* dismissed and *(c)* undetermined.

Mr. Grist: The information is set out in the following table:

	Determined		*Dismissed*		*Undetermined*	
	1989	*1990*	*1989*	*1990*	*1989*	*1990*
Snowdonia NP						
Meirionnydd	18	11	14	8	2	7
Dwyfor	1	1	0	0	1	0
Arfon	0	0	0	0	1	0
Aberconwy	6	6	2	6	0	6
Montgomery	0	1	0	1	0	0
Brecon Beacons						
Dinefwr	1	2	1	2	0	5
Brecknock	13	17	10	13	0	11
Cynon Valley	0	0	0	0	0	0
Merthyr Tydfil	1	0	0	0	0	0
Blaenau Gwent	0	1	0	1	0	0
Torfaen	0	0	0	0	0	0
Monmouth	0	1	0	1	1	4
Pembrokeshire Coast						
South Pembrokeshire	10	9	6	6	2	9
Preseli Pembrokeshire	7	7	5	7	2	10

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Poverty

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of United Kingdom bilateral aid was allocated to poverty alleviation, for the most recent three years available, using the same criteria used for the figures supplied by the Overseas Development Agency in the NAO report, "Bilateral Aid to India", fig. 2, page 10.

Mrs. Chalker: Figures for expenditure on poverty alleviation for the bilateral aid programme overall are not available. The figures for India supplied to the NAO by the Overseas Development Administration related to specific projects in the housing, welfare, education and renewable natural resources sectors which were regarded as being for direct poverty alleviation.

Poverty alleviaton is an important objective of the aid programme and is pursued indirectly through support for sustainable economic growth and by direct action. Projects and programmes supported with aid vary in the extent to which they contribute directly to poverty alleviation. It is not possible to collate meaningful statistics on expenditure that can be categorised as concerned with poverty alleviation and that which cannot.

European Development Fund

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to how many ecologists are employed at the European development fund and as to how many administrative staff are employed to deal specifically with environmental issues.

Mrs. Chalker: There are seven staff in the environmental unit within DG VIII, which is responsible for the administration of the European development fund. There are two administrators responsible for environmental policy; an ecologist with responsibility for the relevant budget line; two foresters (both seconded to the Commission as "national experts", one from the United Kingdom); and two support staff. The unit is able to call on additional assistance as required from DG XI, which has responsibility within the Commission for environmental matters.

Climate Change

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the contributions by the United Kingdom and other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development donors to assist developing countries to participate in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Mrs. Chalker: According to the report of the IPCC special committee on the participation of developing countries (June 1990), the following contributions were received in 1989 from OECD members other than the United Kingdom:

		Equivalent in Swiss francs
Australia	$ 15,175	24,963·05
Canada	C$ 11,000	14,519·50
Denmark	$ 5,000	7,550·00
Finland	$ 5,000	7,950·00
France	FF 100,000	25,303·00
Federal Republic of Germany	SFr 43,750	43,750·00
Japan	$ 50,000	75,500·00
Netherlands	$ 25,000	40,250·00
Norway	$ 15,000	25,050,00
Switzerland	SFr 55,000	55,000·00
United States of America	$ 120,000	199,500·00

The United Kingdom paid £50,000 (approximately equal to SFr 129,400), making us the second largest contributor in 1989. This year, we have offered a further £25,000.

Natural History Museum

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will discuss with the Governments of France and West Germany the means of continuing taxonomic support for teams working in Malaysia and Cameroon in the light of staff reductions at the natural history museum.

Mrs. Chalker *[holding answer 19 June 1990]:* In common with many other Government-funded institutions, including national museums and galleries, the natural history museum is now expected to develop its ability to attract non-Exchequer revenue. The work referred to in Malaysia and Cameroon yields no financial remuneration to the museum, and the museum authorities consider that it will be more appropriate to develop research projects in those countries in collaboration with the ODA's executive agency—the Natural Resources Institute—and with other external funding agencies. I shall be keeping in view the museum's progress to that end, but I have no plans at present to discuss the matter with the French and West German Governments.

Mr Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the implications of reductions in the Heteroptera section of the natural history museum for work sponsored by his Department *(a)* in Surinam on shield-bugs as transmitters of agricultural diseases and *(b)* coccid research and its agricultural implications for United Kingdom supported agricultural development programmes.

Mrs. Chalker *[holding answer 19 June 1990]:* My Department is not funding any work in Surinam on shield-bugs, nor is it commissioning any research on coccids. There are specialists on both insect groups working at the natural history museum for the Commonwealth Agricultural Bureaux International's institute of entomology, without any duplication of effort as the range of insect species is so vast. I do not anticipate that the planned staff reductions at the museum will have a serious impact on agricultural development programmes supported by the United Kingdom. However ODA's Natural Resources Institute will be continuing to discuss with the museum and the institute of entomology the future of taxonomic and identification needs in support of agricultural development and pest management programmes funded by my Department.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Iraq

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether trade protocols one, two and three with Iraq contained any military components, explosives or propellants.

Mr. Redwood: The British exporters supplying goods to Iraq under the 1983-1986 financial protocols were of course responsible for applying for obtaining export licences for controlled goods in the normal way, and were required to confirm that the relevant Government approvals had been obtained.

Film Industry

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on assistance to the British film industry.

Mr. Forth: The Government provide support of £1·5 million a year through British Screen Finance Ltd. for feature film production, together with a further £0·5 million a year for short films and script development. Our present five-year commitment to British Screen is due to expire at the end of this year, but we announced in July 1989 that funding will continue at the present level of £2 million a year for a further three years, until the end of 1993.

We announced on Friday 15 June that the Government would in addition provide £5 million over the next three years to provide pump-priming finance to support producers seeking to enter European co-production. We also announced a range of other measures including the setting up of a working party to be chaired by my Department to look at the structure of the film industry and how to attract greater private sector finance into United Kingdom film production, and to report back in the autumn.

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received in opposition to the Exchequer subsidising the British film industry.

Mr. Forth: My Department has received no representations in opposition to the Exchequer subsidising the film industry.

Civil Servants (Workplaces)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessments under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations have been undertaken at all workplaces used by civil servants in his Department.

Mr. Forth: My officials have carried out the assessments required under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations in all workplaces occupied by the Department, in accordance with the guidance issued by the Health and Safety Executive.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has anything to add to his answer of 30 April, *Official Report*, column *387*, in respect of solid fuels.

Mr. Forth: The Department does not use solid fuels.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to the answer of 30 April, *Official Report*, column *383*, about energy consumption, if he will give the square footage of office space to which these figures relate.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The energy consumption figures relate to the total space of 5·8 million square feet occupied by the Department, including office space, specialised and storage buildings.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much was invested in improving the energy efficiency of his Department in the latest available year.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* In past years, responsibility for such investment has been divided between the Property Services Agency and the Department, with the result that this information could be assembled only at disproportionate cost. However, it is being collected for future years.

Stock Group (Channel Islands) Ltd.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what authorisations were granted by his Department for the activities of Stock Group (Channel Islands) Ltd.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* Stock Group (Channel Islands) Ltd. has never received authorisations from the Department. It has carried on stockbroking business in the United Kingdom by virtue of its membership of the international stock exchange until the entry into force of the Financial Services Act on 29 April 1988 and thereafter through authorisation from the Securities Association.

Dunsdale Securities

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether Dunsdale Securities made annual returns of audit certificates for each year it had business authorisation from his Department.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* Under the Prevention of Fraud (Investments) Act 1958, audit certificates in support of an application for a licence to deal in securities were not required until Aptil 1983 when revised licensing regulations were introduced. After that date each application and monitoring return submitted by Dunsdale Securities was duly verified by an auditor.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

School Closures

Mr. Norris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if, in respect of each of those local education authority-maintained single-sex schools in South and West Yorkshire which have been closed since 1985, he will list (i) the gender of pupils, (ii) the maintaining local authority and (iii) the number of pupils on roll and physical capacity of the school at the most recent convenient date before closure.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The information requested is given in the table. Information on school capacity is not available centrally. There have been no closures of single-sex schools in South Yorkshire since 1985.

Local education authority	*Pupils on roll in January preceding closure date*	
	Boys	*Girls*
Calderdale		
The Heath School	345	—
The Princess Mary School	—	368
Brighouse Girls Grammar School	—	712
Hipperholme Grammar School[1]	377	1
Rastrick Grammar School	339	6
Leeds		
Moor Grange Boys High School	98	—
West Park Girls High School	—	93
St. Michael's RC College	364	—
Notre Dame High School	—	396

[1] Became an independent school in September 1985.

Mr. Norris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if, in respect of each of those local education authority-maintained single-sex schools in *(a)* the former county of West Midlands and *(b)* Tyne and Wear which have been closed since 1985, he will list (i) the gender of pupils, (ii) the maintaining local authority and (iii) the number of pupils on roll and physical capacity of the school at the most recent convenient date before closure.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The information requested is given below. Information on school capacity is not available centrally. There have been no closures of single-sex schools in Tyne and Wear since 1985.

Local education authority	*Pupils on roll in January preceding closure date*	
	Boys	*Girls*
Birmingham		
Erdington School[1]	—	529
Alderlea School	55	—
Longmeadow School	—	73
Selly Oak School	97	—
Coventry		
Cardinal Wiseman Roman Catholic Secondary School for Boys[1]	717	—
Cardinal Wiseman Roman Catholic Secondary School for Girls[1]	—	961
Dudley		
Old Swinford Hospital School[2]	544	—

[1] Closed for the purposes of amalgamation.
[2] Became a grant-maintained school in September 1989.

Scientists

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the meeting of the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) with Professor Duff and representatives of British scientists abroad.

Mr. Jackson: I met Professor Michael Duff on 20 June. The main points which I made at our meeting were set out in Department of Education and Science press notice 202/90, dated 20 June, in which I pointed out that:

Science is international, and it is highly desirable that scientific careers should include experience of working abroad.

No single country in the modern world can afford first class facilities in every branch of science—and the British Government are actively promoting the development of first-class research facilities in selected areas in Britain, through:

(a) an overall increase in the science budget—up 27 per cent. *in real terms* since 1979;

(b) the development of specialist "interdisciplinary research centres"; and

(c) the more selective allocation of university research funding by the UFC.

The "brain drain" is a field in which anecdotes are drawn upon for lobbying purposes, but in which facts are hard to

come by. The only overall statistics which are available are those collected by the universities and published in the *Universities Statistical Record*. These show *(a)* that there has been a net *inflow* of academic staff into British universities from abroad in every year since 1983; and *(b)* that there tends to be a net inflow at the professional level, indicating a net gain in quality. This conforms with the finding of the 1987 Royal Society study of the brain drain, that there was a broad balance between the outflows and inflows of scientists from Britain.

The Government accept that the *Universities Statistical Record* data may not provide a complete picture. This is why I asked the CVCP last year to conduct a review. In the meantime, however, I stressed that, in determining public policy it is better to make use of such information as is available rather than simply to ignore it.

Not all British post-doctoral scientists can, or should, expect to find jobs in British higher education. At least a third of those whose council-funded research studentships ended in 1988 proceeded to work in British industry and public service —and more should do so. Meanwhile, the proportion of "Post Docs" going abroad has fallen from 35 per cent. in 1963 to 12 per cent. in 1988. Recent data from the United States National Science Foundation show that, while the numbers of scientists immigrating into the United States from abroad increased by 19 per cent. between 1984 and 1987, the numbers from the United Kingdom decreased by 6 per cent. during that period.

The USR statistics do not support recent suggestions that there is an "internal" brain drain from the universities into other employment within Britain. They indicate that, in each year since 1983, there was a net inflow of university staff from industry/commerce and public service.

Finally, I suggested to BSA that they should reflect on the implications of their statements for the image and self-image of British science. International comparisons of scientific publications suggest that Britain remains second only to the United States in world science—a position it has maintained throughout the 1980s. I suggested that there is something profoundly wrong with a style of lobbying for public expenditure that leads self-appointed spokesmen for British science to run down their country's scientific achievements and prospects.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the applications for grant-maintained school status notified to his Department from within the seven counties of the south-west.

Mrs. Rumbold: Of the 54 proposals for GM Status that have so far reached my right hon. Friend for a decision, he has approved 44 schools. The approvals include seven schools in the south-west. Three schools in that area had their applications rejected. The list of applications is as follows.

List of schools in the seven counties of the south west who have applied for grant-maintained status

County and School	*Application Details*
Avon	
Beechen Cliff School, Bath	Approved, now incorporated.
Dorset	
Bournemouth Grammar School	Approved for incorporation on 1 September 1990.
Foster's Grammar School for Boys' Sherborne	Rejected.
Lord Digby's School for Girls, Sherborne.	Rejected.
Devon	
Colyton Grammar School	Approved, now incorporated.
Gloucestershire	
Ribston Hall High School, Gloucester	Approved, now incorporated.
Marling School, Stroud	Approved for incorporation on 1 September 1990.
Stroud Girls' High School	Approved for incorporation on 1 September 1990.
Pate's Grammar School, Cheltenham	Approved for incorporation on 1 September 1990.
Highwood, School, Nailsworth	Rejected.

Currently, no schools in Cornwall, Somerset and Wiltshire have applied for GM status.

Computers

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of the school timetable on average English school pupils spend using computers.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The information requested is not available.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has anything to add to his answer of 30 April, *Official Report*, column *392*, in respect of solid fuel.

Mrs. Rumbold: No. The Department does not occupy any accommodation which consumes solid fuel.

Assessment Tests

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what restrictions he has placed on the circulation within the National Foundation for Educational Research of its work on standard assessment tests commissioned by his Department.

Mrs. Rumbold: None.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the cost of each of the pilot assessments for seven-year-olds.

Mrs. Rumbold: Separate figures for the costs of the pilot assessments are not available. However, the pilots were mounted by the three agencies undertaking the development of standard assessment tasks for seven-year-olds in the core subjects as one aspect of their contracts for this work with the School Examinations and Assessment Council. The total provision made in the School Examinations and Assessment Council's published corporate plan for the continuation of these contracts in 1990-91 is £2·5 million.

National Curriculum

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list by individual subject the key phases of the national curriculum which will be introduced in September 1990.

Mrs. Rumbold: National curriculum subject requirements will be introduced with effect from 1 August 1990 for key stages as follows:

Key stage	*Pupils aged*	*Subject*
1	5/6	Technology
2	7/8	English

Key stage	Pupils aged	Subject
		Mathematics Science Technology
3	11/12	English Technology

Last year, English, mathematics and science were introduced at key stage 1, starting with five to six-year-olds. Mathematics and science were also introduced at key stage 3 last year, starting with 11 to 12-year-olds.

In addition, national curriculum subjects must be taught for a reasonable time as follows:

Key stage	Pupils aged	Subjects	With effect from
1 2 3	5/6-7/8 7/8-11/12 11/12-13-14	All	1 August 1989
4	14/15	English Mathematics Science	1 August 1990

Assessment Tests

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his answer of 20 June, *Official Report*, column *558*, what assessments of each of the pilot studies of standard assessment tests at age seven years are to be made by bodies which are independent of the agencies which developed the pilot studies.

Mrs. Rumbold: Responsibility for evaluation rests with the School Examinations and Assessment Council which will collect common data about the performance of the SATs used in the pilot assessments from each of the SAT development agencies, and which will report to my right hon. Friend in due course.

CIVIL SERVICE

Civil Servants (Appointments)

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what civil service guidelines lay down concerning civil servants becoming company directors prior to the termination of employment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The civil service pay and conditions of service code states that civil servants may not accept a directorship, except as a nominee of the Government or with the express permission of the permanent head of their Department, in any company holding a contract with their Department. More generally, the code provides that civil servants must not subordinate their public duties to their private interests, and must avoid conflicts of interest.

THE ARTS

Film Industry

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Minister for the Arts what responsibilities fall to him with regard to the British film industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: My Department funds both the British Film Institute and the national film and television school. I also take the lead in co-ordinating Her Majesty's Government's views on the Commission's proposals for a MEDIA programme designed to strengthen the European audio-visual industry.

Theatres (Audio-description)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister for the Arts what steps his Department is taking to encourage audio-description in theatres.

Mr. Luce: The Arts Council is committed to improving access to the arts for disabled people. As part of its arts and disability initiative, it is encouraging audio-description in all its theatres. From October, the council will be monitoring how its clients are implementing this initiative.

Natural History Museum

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has had about the circumstances of the redundancy payments to long-employed scholars in the service of the natural history museum in South Kensington.

Mr. Luce: I have received no formal representations from trade unions about redundancy payments at the natural history museum. However, I understand that, at a recent meeting between the Office of Arts and Libraries and union representatives, officials of the Institution of Professionals, Managers and Specialists outlined their concerns about the museum's proposals, including the nature of redundancy arrangements. My officials have subsequently briefed me on the outcome of this meeting and have discussed a number of the points with the museum's management.

All questions of staff management such as the circumstances of redundancy payments are the responsibility of the natural history museum's director and trustees.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he has anything to add to his answer of 6 June, *Official Report*, column *607*, in respect of solid fuel.

Mr. Luce: No. No solid fuel is used.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister for the Arts, pursuant to the answer of 1 May, *Official Report*, column *475*, about energy costs, what is the square footage of office space to which these figures relate.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The figures given in the answer of 1 May relate to 14,261·6 sq. ft. of floor space.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Unitary Taxation

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last raised the issue of unitary taxation at a European Council of Finance Ministers meeting.

Mr. Lilley: The European Community continues to take an active interest in unitary taxation and last June, the Government played a prominent part in the Community demarche on unitary tax to the United States Treasury. In response, the United States Treasury said that the issue of unitary taxation remained of serious concern to the Administration of President Bush and that further progress was required before federal concerns on this matter could be put to rest.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the joint Government and United States administration review on unitary tax will be completed.

Mr. Lilley: It is anticipated that the joint review with the United States Treasury on unitary tax will be completed this summer.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what direct action Her Majesty's Government will take to support the efforts of British business with regard to legislation being considered by the Californian legislature on unitary tax.

Mr. Lilley: The Government are fully aware of the difficulties which unitary tax still causes for British businesses and fully support further legislative reform in California. In this connection, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer wrote earlier this year to Secretary Brady at the United States Treasury and Governor Deukmejian in advance of a small delegation of senior Government officials to California to assess the situation as part of the unitary tax review.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress has been made in negotiating an amendment to the United Kingdom-United States double taxation treaty on unitary tax.

Mr. Lilley: The United Kingdom sought such an amendment in the 1970s, only for the United States Senate to refuse to ratify such a provision. The United States authorities have in the last few years made it clear that they were looking for progress towards resolving the unitary tax issue in California rather than at federal level. They have, however, equally made it clear that further progress is required before federal concerns on the issue can be put to rest.

Save As You Earn

Mr. Moss: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when save as you earn will be extended to the banks; and on what terms.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer proposed in his Budget that, in addition to the Department for National Savings and building societies, banks may offer SAYE contracts. Provision has accordingly been included in the Finance Bill. Subject to Royal Assent, approved banks will be able to offer SAYE contracts later in the year. The terms of new SAYE contracts associated with approved employee share option schemes, which enable participants to save up to £150 a month to purchase shares in their company, are to be improved at the same time. The bonus paid on completed contracts will be increased from 12 times to 15 times the monthly contribution (when proceeds are taken after five years) and from 24 to 30 times that contribution (when proceeds are taken after seven years).

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Eastern Europe

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much food aid has been provided to eastern Europe by the EC and member states so far in the current year.

Mr. Maude: The amount of food aid given by the Community to the countries of central and eastern Europe remains as set out in my answer to the hon. Lady's question of 10 May at column *205*. In addition, four member states (Belgium, Spain, France and Luxembourg) have together provided some 2,200 tonnes of food aid for Romania, according to information available to the Commission who are co-ordinating western aid to eastern Europe.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the EC Commission's scoreboard of assistance from the G24 countries to Poland and Hungary has been updated since 24 April.

Mr. Maude: Yes. The Commission updated the G24 scoreboard of assistance provided by the G24 countries to Poland and Hungary on 18 May. A new version is expected in advance of the G24 ministerial meeting on 4 July and this and any future versions will be placed in the Library of the House.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has anything to add to his answer of 30 April, *Official Report*, column *405*, in respect of solid fuel.

Mr. Sainsbury: No solid fuel is used in office buildings either in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office or the Overseas Development Administration.

Immigration

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the posts at which delays of more than nine months elapse between receiving applications for entry clearance and first interview taking place.

Mr. Sainsbury: As at 30 April 1990, overseas posts with estimated waiting times to first interview of nine months or longer are:

Post and category	*Waiting time (months)*
Bombay	
Settlement reapplicants	10·0
Islamabad	
Fiancé(e)s	10·0
Settlement reapplicants	19·0
Dubai	
Non-resident applicants[1]	9·5

[1] Mainly Iranians.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the latest estimated

waiting times for interviews in all categories of applicants for entry clearance at posts on the Indian subcontinent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: As at 30 April the estimated waiting times (in months) are:—

	Settlement			
	Q1	*Q2*	*Q3*	*Q4*
Islamabad	3	6	10	19
Karachi	1	3	3	6
Dhaka	3	3	3	9
New Delhi	0	3	5	8
Bombay	1	6	9	10
Madras	All settlement applicants 2 months.			
Calcutta	No settlement queues.			

Setlement queues are organised as follows:
Q1. Persons with a claim to the right of abode, dependent relatives over 70 years, special compassionate cases.
Q2. All spouses, and all children under 18 years.
Q3. Fiancé(e)s and others applying for the first time for settlement.
Q4. Re-applicants.
Visitors
Due to seasonal high demand applicants for visit visas in Islamabad requiring a full interview can expect to wait up to five days. Elsewhere they are dealt with on day of application.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on the present estimates, when he expects the main queues of those applying for entry clearance to the United Kingdom from the Indian sub-continent will be cleared; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is not possible to forecast how many applicants will apply for settlement entry clearance in future years nor therefore to predict the length of settlement queues.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Benefit Claimants

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he takes to ensure that claimants of social security benefits are fully informed as to their entitlements.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Government's policy on take-up of benefits is set out in the White Paper on the Government's expenditure plans 1990-91 to 1992-93, chapter 14, paragraph 27, which is in the Library.

B1 Form

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what mistakes were found in the revised and printed B1 form which led his Department not to issue it; how much was spent on the withdrawn B1 form; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: No mistakes were found in the April 1990 version of form B1, and it was distributed in the normal way. No stocks have been withdrawn.

Benefit Claimants

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what type of assistance would be available to a claimant who, about to start work and unable to manage until they get their first week's wages, approaches a local social security office, as suggested in the revised UB40/UBL18, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Since income support is normally paid fortnightly in arrears, an unemployed person has two weeks' benefit on which to manage until he receives his first wage. Nevertheless, if a person runs out of money and there is serious risk to his or his family's health or safety, a crisis loan from the social fund may be made.

Pensioners

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of those pensioners who have recently retired are receiving income from occupational pensions or savings.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The latest available figures show that in 1987, 90 per cent. of those pensioners who had recently retired[1] had income from either occupational pensions or savings or from both of these income sources.
Source: [1] Family expenditure survey.
"recently retired" includes those pensioners within five years of pensionable age.

EC Citizens

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if any record is maintained of the sums paid out from his Department's offices to EC nationals and the citizens of overseas territories of EC member states.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: No record is kept of the total sums paid by the Department to EC nationals and the citizens of overseas territories of EC member states.

Local Offices

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many executive officers there are in his Department's office in *(a)* Caernarfon and *(b)* Porthmadog; how many of these, respectively, are Welsh-speaking; how many new appointments have been made during the past 12 months to such posts in each office; and how many of these new appointments are Welsh-speaking.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Caernarfon local office has 16 executive officers in post, of whom 10 are Welsh-speaking. No new executive officer appointments were made during the past 12 months.

The Porthmadog local office has 14 executive officers in post, all Welsh-speaking. One new appointment was made during the past 12 months.

Correspondence

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will instruct his Department's office at Clarence road, Manchester, to reply to the letters of 28 February, 2 April and 3 May from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton, with regard to Mr. B. P. Madden, 4 Barnesdale close, Manchester.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The manager of Longsight local office has written to the right hon. Member on 25 June in reply to his letters of 28 February, 2 April and 3 May on behalf of Mr. B. P. Madden of 4 Barnesdale close, Manchester. I very much regret the uncharacteristic delays by the local office in responding to the correspondence.

Income-related Benefits

Mr. Burt: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether a person who deprives himself of a substantial amount of capital is entitled to receive an income-related benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Where the independent adjudicating authority decides that a person has deprived himself of capital for the purpose of receiving an income-related benefit, regulations provide for him to be treated as notionally still possessing that capital. Benefit may be payable, however, if the total capital, including any notional capital, that he possesses does not exceed the capital limit for that benefit. As my noble Friend Lord Henley announced in another place on 25 June, regulations are to be introduced into all the income-related benefits from October to provide for the phased reduction of the national capital according to the circumstances of the particular case.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will break down into the different benefits the extra £100 million which is being spent in real terms on income-related benefits in comparison with the old scheme.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Government's estimates of expenditure in April 1988 suggest that overall expenditure on weekly benefit payments in the pre and post-reform schemes was broadly the same. However, owing to the very different nature of the two schemes, and subsequent improvements in the benefit system, straightforward comparisons between overall expenditure on income-related benefits under the old and new schemes have become less meaningful with the passage of time.

Family Incomes

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) *Official Report*, 3 May, column *653*, what proportion of the lowest quintile were dependent on social security benefits broken down by family type and type of benefit.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information is set out in the tables.

The tables show the proportion of people in the lowest quintile in 1979 who were in households receiving the various benefits. The tables do not show what other sources of income may have been received by these households.

Individuals in lowest quintile of income distribution showing proportion living in households receiving benefits by family type of benefit unit 1979

A. Lowest quintile before housing costs

	Percentage receiving:				
	Supplementary benefit	*Other income-related benefit*	*Other benefit (mostly retirement pension and child benefit)*	*No benefit*	*Total*
Married pensioners	25	50	25	0	100
Single pensioners	45	35	20	0	100
Married with children	15	15	70	0	100
Married without children	20	25	20	35	100
Single with children	65	10	20	0	100
Single without children	40	15	25	20	100
TOTAL	29	25	41	5	100

B. Lowest quintile after housing costs

	Percentage receiving:				
	Supplementary benefit	*Other income-related benefit*	*Other benefit (mostly retirement pension and child benefit)*	*No benefit*	*Total*
Married pensioners	25	55	20	0	100
Single pensioners	55	30	15	0	100
Married with children	15	15	70	0	100
Married without children	20	25	20	35	100
Single with children	75	10	15	0	100
Single without children	40	15	25	20	100
TOTAL	31	25	39	5	100

Notes:

1. Figures for individual family types are rounded to nearest 5 per cent. Figures may not add to 100 per cent. because of rounding.
2. SB: Supplementary Benefit; RP: Retirement Pension; CB: Child Benefit.
3. Benefit receipt is to the household as a whole. Thus, for example, where two or more benefit units are sharing a household, all household members would be shown in the supplementary benefit column if any of them was receiving supplementary benefit.
4. Figures are according to the definitions used in "Households Below Average Income".
5. People receiving more than one relevant benefit appear in the first appropriate column.

Social Security Benefits

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are currently receiving family credit or income support in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 20 June 1990]:* The figures requested are set out in the table.

	Greenock and Port Glasgow	*Strathclyde*	*Scotland*
Income Support[1]	16,076	275,812	490,067
Family Credit[2]	883	14,995	36,000

[1] Data are derived from a 100 per cent. count of cases in action in May 1990, which include a number where benefit payment has ceased but other action is continuing and are provisional and subject to amendment.

[2] Number of families receiving Family Credit in Greenock, Port Glasgow and Strathclyde on 1 June 1990 ie excludes awards on claims made before that date but not decided at that stage. For Scotland caseload is as at the end of March 1990, including backdated awards and is therefore provisional. Information on this basis is available only for Scotland as a whole.

Home Visits

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many home visits, excluding those made for the purpose of investigating suspected fraud, were made per 1,000 claimants for the latest year available.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* In the year 1 April 1989 to 31 March 1990, 149·34 home visits were made per 1,000 income support claimants. Specialist visits, including those for the purpose of investigating suspected fraud, have been excluded from the calculation.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Immigration Appeals

Mr. Darling: To ask the Attorney-General how many cases awaited determination before the immigration appeal tribunal as at 31 May or the nearest available date.

The Attorney-General: As at 22 June 1990, 237 cases awaited determination before the immigration appeal tribunal.

Factortame

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the juridical implications of the ruling of the European Court of Justice in Factortame.

The Attorney-General:

The Context

Owners and operators of certain fishing vessels formerly registered as British have claimed that some of the registration conditions contained in part II of the Merchant Shipping Act 1988 are incompatible with Community law. They have applied to the High Court for judicial review.

The divisional court has referred the relevant questions of Community law to the European Court of Justice for a ruling. But the applicants also asked the divisional court for interim relief to protect their claimed rights in the meantime, by disapplying the relevant provisions of the Act pending final judgment.

The Secretary of State for Transport has opposed this application strongly.

The divisional court decided to grant the interim relief that was asked for. It ordered that the relevant part of the 1988 Act should be disapplied, so as to allow all previous registrations to remain in effect pending the European Court's ruling.

The Secretary of State appealed. The Court of Appeal reversed that order, and the House of Lords upheld the Court of Appeal. It held that, as a matter of national law, the divisional court had no jurisdiction to make any such order.

The House of Lords itself, however, referred to the European Court the separate question whether in the circumstances of the case Community law either obliged the national court to grant interim relief by suspending the application of a national measure, or alternatively gave it power to grant such interim protection of the rights claimed; and, if so, upon the application of what criteria.

The immediate effect

The United Kingdom argued before the European Court that Community law neither obliged nor enabled a national court to grant interim relief suspending the application of a national measure where the national court was debarred by national law from doing so. The court has, however, ruled that, where a national court would have granted such interim relief in order to protect directly effective Community law rights had it not been for a rule of its national law prohibiting it from so doing, it must as a matter of Community law set aside that rule.

In consequence the application for judicial review now returns to the English courts for decision as to whether interim relief should now be granted and, if so, on what terms. The Secretary of State will make submissions as to the general criteria to be applied and will argue strongly that interim relief ought not to be granted in the present case; but since the matter is sub judice it would be wrong to say more. Meanwhile, the practical position as regards fishing rights remains unchanged pending resolution of this issue.

The juridical significance

When a country joins the Community it is obliged to reconcile its constitution, whether written or unwritten, with Community membership. It has to provide for the application of Community law within its territory, which means providing for Community law to have supremacy over any conflicting provisions of its own national law.

Community law requires that directly effective Community law rights must be fully and uniformly applied in all the member states. If the provisions of any national law might prevent, even temporarily, Community rules from having such force and effect as Community law requires, national courts shall be able to set them aside. This requirement derives from article 5 of the treaty of Rome. It is Parliament that has given effect to requirements such as this, by means of the provisions of section 2(1) of the European Communities Act 1972:

"All such rights, powers, liabilities, obligations and restrictions from time to time created or arising by or under the Treaties, and all such remedies and procedures from time to time provided for by or under the Treaties, as in accordance with the Treaties are without further enactment to be given legal effect or used in the United Kingdom shall be recognised and available in law, and be enforced, allowed and followed accordingly; . . ."

In Factortame the Court of Justice held that the full effectiveness of Community law would be impaired if a

jurisdictional rule in the law of a member state prevented its national courts from granting interim relief so as to preserve directly effective rights claimed under Community law, where the national courts would otherwise consider it appropriate to do so. The House of Lords is accordingly now under a Community law obligation to give effect to the ruling, because that ruling is automatically brought into English law by the operation of section 2(1) of the 1972 Act. Moreover, by virtue of section 2(4) of the Act, Parliament has provided that an Act of Parliament such as the 1988 Act is to be construed and have effect subject to the obligations and powers which arise under section S2(1):

"[S2(4)] . . . and any enactment passed or to be passed, other than one contained in this Part of this Act, shall be construed and have effect subject to the foregoing provisions of this section . . ."

Finally, it is important to note that the ruling of the Court of Justice applies equally to the national courts of every member state.

SCOTLAND

Local Enterprise Companies

75. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how his Department intends to monitor the quality of training provided by LECs.

Mr. Lang: It will be for Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise respectively to monitor —through regular data returns and visits—the quality of training delivered by the local enterprise companies in their areas. The Scottish Office will monitor the performance of Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise in carrying out this task.

Trials (Angus Sheriff Courts)

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cases did not proceed to trial on the day allocated in Angus sheriff courts; and what assessment he has made of the ability of Scottish courts to cope with the volume of business they are currently undertaking.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: During May 1990, 29 summary trials did not proceed on the day allocated, seven due to lack of court time and 22 for other reasons. The ability of Scottish courts to cope with business is kept under continuous review.

Brook Advisory Centres

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make additional funds available to the Brook advisory centres in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: The Brook advisory centre in Scotland receives grant assistance from the Scottish Home and Health Department towards the administrative costs of its all-Scotland education activities. For 1990-91 the centre has been awarded a grant of £6,700. No representations have been received regarding the level of grant and all the available resources have been fully allocated.

Civil Servants (Workplaces)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessments under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations have been undertaken at workplaces used by civil servants in his Department.

Mr. Rifkind: Responsibility for undertaking these assessments in the Scottish Office and for acting on the results has been delgated to heads of divisions and professional units. Because the performance of many diverse tasks is relevant, and because the responsibilities often in practice overlap with other management responsibilities no attempt is made to maintain central records of the issues that have arisen.

Rents-to-mortgages Scheme

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if there are any plans to extend the rents-to-mortgages scheme to new town properties in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The rents-to-mortgages scheme has been available to tenants of development corporations and Scottish Homes since its introduction in 1989.

Privacy

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement in respect of his response to the recommendations of the committee on privacy and related matters so far as they affect Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In his statement on 21 June, at columns 1123-24, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary expressed the Government's warm welcome for the general approach taken in the report of the committee. The committee concluded that existing civil law remedies against press intrusion offences were adequate in Scotland, and it endorsed the Scottish position on the identification of victims of crime. The committee noted that some of the most serious forms of press intrusion might be subject to criminal proceedings under Scots common law. As recommended by the committee, we shall consider whether any extension of the law of Scotland is required in respect of the three new criminal offences proposed by them.

Sheriff Officers

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many sheriff officers operating under section 7 of the Law of Distress Amendment Act 1888, and certificated by a sheriff principal, are operating in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: None. The Law of Distress Amendment Act 1888 does not extend to Scotland.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many certificated sheriff officers are operating within the courts in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Sheriff officers are not certificated. They hold commissions from sheriffs principal and as at 1 January 1990 there were 191 individuals with commissions. An individual can hold commissions for more than one sheriff court area.

Capital Assets

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the regions which have now completed their register of capital assets; and if he will give the number of entries made on each register.

Mr. Rifkind: All health boards are currently working towards the completion of asset registers.

Sewerage

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he proposes to make any funds available to Scottish regional and islands councils for expenditure on sewerage improvements.

Mr. Rifkind: The Government are committed to further improving the quality of our rivers and coastal waters. There are pressing needs for new and upgraded sewage treatment and disposal facilities to meet European Community bathing water and other environmental standards and Scotland is disproportionately affected. Accordingly, I have decided, subject to the necessary legislation and in due course the approval by Parliament of funds, to make available to regional and islands councils a capital grant of £130 million over three years for works on sewerage, sewage treatment and disposal to reduce pollution or otherwise benefit the environment. The amounts available, at a grant rate of 75 per cent. on eligible works, would be £30 million in 1991-92, £45 million in 1992-93 and £55 million in 1993-94.

Home Improvement Grants

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the new system for home improvement grants will come into operation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* No date has been set for the introduction of a new improvement grant system in Scotland. The Government's proposals for reform of the present system were set out in a consultation paper which received many constructive comments. These are being considered fully as details of the proposed new system are developed. It is our intention that a further consultation paper will be issued before legislation to reform the system is placed before Parliament.

Social Workers

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to how many extra social workers and support staff are being appointed and what training provisions have been made to implement the community care programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* No information is kept centrally as to the number of extra social workers or support staff being appointed by local authorities specifically for community care, but the total number of staff on a whole-time equivalent basis employed by local authority social work departments increased from 32,453 in October 1987 to 35,228 in October 1989.

In order to ensure that local authorities and other agencies will be equipped to undertake their new responsibilities anticipated in the National Health Service and Community Care Bill, the Scottish Office has funded the university of Dundee to provide a training programme for key members of staff in the social work departments and the other agencies involved in community care for a three year period from 1990, with a possible extension to five years. Discussions are also being held with officials of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, Dundee university and the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work on ways of providing short-term training for the staff immediately involved in establishing the new community care procedures and the production of a training pack for use by local authorities in training the wide variety of staff involved in community care.

Training

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was *(a)* the spending and *(b)* the number of participants in each of his training and employment measures in (i) the last three years, (ii) the current year and (iii) projections for the next three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* Information about projected numbers and spending on training and employment measures in Scotland for the next three years is not available. For the last three years and the current year, it has not been possible to provide all the information requested in precisely the form required. In so far as data are available, they are set out in the tables:

Table 1: Training Measures

	(a) Spending £ million				*(b) Number of participants*[1]			
	(i)		*(ii)*		*(i)*		*(ii)*	
	1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91 (estimate)*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91 (estimate)*
Youth Training Scheme[2]	93·416	102·445	102·690	96·570	37,102	39,543	35,497	n/a
Adult Training[3]	20·094	12·379	3·242	—	43,406	37,845	n/a	—
Community Programme[4]	138·600	n/a	—	—	37,182	12,903	—	—
New Job Training Scheme[4]	2·490	n/a	—	—	11,600	6,946	—	—
Employment Training[5]	—	46·777	124·100	145·000	—	28,528	55,311	n/a
Business Enterprise Programme (outwith Employment Training)[6]	—	—	0·331	0·265	—	—	1,802	1,876
Community Industry	5·591	6·275	6·425	6·625	1,441	1,577	1,560	1,550

n/a = not available

[1] Number of participants means number of entrants to the programmes or number of starts in training as appropriate.

[2] This covers YTS, and in 1990-91 Youth Training. The expenditure figures do not include elements of National Providers Unit expenditure paid for from a GB budget.

[3] Adult Training includes the original Job Training Scheme, Training for Enterprise, Access to Information Technology, Self Standing Work

Preparation and Training linked to the Community Programme. The 1989-90 expenditure is residual and includes Community Programme and New Job Training Scheme.

[4] The Community Programme and New Job Training Scheme ended in August 1988 and 1988-89 expenditure cannot be broken down below GB level. Numbers of participants for 1988-89 are until the end of August 1988.

[5] This programme took over from Adult Training, Community Programme and the New Job Training Scheme on 2 September 1988. The expenditure figures do not include elements of National Providers Unit expenditure paid from a GB budget but do include expenditure on Community Opportunities. These figures include an element for trainee allowances.

[6] This programme started at the same time as Employment Training.

Table 2: Training Measures

Financial year	*(a) Number of starts/projects*					*(b) Expenditure £ million*
			Options			
	2 (Business skills seminars)	*2 (Growth programme*	*3*	*4*	*5*	
Business Growth Training						
i 1987-88	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
1988-89	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
1989-90	6,704	43	207	10	2	0·913
ii 1990-91 (estimate)	7,137	60	133	13	10	4·408

Notes:

This programme started on 11 April 1989

Option 1: Business Kits—no separate Scottish figure available. Paid for from GB budget.

Option 2: Business Skills Seminars and Growth Programme.

Option 3: Managing Business Change Projects.

Option 4: Joint action on Skills Programme.

Option 5: Innovation and Technology Programme.

Table 3: Employment measures

	(a) Spending (£ million)				*(b) Numbers of participants*[1]			
	(i)			*(ii)*	*(i)*			*(ii)*
	1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91 (estimate)*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91 (estimate)*
Jobclub	1·000	1·961	2·192	2·319	14,568	18,733	20,820	n/a
Restart courses	1·262	0·710	0·735	0·710	7,113	6,957	7,362	n/a
Jobstart	0·682	0·453	0·685	0·455	1,493	1,466	1,890	n/a
Enterprise Allowance Scheme	17·417	17·234	14·834	13·349	9,689	8,494	6,972	6,606
Sheltered Employment	3·369	3·752	4·497	5·971	2,373	2,457	2,598	n/a

n/a = Not available.

Note:

[1] Number of participants means entrants for the Enterprise Allowance Scheme, starts for Restart courses, acceptances for Jobstart, throughflow for Jobclubs and filled places for Sheltered Employment.

Disabled Students

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to ensure that access funds are sufficient to meet the applications of all entitled students.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 25 June 1990.]:* As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science announced on 26 March 1990, *Official Report*, column *34*, the Government have increased to £20 million the access funds available for higher education, making a total provision—including £5 million for the further education access fund—of £25 million in 1990-91. The purpose of this increase is to give the higher education institutions greater scope for extending discretionary assistance on a flexible basis to their students, notably those facing relatively high accommodation costs.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much of each of the access funds associated with the student loans scheme has been allocated to him to disperse.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* My right hon. and learned Friend has made provision for a total of £2·1 million to be distributed to non-university institutions of higher and further education in Scotland in 1990-91.

The breakdown of this figure between the three funds is as follows:

	£ million
Postgraduate Fund	0·26
In Scope of Loans Fund	1·10
Further Education Fund	0·76
	[1]2·1

[1] Rounded.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what guidelines about entitlement he has established for access funds in Scotland;

(2) whether any categories of application for access funds will have priority funding.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* Subject to the terms of the necessary regulations, a statement of the terms and conditions for the payment of access funds, together with associated guidance notes, will be prepared. It is intended to issue these to grant-aided colleges, education authorities and further education colleges in Scotland during July. Individual institutions will be entirely free to manage the administration of their share of the access

funds in accordance with those terms and conditions and to determine the priority to be afforded to any particular category of applicant.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions have been held between the Scottish Education Department and education institutions about access funds; and what was the outcome of the talks.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* Officials of the Scottish Education Department have held discussions with representatives of the Conference of Scottish Centrally Funded Colleges on the proposal to introduce access funds, with particular reference to the position of the Scottish grant-aided colleges. Similar discussions have been held with representatives of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland in relation to further education colleges in Scotland. These discussions were necessarily of a preliminary nature. It was made clear that the detailed provisions of the access funds would be set out formally in advance of their introduction in Session 1990-91.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what administrative procedures he has established to allocate access funds in Scotland;

(2) what action he is taking to ensure that access funds are available at the start of the academic year.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The level of resources for access funds to be allocated to each grant-aided college in Scotland will be determined by my right hon. and learned Friend, broadly on the basis of the number of full-time students in attendance at that institution. A similar allocation system will apply to each further education college in Scotland, taking account of the numbers of full-time students aged 19 and over.

Subject to the terms of the necessary regulations, payment of access funds' allocations will be made so that they are available for distribution by institutions with effect from 1 September 1990.

Lord Advocate (Overseas Visits)

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the dates when the Lord Advocate was abroad on official business during the present parliamentary Session.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* My noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate was abroad on official business on the following dates:

21 to 26 January 1990
4 to 6 March 1990
12 to 27 April 1990

TRANSPORT

Aircraft Fleets

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to amend the system of certification for work on existing aircraft fleets to deal with new acquisitions.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Civil Aviation Authority has the statutory responsibility for the safety regulation of civil aviation, and the certification of aircraft is part of the regulatory process. There is no reason for the Department to interfere.

I understand that any aircraft coming on to the United Kingdom register of aircraft has to meet the full requirements of the air navigation order for both initial issue and renewal of its certificate of airworthiness. Aircraft not on the United Kingdom register which are used by British operators may be leased only from states which are signatories to the convention on international civil aviation and which thus comply with the requirements of the International Civil Aviation Organisation.

Bus Companies (Subsidies)

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Hazel Grove of 19 June on subsidies to bus companies, what is the present annual cost to public funds of subsidies to bus companies in Greater Manchester.

Mr. Freeman: We estimate that some £6·6 million in fuel duty rebate was paid to bus companies in Greater Manchester in 1988-89, and some £30,000 in rural bus grant. In addition, the passenger transport executive made direct subsidy payments to bus companies for running socially necessary services of £10·7 million; they also gave support to the bus industry in other ways such as the provision of bus stations and publicity for timetables.

Aircraft (Counterfeit Parts)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a study of the use of counterfeit parts in commercial and private aircraft with landing rights in the United Kingdom.

Mr. McLoughlin: It would be quite impracticable to investigate the service history of the thousands of aircraft which may land in the United Kingdom in order to study the possible use of counterfeit parts; it would be a gross intrusion into the responsibilities of the states of registry of the aircraft concerned; the industry is well aware of the problem and is taking effective steps to combat it; and the Civil Aviation Authority, which has the statutory responsibility for the regulation of civil aviation, is also aware of the problem.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the relationship between civil aircraft accidents in the United Kingdom, or over United Kingdom airspace, and the use of bogus or faulty replacement parts.

Mr. McLoughlin: I understand from the safety data analysis unit of the Civil Aviation Authority, which has been keeping the relevant statistics since 1976, that there have been no accidents to public transport aircraft in any way related to unauthorised parts.

There have been seven accidents to private aircraft after which the investigation discovered unauthorised parts, but these were not directly the cause of the accidents. Three of the aircraft involved were light aeroplanes, three were microlight aeroplanes and one was a light helicopter.

Airport Maintenance Engineers

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will meet the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority to discuss the resources being devoted

to the Civil Aviation Authority inspectorate for work on monitoring the qualifications and resources of maintenance engineers at British airports and the effectiveness of the certification process.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend meets the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority from time to time and discusses, among other things, the Civil Aviation Authority's resources. However, the detailed allocation of those resources is a matter for the Civil Aviation Authority, which has the statutory responsibility for the safety regulation of civil aviation.

Roads

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he has taken since the publication in November 1989 of the National Audit Office report on road maintenance and building.

Mr. Atkins: The Department has completed preliminary consideration of the recommendations made by the NAO and the accounting officer has given evidence to the Public Accounts Committee. It has already reviewed its quality control reporting procedures. The Department will decide whether further action is necessary when it has received and considered the committee's report.

A40 Western Avenue

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the estimated cost of the A40 Western avenue improvement scheme in November 1987; and what is the latest estimate for these works.

Mr. Atkins: I presume that my hon. Friend is concerned with the scheme to improve the A40 Western avenue at its junction with Long lane. The estimated cost quoted in the Secretary of State's decision letter of November 1987 was £18·2 million (1986 prices). The latest published estimate was £34·1 million (1987 prices). The cost of the scheme has been reassessed, in accordance with the Department's usual practice, before tenders are invited this summer for the first of two major construction contracts. For commercial reasons it is not the Department's practice to reveal such estimates at this stage. An indication of the size of the contract will be given when notice of intention to invite tenders is published in the EC's *Official Journal.*

Driving Tests

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what conclusions have been reached about conducting heavy goods vehicle and public services vehicle driving tests on Saturdays.

Mr. Atkins: The recent 12-month trial has confirmed that Saturday vocational testing is a practical proposition and provides a service that is welcomed by customers. During the year some 4,300 Saturday tests were conducted and the number of centres where the waiting times for vocational tests were at or below four weeks doubled. I have decided to continue the service on a permanent basis and to make it available at all centres where Saturday testing is feasible and there are examiners available.

EC Transport Council

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the outcome of the meeting of the European Community Transport Council on 18-19 June.

Mr. Parkinson: I attended the meeting of the European Council of Transport Ministers which was held in Luxembourg on 18 to 19 June. My hon. Friend the Minister for Aviation and Shipping was also present.

I am particularly pleased that the Council adopted a second package of measures which seals the commitment to the liberalisation of air transport in the European Community by the end of 1992.

The new package builds on the first set of measures agreed in 1987. It contains arrangements for setting fares which introduces an element of double disapproval and simplifies the existing zonal system; further relaxes the limits on capacity sharing; and eases access to the market. The Council accepted the need to deal quickly with predatory practices; agreed principles against which air cargo services should be further liberalised; and agreed to open aviation negotiations with the EFTA countries.

The Government welcome this second package. We have taken the lead in pressing for maximum progress, and the agreement which we have won will give airlines greater scope to respond to market demands. The way is open for airlines to offer greater choice to consumers.

On shipping matters, the Council adopted resolutions highlighting the importance of safety on ferries, in the light of recent tragic accidents; and on pollution at sea. It was agreed that a regulation on block exemptions for consortia should be adopted by the end of the year. There were discussions, but no agreements, on cabotage, and on the transfer of vessels between EC registers. The Commission gave a report on implementation of the 1986 measures on liberalisation.

A conditional agreement was reached by the Council on a further ad-hoc programme to December 1992 to support the development of certain transport infrastructure projects. This is subject to the resolution of outstanding questions on the scope of the programme and the way in which it will be operated.

On inland transport the Council agreed to abolish minimum hire periods for vehicles without drivers and restrictions on hire of vehicles under 6 tonnes by own account operators. Discussions were held on measures in the event of a crisis in road haulage; road haulage quotas for 1991 and 1992; the maximum length of road trains; road safety; and fiscal harmonisation and the proposed German lorry tax. The Commission reported the state of play in the negotiations between the Community and Switzerland, Austria and Yugoslavia over third country transit.

Among the items discussed briefly under "Other Business" were air traffic control, transport relations between the two Germanies, European high-speed railways and the alignment of Community and AETR (the European agreement concerning the work of crews of vehicles engaged in international road transport) rules on drivers hours. The Commission responded favourably to a United Kingdom request for regular reports on implementation of EC transport legislation.

Noise Insulation

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what regulations govern the eligibility of householders for grants to cover the cost of insulation when traffic noise levels exceed 68 decibels.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The Noise Insulation Regulations 1975 govern eligibility for an offer

of insulation or grant to owners or tenants of dwellings and other buildings used for residential purposes. The criteria in the regulations apply in respect of new or altered roads. There is no provision for insulation against increased traffic noise from existing roads.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the total value of insulation work carried out and grants made *(a)* as a duty under regulation 3 of the Noise Insulation Regulations 1975 and *(b)* as a power under regulation 4 of those regulations, since 1985.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* Information on expenditure for noise insulation is not held in the form requested. Since 1985 the total value of insulation work carried out and grants made in respect of the trunk road programme in England is estimated at £7 million. This figure includes insulation provided under regulations 3 and 4 and under regulation 5 against construction noise.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the answers of 10 May, *Official Report*, column *217*, and 30 April, *Official Report*, column *434*, about energy consumption, what is the square footage of office space to which these figures relate.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* Energy consumption and expenditure figures quoted in the answers of 10 May, *Official Report*, column *217*, and 30 April, *Official Report*, column *434*, relate to the total of 3,619,718 sq ft of accommodation occupied by the Department of Transport.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much was invested in improving the energy efficiency of his Department in the latest available year.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* Of the order of 10 per cent. of its expenditure on energy is estimated to have been invested by the Department of Transport in energy efficiency measures in 1989-90.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Social Security

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many children claimed under the community grant heading of the social fund from 1 April 1989 to 31 March 1990; and of these how many received payment at each of the social security offices in South Down.

Mr. Needham: The information is as follows:

Social Fund Community Care Grants 1 April 1989 to 31 March 1990

Social Security Office	*Number of applications*	*Number of awards*
Ballynahinch	294	103
Banbridge	734	433
Downpatrick	858	386
Kilkeel	255	192
Newcastle	383	216
Newry	2,432	1,211
Total (South Down)	4,956	2,541

Teachers

Rev. William McCrea: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what provision is made under local management of schools for cover teachers in the case of illness; what representations he has received concerning the relationship between this provision and the present practice of employing a substitute teacher on the third day of absence; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Under local management of schools the cost of substitute cover after the 20th day of a teacher's absence because of illness will not be a charge on a school's budget but will be met centrally. The cost of illness cover before this will fall to be met from the school's budget. Where substitute cover would not apply under the normal arrangements and the board of governors of a school has delegated responsibility for managing teacher costs, it is, of course, open to the school to use some of its budget to fund such cover.

I have received one representation on this matter and have no plans to change the arrangements.

Privacy

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement in respect of his response to the recommendations of the committee on privacy and related matters so far as they affect Northern Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney: The terms of reference of the committee did not extend to Northern Ireland. We are considering whether the proposals might be appropriate for introduction in Northern Ireland.

Terrorist Bomb Damage

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how payments to loss adjusters are calculated in Northern Ireland in respect of terrorist bomb damage.

Mr. Cope: Payments made to loss adjusters are in respect of fees. These are calculated in accordance with scales agreed with representatives of companies which act for the Northern Ireland Office in criminal damage claims. The fee payable in each case depends on the amount of compensation determined.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish the report he has received from the Standing Advisory commission on Human Rights on religious and political discrimination and equality of opportunity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I am publishing the report today as a command paper (Cm. 1107) and copies have been laid before Parliament.

The report "Religious and Political Discrimination and Equality of Opportunity in Northern Ireland: Second Report" concluded a major review by the commission of the laws and institutions dealing with religious and political discrimination and equality of opportunity in Northern Ireland. The commission's first report "Report on Fair Employment" was published as a command paper (Cm. 237) in 1987.

I am grateful to the commission for the considerable effort which has been devoted to the preparation of the report which I regard as a valuable one and a welcome contribution to how human rights might be further protected in Northern Ireland. It would be inappropriate of me to commit the Government to accepting the commission's recommendations before there has been an opportunity for these to be fully considered, but I am firmly committed to eradicating discrimination and ensuring equality of opportunity for everyone in Northern Ireland whatever their religious background. I shall therefore be giving the report and its detailed recommendations the very careful consideration they deserve before reaching any conclusions.

Maternity Services

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his policy on the application of the reports of the maternity services advisory committee by health boards.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 19 June 1990]:* The four health and social services boards in Northern Ireland have been asked to ensure that the recommendations made in the maternity services advisory committee reports are taken into account in the planning and organisation of maternity services in their areas.

Bangor Post-primary School

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland for what reason the South Eastern education and library board excluded all-ability, co-educational and integrated status for the proposed post-primary school for the Bangor area, in their current consultations.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* It is a matter in the first instance for the South Eastern education and library board to decide the character and type of post-primary provision which will meet the best educational interests of secondary age children in the Bangor area. The consultation which it carries out in this issue is a matter for the board.

ENVIRONMENT

Nursery Schools

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities have reduced nursery school places by more than 10 per cent. as a result of community charge capping.

Mr. Portillo: Although I have no information about whether authorities have reduced their nursery school places, I can say that the Government have proposed to cap only those councils which are budgeting to spend well in excess of what we believe it would be appropriate for them to spend.

Searches

Mr. Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the average length of time taken by each of the district councils in Staffordshire to undertake searches for solicitors in the four most recent three-month periods for which figures are available.

Mr. Chope: None.

Planning Decisions

Mr. Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the percentages of planning decisions made in four weeks, eight weeks, and 12 weeks by each of the district councils in Staffordshire and in the Peak District national park in the 12 most recent three-month periods for which figures are available.

Mr. Moynihan: Information on planning decisions made by local authorities is not collated in the format requested. The information which is available is listed in the table.

Percentage of planning decisions made within eight weeks, by planning authority

Percentages

Local Authority	*Quarter of Decision*											
	1986	*1987*			*1988*					*1989*		
	4th	*1st*	*2nd*	*3rd*	*4th*	*1st*	*2nd*	*3rd*	*4th*	*1st*	*2nd*	*3rd*
Cannock Chase	80	73	73	82	74	74	83	82	80	75	80	60
East Staffordshire	88	88	88	87	89	87	90	82	74	70	75	68
Lichfield	n/a	n/a	n/a	54	66	53	73	66	59	57	63	57
Newcastle Under Lyme	92	88	97	89	92	90	91	93	85	90	86	75
South Staffordshire	71	72	74	56	63	60	54	48	35	40	41	37
Stafford	85	86	88	90	85	81	85	78	39	22	52	71
Staffordshire Moorlands	39	37	45	40	42	62	63	55	48	40	29	10
Stoke on Trent	74	68	76	64	67	66	73	70	69	63	63	22
Tamworth	75	76	77	79	80	81	78	77	69	68	56	68
Peak Park[1]	55	54	59	58	57	68	55	49	49	51	54	38

n/a = not available.
[1] = This includes figures for areas outside Staffordshire.

Lincolnshire County Council (Planning)

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to change the regulations that allow local authorities to give themselves deemed planning consent.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Yes. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) on 7 February, *Official Report*, volume 166, column *638*. I am currently considering responses to the consultation paper referred to in that reply.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to intervene in the case of Lincolnshire county council and its plan to grant planning permission contrary to structure plan policy, at

Surfleet near Spalding without any determination from South Holland district council.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My Department has issued a direction to Lincolnshire county council under article 14 of the Town and Country General Development Order 1988, preventing the council from deeming itself planning permission for this proposed development without special authorisation from the Secretary of State. A decision will be made in due course on whether to require the council to apply to the Secretary of State for planning permission for the development.

Councillors (Pecuniary Interests)

Mr. Gerald Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to amend circular 105/73 so as to dispense only those councillors who are not in rent arrears from the obligations and disabilities arising from the pecuniary interest provisions of the Local Government Act 1972.

Mr. Portillo: None. We consider that the general dispensation under circular 105/73 does not extend to councillors who are in rent arrears voting on questions relating to such arrears. There is, however, no reason why the existence of arrears, for which there may be a good explanation, should disable a councillor from speaking or voting on other questions of general housing policy.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when and in what manner he expects the London Docklands development corporation to publish its budget for the financial year 1990-91.

Mr. Moynihan: The corporation will provide details of its expenditure programme for 1990-91 in its corporate plan to be published in September.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress his Department has made in its re-examination, in relation to the grant-related expenditure assessment for 1989-90, of the standard spending assessment for 1990-91 for Torbay.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has made it clear that he is willing to consider any fresh evidence on standard spending assessments before making decisions for 1991-92. Officials are currently discussing with the local authority associations the evidence which has been brought forward.

Threatened Species

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek to secure an EC ban on the transit of threatened species through the United Kingdom.

Mr. Trippier: No. Such a ban would be inconsistent with the provisions of the convention on international trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora and regulation EEC No. 3626/82.

Environmental Protection

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the achievement of target completion dates in respect of BATNEEC notes for prescribed processes and scheduled processes under the Environmental Protection Bill.

Mr. Trippier: The production of BATNEEC notes is proceeding according to the programme for introducing integrated pollution control, a copy of which was placed in the Library on 26 April 1990.

Particle and Fibre Board Industry

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment *(a)* if he will list the membership of the working party concerned with the particle and fibre board industry, indicating which members are (i) representatives of HMIP, (ii) representatives of local authorities, (iii) representatives of environmental or community groups and (iv) employed with the particle and fibre board industry; and *(b)* what criteria he used to determine the membership of the working party.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: *(a)* The membership of the working party is as follows:

Dr. M. G. Bigg, HMIP
Mr. A. S. Fidling, Glyndwr District Council

Representatives of the particle board and fibre board industry
Mr. T. Allison
Mr. K. H. Bryant
Mr. D. G. Duke-Evans
Mr. N. F. Hodnett
Mr. C. P. Towl
Mr. R. Kenworth
Mr. A. F. Kerr
Mr. R. N. Stewart
Mr. A. Twitchett

In addition to the working party meetings discussions have taken place between Dr. M. G. Bigg and the following representatives of local authorities whose residents are affected by particle board and fibre board processes:

Mr. A. Millie, North Devon District Council
Mr. A. Fuller, Alyn and Deeside District Council
Mr. S. Fraser, Cullinghame District Council
Mr. D. Hubbick, Tynedale District Council
Mr. N. Findlay, Coleraine District Council
Mr. T. Rose, Sterling District Council
Mr. A. Fidling, Glyndwr District Council

In addition a meeting has been held with representatives of the following community groups:

Central Scotland Environmental Action Group (CSEAG)
The National Association for the Control of Chipboard Industry Pollution
Chirk Residents Environmental Group (CREG)
Mr. A. Fidling, Glyndwr District Council was also present at this meeting.

(b) HMIP invited the local authority associations, local government professional institutions, and the industry to nominate members to serve on the working party. All the members nominated were appointed.

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the terms of reference of the working party concerned with the particle and fibre board industry.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: A group is preparing the first draft of the guidance for local authority air pollution

control of the manufacture of particle board and fibre board. The terms of reference of this group are to determine the appropriate techniques to meet the objectives set down in section 7(2)(a) of the Environmental Protection Bill.

The objectives are: ensuring that in carrying on a prescribed process, the best available techniques not entailing excessive cost will be used:

(i) for preventing the release of substances prescribed for air into air or, where that is not practicable by such means, for reducing the release of such substances to a minimum and for rendering harmless any such substances which are so released; and

(ii) for rendering harmless any other substances which might cause harm if released into any environmental medium.

London Residuary Body

Mr. Summerson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the re-appointment of the chairman of the London residuary body.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend has today re-appointed Sir Godfrey Taylor as chairman of the London residuary body for a further term from 12 August until 31 March 1993.

The bulk of the London residuary body's remaining GLC-related property, rights and liabilities were transferred by order to the London boroughs and other functional successors on 30 March. This marked the virtual completion of the residuary body's highly successful role in relation to the abolition of the GLC. Its main task now is to discharge the responsibilities which it has inherited as a consequence of the abolition of the ILEA.

The re-appointment reflects the confidence of my right hon. Friends, the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Education and Science, in Sir Godfrey's and his board's ability to complete the residuary body's new tasks by 31 March 1993.

Council Rents

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the average English council rent level as a percentage of *(a)* average male earnings and *(b)* the national insurance retirement pension for a single pensioner and a pensioner couple in each of the years since 1987 for which figures are available.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 18 June 1990]:* Average council rents expressed as a percentage of average earnings and national insurance retirement pension levels are notional calculations. In particular, it should be emphasised that council tenants whose sole income is a national insurance retirement pension would usually qualify for rent assistance through housing benefit and others with incomes from other sources may also qualify. For example, in 1988, 1·3 million retirement pensioners were receiving rent rebate from their local authority; the average value was £17·81 a week for pensioners receiving housing benefit and income support and £12·54 for pensioners receiving housing benefit only.

	Average weekly council rent (£)	*Rent as percentage of average male earnings*[2]	*Rent as percentage of retirement pension*	
			single person	*married couple*
April 1987	17·20	8	44	27
April 1988	18·82	8	46	29
April 1989	20·70	8	47	30
April 1990	[1]23·36	8	50	31

[1] Provisional figure.
[2] Full time adult males whose pay is unaffected by absences.

Frogs

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made so far in Leicester polytechnic's study of the population levels of frogs; when it expects to complete its research; and what assessment he has made of the implications for policy.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The Nature Conservancy Council advises me that it has contracted Leicester polytechnic to update a survey made in the early 1980s into the population status and trends of nine widespread species of amphibians and reptiles, including the common frog. Questionnaires have recently been circulated and the polytechnic is due to report to the Nature Conservancy Council in October.

World Cup

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with his counterparts in other countries in connection with the monitoring of the behaviour of football fans in Italy for the World Cup competition; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* I have held a number of discussions with the Italian authorities to assist them in making safety and security arrangements for England's participation in the tournament and for the appropriate monitoring of the behaviour of English supporters.

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when officials or Ministers in his Department plan to meet officials of the Football Supporters Association in Italy.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* Officials from my Department have had meetings with the Football Supporters Association in connection with the World Cup both in England before the tournament began and in Italy during the England team's stay in Sardinia.

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information his Department has requested from the Football Supporters Association for use in assessing the behaviour of English football supporters at the World Cup tournament.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I have today given

to the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing). My Department has not found it necessary to seek such information from the Football Supporters Association, as officials in Italy during the World Cup are able to provide me with a first-hand assessment.

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what aid his Department has granted to the Football Supporters Association towards establishing its football embassy in Italy.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* My Department welcomed the setting up of the Football Supporters Association advice centre in Sardinia in connection with England's participation in the World Cup. The question of Government financial assistance for the centre has not arisen.

Geographic Information

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what actions have been taken by his Department following the receipt of the report by the Chorley committee on the handling of geographic information in 1987.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The Government's response to the report of the committee of inquiry chaired by Lord Chorley was published in February 1988. This document sets out the Government's reponse to each of the recommendations made by the Chorley committee and where these relate to the Department of the Environment my officials are actively engaged in carrying them forward.

One of the key responses to the report of the Chorley committee has been the establishment of the Association of Geographic Information (AGI), the launch of which was attended by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan). The Department is a sponsor member of the AGI and is represented on its council.

Environmental Assessment

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning the relationship between article 1.5 of Council directive 85/337/EEC, on the environmental assessment of certain projects, and the private Bill procedure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* A number of representations have been received in the last two years about article 1.5 of directive 85/337/EEC on environmental assessment which provides that the directive shall not apply to projects, the details of which are adopted by a specific act of national legislation. The Joint Committee on Private Bill Procedures included in its 1988 report (HC 625 Session 1987-88) a recommendation that promoters of works Bills must deposit either an environmental statement or a certificate from the appropriate Secretary of State saying that an assessment is not necessary as the project does not fall within the scope of the directive. The Government have welcomed this recommendation and are consulting the authorities in both Houses about its implementation.

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what contacts he has had with the Commission of the European Communities concerning compliance by the United Kingdom with the requirements of Council directive 85/337/EEC on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment, in respect of works intended to be authorised by the private Bill procedure.

Mr. Michael Spicer *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* In the case of the King's Cross Railway Bill currently before Parliament the EC Commission forwarded a complaint in January this year alleging that directive 85/337/EEC was being infringed. The Commission was advised in response on 27 February that, although those proposals were exempt from the provisions of the directive because they were contained in a private Bill, British Rail—the promoters—had produced an environmental statement voluntarily. The Commission was advised of the recommendation of the Joint Committee on Private Bill Procedures in so far as it related to environmental assessment and the Government's acceptance of that particular recommendation.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any proposals for further regulations to implement Commission directive 85/337/EEC on environmental assessment.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* As indicated in the recent consultation document on "Private Bills and New Procedures" (Cm. 1110) environmental assessment requirements would be included in the new procedure proposed in that document. Apart from some regulations which are currently in preparation to complete implementation of directive 85/337/EEC in Northern Ireland, the Government have no proposals at present for further regulations relating to environmental assessment.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will amend paragraph 68 of "Environmental Assessment: A Guide to the Procedures", to give guidance to persons who could have obtained authorisation for proposed works by procedures under legislation to which the requirements of Council directive 85/337/EEC on environmental assessment have been applied by regulations, that private Bill procedure should not be seen as a possible means to avoiding the submission of an environmental statement.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* No. As the Joint Committee on Private Bill Procedures made clear in its report (HC 625), the private Bill procedure is not an alternative which is generally available to every developer since the purpose of the Bill must be one which cannot be effected without parliamentary authority. The procedure cannot therefore be chosen simply to avoid the need for environmental assessment. Paragraph 68 of the booklet "Environmental Assessment: a Guide to the Procedures" makes clear the Government's view that the promoter of a private Bill should provide an environmental statement if his project would otherwise require one.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to issue a revised statement of view as to legal requirements in connection with Council directive 85/337/EEC on environmental assessment published by his Department.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* I see no need for such a revision at present.

Rented Housing

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the percentage of rented housing in the United Kingdom and other OECD countries.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer as 25 June 1990]:* The available information is as follows:—

	Percentage of rented housing	*Year*
Australia	32	1986
Austria	50	1981
Belgium	39	1981
Canada	38	1986
Denmark	44	1987
Finland	39	1980
France	49	1984
Germany	59	1985
Greece	28	1982
Iceland	not available	
Ireland	24	1981
Italy	36	1986
Japan	38	1983
Luxembourg	40	1981
Netherlands	56	1985
New Zealand	29	1980
Portugal	44	1981
Spain	24	1980
Sweden	43	1985
Switzerland	70	1980
Turkey	38	1979
United States	36	1987
Yugoslavia	not available	

Corresponding estimates for the United Kingdom are 42 per cent. for 1982 and 35 per cent. for 1988.

Figures for the various countries are not all compiled on a comparable basis and should be interpreted with caution.

PRIME MINISTER

Bradford

Q31. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Prime Minister when she expects to pay an official visit to Bradford Forster Square station.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has at present no plans to do so.

Natural History Museum

Q52. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister if she is satisfied with co-ordination between the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Department of the Environment, the Department of Education and Science, and the Office of Arts and Libraries on the future of science at the natural history museum in south Kensington.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is satisfied with the degree of co-ordination between Government Departments over the future of science at the natural history museum.

I understand that the museum is in discussion with the Government's chief scientific adviser and the Office of Arts and Libraries about its position in relation to the United Kingdom science base. The Minister for the Arts has indicated that he will be calling a further meeting with the chairman of trustees and the museum's director to discuss the natural history museum's corporate strategy and these wider issues.

European Community

Q134. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Prime Minister if Her Majesty's Government plan to put proposals to other European Community states concerning the structure of the relationship between the European Parliament and the Commission of the European Community and the relationship of these two with national legislatures within the European Community.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

We are participating fully in the Community debate on institutional reform. In particular we believe the Commission should be more accountable to the European Parliament, especially on financial issues, and that closer links should be established between national and European Parliaments, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs explained to the House on 11 June.

Boxley

Q182. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to make an official visit to Boxley.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has at present no plans to do so.

Engagements

4. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 June.

5. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 June.

13. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 June.

27. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 June.

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 June.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is attending the European Council meeting in Dublin.

HEALTH

Management Consultants

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the studies conducted inside his Department by management consultants in the last 10 years, naming the consultancy, the cost, the subject and the outcome in each instance.

Mr. Dorrell: A list giving details of consultancies and projects for the years 1986-87 to 1989-90 has been placed in the Library.

Details prior to 1986-87 are not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The amount paid to individual consultants is subject to commercial confidentiality. Information on the outcome of each consultancy is not collated centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Studies prior to April 1989 were undertaken on behalf of the then Department of Health and Social Security; therefore some projects listed do not relate solely to health matters.

Inequalities in Health

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he has taken to implement the recommendations of the Black report on inequalities in health; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Since the publication of the Black report in 1980, a copy of which is available in the Library, a number of preventive and health promotion measures have been introduced. These have contributed to an overall improvement in the health of the nation and life expectancy and a reduction in infant mortality to an all-time low. Programmes for breast and cervical screening and vaccination and immunisation have been important factors along with targeted health promotion schemes by the Health Education Authority, such as the "Look After Your Heart Campaign". The Government will continue to promote the equitable distribution of health services throughout the country and ensure these are available to all.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research has been sponsored by his Department into social inequalities in health since the publication of the Black report by *(a)* the Medical Research Council, *(b)* the Economic and Social Research Council and *(c)* any other research body.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) is the main public body funding research in this area. A major programme of work has been funded by the council at the centre for health economics, York, which covers studies on:

- intergenerational inequalities in health;
- gender and race inequalities;
- use of health status as an indicator of social position;
- and the role of health status in the process of social mobility.

Other projects funded by ESRC include:

- development of new techniques for measuring inequality in health;
- an econometric technique to examine the relationship between individuals' states of health and socio-economic factors such as housing conditions, income, occupation, education, employment status, and so on;
- restructuring health care provision in England: its spatial implication;
- and distributional consequences of changes in United Kingdom health policy.

Maternity Services

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to advise district health authorities in England and Wales to take full account of the reports of the maternity services advisory committee when drawing up contracts for the maternity services.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The maternity services advisory committee reports remain the basis of our policies for the delivery of maternity services. They should be used by health authorities to help them draw up contract specifications for these services. There is evidence that this is already happening.

School Health Statistics

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what school health statistics are routinely gathered relating to the results of tests of hearing, vision and measures of height and weight; and if he will publish a list of data published as school health statistics.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There is a standard health authority school medical examination form on which height and weight are recorded with the results of tests and assessments of vision, hearing, locomotion, manipulation, speech/language and behaviour. It is for local health authorities to decide what aggregate statistics to publish from this information. Information of this detail is not collected centrally.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Flannery: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which persons or bodies may initiate the process to apply for the self-government of a hospital; and what measures are taken to seek to obtain the opinion of the majority of those affected by a decision to make an application.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Initial expressions of interest in NHS trust status may be made by any individual or group with links with an NHS unit. When applications for NHS trust status are submitted, following parliamentary approval of the necessary legislation, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will direct regional health authorities to consult such other bodies as the authority considers appropriate in addition to community health councils. In all cases this should include health authorities, staff, patients, GPs and the local community as well as other groups with a particular interest in the application.

Royal National Institute for the Deaf

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) *Official Report*, 24 April, columns *160-64*, if he will provide details of the grant awarded to the Royal National Institute for the Deaf under section 64.

Mr. Dorrell: The grant was for the administrative expenses of the National Rubella Council (NRC) for which the director of finance of the Royal National Institute for the Deaf (RNID) acts as honorary treasurer.

Pesticides

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the health implications for humans of chronic exposure to pesticides.

Mr. Dorrell: Pesticides are approved for use by Ministers after receiving the advice of the Advisory Committee on Pesticides, which considers all relevant data including the possible effects of chronic exposures. If any significant adverse health effects are a possibility, approval is not recommended.

Menopausal Clinics

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospitals in England have menopausal clinics.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not held centrally.

Ambulance Dispute

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make extra funds available to regional health authorities to meet the costs of military assistance provided during the ambulance workers' dispute.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have no plans to make extra funds available. Regional health authorities are aware that contingencies of this nature must be met from within existing resources.

Chrysoidine

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if chrysoidine has been investigated by the carcinogenic substances committee.

Mr. Dorrell: The Committee on Carcinogenicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment has considered chrysoidine, a dye which has been used to colour maggots used by coarse fishermen, on a number of occasions in the past. At its meeting on 29 October 1985 when it was last reviewed the committee reaffirmed earlier advice that it would be prudent for anglers who wanted to use chrysoidine to avoid skin contact with the dye by, for example, using gloves when handling the dye or when baiting hooks with the dyed maggots. The Government conveyed this advice to the National Federation of Anglers and the angling press at the time.

Civil Servants (Workplaces)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessments under Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations have been undertaken at all workplaces used by civil servants in his Department.

Mr. Dorrell: An initial assessment of potentially hazardous substances was made to comply with the regulations. This assessment is subject to continual review.

Hospital Laundering

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list those health authorities that purchased their laundry services from other health authorities during 1987, 1988 and 1989.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his reply on competitive tendering on 1 March, *Official Report*, column *301*, if he will explain how the figures relating to the savings generated by competitive tendering are calculated.

Mr. Dorrell: The detailed basis of calculating the annual saving made in consequence of tender action was left to district health authorities to determine. Generally previous annual costs were compared with the new costs following tender action inclusive of any redundancy or other similar additional costs averaged over the contract period.

Liverpool RHA

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions his Department has had with Mr. G. R. Scaife, regional general manager of Liverpool regional health authority, on the subject of community health councils; and if he will list dates and any correspondence between his Department and Mr. Scaife on this subject.

Mr. Dorrell: As part of the process of planning for the NHS review, an official wrote to Mr. Scaife on 22 September 1989 about the future role of community health councils. Mr. Scaife discussed the subject very briefly with the Department on 5 October 1989 before responding constructively to this letter on 9 October. The Department's subsequent reply to Mr. Scaife was dated 22 November. We know of no other discussion between Mr. Scaife and the Department of Health on the subject of CHCs.

Helicopter Emergency Services

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will make a statement on the progress of the study being conducted by regional ambulance officers into helicopter-borne emergency medical services;

(2) if he intends to publish the results of the study into helicopter-borne emergency medical services.

Mr. Dorrell: The regional ambulance officers' working party on helicopter transport has reported. The report will be made available to the NHS.

Eye Tests

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many relatives of glaucoma sufferers in England received free eyesight tests in each quarter of 1988-89 and in each quarter of 1989-90.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Statistics prior to 1April 1989 were not broken down by patient group. Since then family practitioner committees have collected data on sight tests paid for under the general ophthalmic services on a six-monthly basis. A total of 65,050 national health service sight tests for relatives of glaucoma sufferers were paid for in England during the period 1 April to 30 September 1989. This figure is based on a 2 per cent. sample of NHS sight test application forms processed by family practitioner committees. It does not take into account sight tests paid for after 1 April but conducted before that period.

NHS Land Disposal

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the proceeds from the disposal of national health service land in the Trent region, and in each of the district health authorities in the Trent region for each of the past 11 years; and if he will list the reasons given for the disposal of that land.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested on disposal proceeds has been placed in the Library. The land and

property sold was surplus to requirements as a result of changes in service provision determined by local health authority management.

The land sales exclude sites of less than an acre or £50,000 in value.

Blood Supplies

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what information he has on hospitals which are currently short of blood supplies; and if he will list the name of the health authority in which they are located;

(2) what steps he is taking to improve the supplies of blood to hospitals;

(3) how much money is spent on advertising the need for blood donors to national health service hospitals.

Mr. Dorrell: Blood supplies can fluctuate but are at present satisfactory and there is no need for any hospital to cancel elective surgery due to shortage of blood.

To maintain blood supplies the national blood transfusion service (NBTS) has been allocated a central publicity budget of £627,000 for the current financial year. This central funding is supplemented by regional health authorities for local publicity campaigns.

The NBTS is constantly seeking better ways of matching supply and demand for blood. These include improved communications with blood donors to encourage more recruitment, retention and response to call-up; improved arrangements through the national directorate of the blood transfusion service to transfer blood when needed between regions; and improved communications between hospitals and transfusion centres so that demand may be foreseen and the level of supply planned in advance. However, the availability of blood ultimately depends on the good will and generosity of our blood donors. We are grateful to them.

Hospital Closures

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the savings to each health authority within the Trent region which have resulted from each hospital closure during the last five years.

Mr. Dorrell: The information is not held centrally.

Children Act 1989

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the circulars and other documents of guidance he has issued on the workings, implementation or interpretation of the Children Act 1989.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The following documents which are available in the Library have been issued:

Local Authority Circular LAC(89)/16: The Children Act 1989: Notice of Royal assent and the provisions to take immediate or early effect;

Local Authority Circular LAC(89)/17: Social Services Training Support Programme: Financial Year 1990-91 ;

Local Authority Circular LAC(90)/3: The Children Act 1989 (Admission of Hearsay Evidence) Order—Statutory Instrument 143/1990;

Children Act 1989: Training Together—A Training and curriculum Model;

An Introduction to the Children Act 1989;

The Care of Children: Principles and Practice in regulations and Guidance:

Children Act 1989 Consultation Paper No. 1—Secure Accommodation (Guidance and Regulations).

Consultation paper No. 2—Policy and Standards of Day care and Educational Services (Guidance)—will be issued later this week; further consultation papers are being prepared, and will be issued shortly.

In addition, the Department of Health produces "Implementation News", a monthly newsletter which provides a forum for the exchange of information about courses, conferences and seminars, training material, progress on implementation, news from the regions, and initiatives by local authorities and voluntary and other agencies. "Implementation News" is widely distributed to local authorities, voluntary and professional agencies and other relevant organisations.

Bone Marrow Transplants

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the total number of bone marrow transplants carried out in the latest year for which figures are available at the Royal Marsden, Hammersmith, Westminster, Royal Free and Great Ormond Street hospitals.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not held centrally.

Outcome Assessments

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether he has any proposals to standardise outcome assessment in national health service trust hospitals;

(2) whether he has any proposals to standardise outcome assessments in district health authority-managed hospitals.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Health authorities will be expected to assess outcomes in monitoring the contracts they make with providers of health services. The new purchasing role will give district health authorities strong incentives to move from specifying input to developing measures of health outcome. The Department is developing a methodology for outcome assessment, and guidance for health authorities to equip them to monitor outcome effectively.

Obstetricians

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many consultant obstetricians are employed by the national health service in each regional health authority in England; and what is the number on a whole-time equivalent basis in the current year and in each of the past five years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested is given in the table:

Hospital consultants in obstetrics and gynaecology showing numbers and whole time equivalents as at 30 September each year

Year	1988		1987		1986		1985		1984		1983	
	No.	Wte.	No.	Wte.	No.	Wte.	No.	Wte.	No.	Wte.	No.	Wte.
England	753	697·4	747	693·0	743	687·0	729	674·1	721	663·3	703	649·9
Northern	63	58·5	63	56·1	64	57·8	64	58·8	60	55·4	60	55·5
Yorkshire	59	55·5	57	53·8	63	54·5	60	52·3	56	48·3	53	48·2
Trent	70	60·3	67	58·6	66	57·5	65	57·1	65	56·6	64	55·2
East Anglia	31	29·9	31	30·1	31	29·5	32	30·9	32	30·9	31	29·9
North West Thames	60	50·6	58	51·5	58	50·5	59	49·2	63	51·3	61	49·3
North East Thames	79	67·1	79	63·2	78	67·8	76	65·8	79	66·3	81	67·5
South East Thames	55	50·2	60	53·8	57	50·9	58	51·6	59	51·6	56	49·3
South West Thames	42	38·7	42	37·4	43	37·9	44	37·0	42	37·0	44	38·6
Wessex	42	37·2	40	36·8	40	37·7	37	34·5	38	35·3	37	33·6
Oxford	38	34·9	36	33·8	35	32·8	35	31·9	33	30·8	30	28·4
South Western	45	39·7	45	39·8	46	38·0	45	39·2	41	35·7	40	34·4
West Midlands	74	71·9	76	73·9	71	68·6	68	65·9	67	64·9	62	60·6
Mersey	38	34·0	39	34·1	35	31·7	35	31·2	35	31·2	36	32·2
North Western	65	62·2	66	63·7	67	63·3	65	61·2	65	61·2	64	60·4
SHAs	16	6·9	15	6·3	18	8·5	17	7·3	17	6·8	15	7·0

Source: Medical and Dental Census.

(1) Includes permanent paid and honorary staff.

(2) From 1987 Senior hospital Medical Officers (with allowance) are excluded. These are included with Other Staff.

(3) Staff holding two or more appointments with the same of different regions are counted only once. Differences in the sum of numbers of staff for all regions is due to the duplication of staff holding appointments in more than one region. Such staff are included separately in each region. This duplication does not occur in the WTE component.

GPs (Operations)

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether any assessment has been undertaken on the benefits to out-patients' departments of requiring general practitioners to undertake all minor surgery operations, rather than a selection of such operations.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No, but it is a reasonable expectation that the more minor surgery that GPs can carry out in their own surgeries, the fewer visits patients will have to make to the out-patients' department (OPD) and the more time OPD doctors will have to respond to other patient care needs. There is a practical difficulty in assessing with any accuracy the effect of the new arrangements on out-patient departments. Once on the minor surgery list, a GP is not required to undertake every procedure in which he or she is competent every time a patient presents with the relevant condition. It has to be a matter of clinical judgment on the part of the GP as to what action to take in the light of the particular circumstances. Arrangements for monitoring the GPs' new contract will, in time, provide helpful information on the extent to which minor surgery has expanded in general practice.

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the operations in which general practitioners are now required to have competence to qualify for inclusion in the minor surgery list; and whether there have been any changes from the original list in the White Paper "Working for Patients".

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The procedures in which GPs must be competent before gaining admission to the minor surgery list are set out in the table. There have been no changes to the original list which appeared as schedule 1B of the NHS (GMPS) Regulations 1974 (as amended). However, we have recently agreed to amend the list of procedures by removing ligation of varicose veins.

Minor surgery procedures

Injections
- intra articular
- peri articular
- varicose veins
- haemorrhoid

Aspirations
- joints
- cysts
- bursae
- hydrocele

Incisions
- abcesses
- cysts
- thrombosed piles

Excisions
- sebaceous cysts
- lipoma
- skin lesions for histology
- intradermal naevi, papilloma, dermatofibroma and similar conditions
- warts
- ganglions
- removal of toe nails (partial and complete)

Currette cautery and cryocautery
- warts and verrucae
- other skin lesions (eg molluscum contagiosum)

Other
- ligation of varicose veins
- removal of foreign bodies
- nasal cautery

Family Planning

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will give the total number of family planning cases seen by general practitioners in 1982 and in the latest year for which figures are available in Greater London;

(2) if he will give the total number of family planning cases treated at family planning clinics in 1982 and in the latest year for which figures are available in each health district in Greater London.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In 1982, a total of 295,383 women received contraceptive services from general practitioners in Greater London compared with 374,560 in 1988.

In 1982, the number of people seen in family planning clinics in Greater London was 353,320 compared with 294,629 in 1988-89. The breakdown for each district health authority in Greater London is shown in the following table:

Number of family planning cases seen at family planning clinics

	1982	*1988-89*
Barnet	14,355	8,586
Harrow	9,599	7,699
Hillingdon	10,701	4,460
Hounslow and Spelthorne	14,903	12,584
Ealing	8,572	11,887
Riverside	20,694	15,224
Parkside	22,490	18,658
Barking/Havering/Brentwood	14,826	12,830
Hampstead	3,992	3,080
Bloomsbury	26,915	27,393
Islington	11,653	10,383
City and Hackney	10,453	6,712
Newham	6,379	3,936
Tower Hamlets	6,659	4,953
Enfield	10,253	3,987
Haringey	10,341	10,819
Redbridge	6,193	5,382
Waltham Forest	7,017	6,049
Dartford and Gravesham	5,529	960
Bexley	9,301	5,182
Greenwich	8,256	5,878
Bromley	10,529	9,316
West Lambeth	2,001	6,796
Camberwell	6,911	10,687
Lewisham and North Southwark	25,283	23,287
Croydon	16,783	12,132
Kingston and Esher	7,690	4,613
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	11,715	8,210
Wandsworth	16,659	16,529
Merton and Sutton	14,745	16,417
Hammersmith special health authority	1,923	0
GREATER LONDON TOTAL	353,320	294,629

Hospital Beds

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many beds were closed in each region for 1989-90, 1988-89 and for the latest six months.

Mr. Dorrell: Centrally held statistics record only beds available at the end of each financial year. Comparing year-end figures does not provide a measure of beds closed because the published figures are also affected by new beds opening or reopening during the year. The information requested is therefore not available centrally.

Cervical Smear Test

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the total number of cervical smear tests carried out in the latest year for which figures are available in each of the four Thames regions.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information on the number of smears examined by NHS laboratories in each of the Thames regions is given in the table. Smears taken from women in a particular region are sometimes analysed by laboratories in other regions.

Cervical Cytology—Number of Smears Examined

Regional Health Authority	*1987-88*	[1] *1988-89*
North West Thames	317,000	375,000
North East Thames	325,000	326,000
South East Thames	317,000	326,000
South West Thames	248,000	267,000

[1] Provisional

General Practitioners

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of general practices and general practitioners in each district health authority area within the Northern region; and what is the number of such general practices and general practitioners that have expressed an interest in becoming practice budget holders.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information on numbers of general practices in each district health authority is not available centrally. The latest figures for the numbers of practices and general practitioners in Northern region by family practitioner committee are given in the table. A total of 65 practices in Northern region expressed their interest in the fund holding scheme and the regional health authority announced on 27 March 1990 that 31 practices which met the eligibility criteria will be undertaking the necessary preparatory work for the fund holding scheme.

Breakdown of the number of practices and unrestricted principals by family practitioner committee in the Northern region as at 1 October 1987

Family practitioner committee	*Number of practices*	*Number of general practitioners*
Cleveland	83	273
Cumbria	100	269
Durham	83	289
Northumberland	50	165
Gateshead	34	109
Newcastle	50	156
North Tyneside	34	102
South Tyneside	31	79
Sunderland	53	142
	518	1,584

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer of 1 May, *Official Report*, column *535*, whether the discussions with Ordnance Survey concerning general practitioners' practice leaflets have yet been concluded.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Yes. A circular clarifying the position will be issued to all family practitioner committees shortly.

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the necessary computer software packages for the management of general practitioner practice budgets will be available; and what Government subsidies will be paid to computer companies for the development of appropriate software packages.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 25 June.

Coronary Heart Disease

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the standard mortality ratios for coronary heart disease for *(a)* women and *(b)* men aged 15 to 64 years in each district health authority area and each regional health authority in England.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information covering the years 1983-87, for men and women aged 15 to 64 years, has just been published in a report from the Health Education Authority, "Mapping the Epidemic—Coronary Heart Disease". Copies are available in the Library.

Family Practitioner Committees

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the existing membership of family practitioner committees will be kept in place with full responsibility until 31 March 1991.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is our intention that regulations ending family practitioner committees and commencing family health services authorities will be laid shortly after the National Health Service and Community Care Bill receives Royal Assent.

NHS Reform

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much public money is likely to be spent in each of the next five years in administering the indicative prescribing scheme under the proposed national health service reforms.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The indicative prescribing scheme should lead to more effective and efficient prescribing by GPs, the cost of which is currently £1·8 billion per annum. The scheme will require a "one-off" capital investment of around £7 million and have a recurring cost of around £7·5 million per annum at current prices.

Capital Assets

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list all district health authorities which have now completed their register of capital assets; and if he will give the number of entries made on each register.

Mr. Dorrell: Most district health authorities had completed their asset registers by the end of May 1990. The few authorities which had not achieved completion of registers by that date are expected to have done so by the end of June. The number of entries made on each register cannot be given as this information is not held centrally.

Erythropoietin

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if it is his intention to make Erythropoietin, when it receives a full licence, freely available to doctors to prescribe for any patient for whom it is appropriate.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Erythropoietin has received a licence, as announced in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller) on 11 June at column *39*.

Responsibility for funding hospital prescribing of this product is for the health authorities concerned. General practitioners are also free to prescribe erythropoietin provided they are content to accept clinical responsibility for that aspect of the patient's care.

Encephalopathies

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has yet established if the infective agent responsible for human encephalopathies can be transferred subcutaneously; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: A small number of cases of the human spongiform encephalopathy, Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, can be attributed to inadvertent transmission by transplantation of nervous tissue and corneas and the use of dura mater and human growth hormone. Similar information is not available for kuru, another human spongiform encephalopathy that at one time was common in certain tribes in New Guinea.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research is being undertaken to establish any possible connections between Alzheimer's disease and human spongiform encephalopathies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department of Health has not commissioned any such research. The Medical Research Council (MRC) is the main Government agency for the promotion of medical and biomedical research in the United Kingdom. The MRC receives its grant in aid from the Department of Education and Science.

Drug Expenditure

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health wht is the expenditure figure allowed for drug expenditure in the family practitioner service in real terms in 1991-92 as stated in paragraph 3.1 of the document, "Improving Prescribing—Working for Patients".

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The public expenditure White Paper shows that gross expenditure on the family practitioner services as a whole in 1991-92 will be £6,520 million, an increase of 3·9 per cent. in real terms over the previous year.

The numbers given for 1991-92 onwards are planning figures only and are subject to revision. To quote disaggregated figures, for example, for drugs alone, would therefore be misleading. Firm expenditure plans for 1991-92 are being discussed in this year's public expenditure survey, and the outcome will be published in due course.

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the financial implications in terms of dispensing fees of the Boots monitored dosage system.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Monitored dosage systems have no financial implications in terms of dispensing fees.

Medicines Resource Centre

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the anticipated annual cost of the medicines resource centre.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The medicines resource centre cost £250,000 in 1989-90. We expect costs of the same order annually for the following three years up to 1992-93.

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people will be employed by the medicines resource centre.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The medicines resource centre employs four staff—three pharmacists (including the director) and one secretary.

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the first medicines resource centre bulletin will be issued; and how often they will appear.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The first medicines resource centre bulletin was issued during the week commencing 11 June. All GPs should by now have received a copy. The medicines resources centre bulletins will be issued monthly.

Leeds University (Prescribing Unit)

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the anticipated annual cost of the prescribing unit at the department of general practice at Leeds university.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The detailed scope of the work to be undertaken by the prescribing unit and the costs are still under discussion.

Regional Health Authority Budgets

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what savings each regional health authority is having to make in the current year in order to have the required balanced budget for financial year 1991-92.

Mr. Dorrell: It is essential for health authorities to establish a sound financial position in 1991-92. Elimination of underlying deficits has been made a priority in the current financial year. Measures to be taken by individual health authorities are for agreement between the region and district concerned.

Cervical Cancer Tests

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list for every month in each of the last two years the district health authorities not meeting the one-month target for cervical cancer test turnround time; and if he will state the time taken in each of those authorities.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 12 June 1990]:* Health authorities must aim to return the results of cervical smear tests to the doctor who undertook them within one month. Since December 1989 around 80 per cent. of districts have been meeting the target. A table of district health authorities not meeting this target over the past two years has been placed in the Library. The average processing times are shown in weeks. Since June 1988 this information has been collected on a quarterly rather than a monthly basis.

Blood Supplies

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if operating costs of the blood transfusion service are currently covered by a standard national charge for each unit.

Mr. Dorrell: At present in 12 of the 14 English regions no charges are made by the national blood transfusion service (NBTS) to national health service hospitals for operating costs. The remaining two regions have introduced arrangements by which the operating costs are recovered in proportion to the district's demands on the regional transfusion centre (RTC) for blood supplies. The reimbursement to the RTCs will not include any element for the blood itself. This is freely donated by voluntary donors to whom we are all indebted.

There are, however, standard national blood handling charges designed to recover the costs incurred in supplying non-NHS hospitals with blood and blood derivatives. Again, these charges do not include any element for the blood itself which is donated free of charge to the NBTS for use where needed.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Discipline

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps have been taken to bring to the attention of prisoners the alteration in prison rule 47 made in 1989; and when the booklet made available to prisoners concerning matters relating to discipline was last revised.

Mr. Mellor: Circular instruction 25/1989, issued in June 1989, advised governors that information should be made available to prisoners about the change made to the disciplinary rules on 1 April 1989 and asked them to consider what steps they needed to take for this purpose. An extract from the new rules was also sent to prison establishments in March 1989 for inclusion in the manual on the conduct of adjudications, a copy of which is

available to prisoners in every prison library and which they may purchase if they wish. A revised prisoner information booklet containing details of the new code of offences will be circulated shortly; the booklet was previously revised in 1986.

Departmental Research (Expenditure)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total identifiable expenditure on research by his Department in each year since 1979; what proportion was awarded on a customer-contractor basis; and what proportion of his total departmental budget was expended on research for each year.

Mr. Waddington: Details of the proportion of research awarded on a customer-contractor basis are not held centrally and could not be obtained without disproportionate cost. The information shown in the table relates to research and development. Variations in the percentages shown in column 3 are attributable in part to changes in the scope and classification of departmental expenditure.

(1) *Year*	*(2)* *Amount spent on research and development* *£ million*	*(3)* *(2) as percentage of total Home Office cash limited expenditure or equivalent*
1979-80	6·1	1·43
1980-81	8·7	1·48
1981-82	11·2	1·75
1982-83	12·2	1·77
1983-84	12·7	1·59
1984-85	13·2	1·56
1985-86	13·7	1·50
1986-87	13·3	1·28
1987-88	14·2	1·24
1988-89[1]	13·3	0·98

[1] Provisional.

Police (Training and Promotion)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will review methods of training and promotion in the police forces in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Over the past three years there has been a comprehensive review of police training in England and Wales, which has led to the introduction of new training courses for recruits, experienced constables, sergeants and inspectors. The programme of command and carousel courses at the police staff college has also been revised and updated.

The system of qualifying examinations for promotion to the ranks of sergeant and inspector has recently been reviewed by the police promotion examinations board. The main recommendation of that review is that the existing system of examinations should be replaced by a two-part examination, consisting of a factual written paper and a series of performance-related tests.

Promotion to the ranks of chief inspector, superintendent and chief superintendent is a matter for the chief officer of the force concerned. For the most senior appointments the Government share the Home Affairs Committee's view that it would be desirable for all officers appointed to chief officer rank to have attended the senior command course or to have had acceptable equivalent training such as the chief police officer course which is to be held at the police staff college in 1991 and 1992. We intend to introduce this as a general policy when sufficient numbers have pased through the senior command course and chief police officer course to provide a good field of qualified candidates.

Prisoners (Drugs)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the latest information available to him about the prevalence of the illegal taking of drugs by injection in Her Majesty's prisons.

Mr. Mellor: Reports of finds of needles and syringes and of substances such as heroin and cocaine suggest that the incidence of drug misuse by injection in establishments is relatively low. Over 90 per cent. of finds of substances involve cannabis and only 3 per cent. heroin and cocaine. The results of research studies which have been conducted, including those recently reported in the *British Medical Journal*, need to be treated with some caution because of the small size of the samples. But we are studying the findings. As my hon. Friend is aware, we are considering whether some form of screening, whether for clinical or control purposes, should be introduced, and we are looking at other means to assist in assessing the scale of misuse.

Immigration and Nationality Department

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to introduce *(a)* computerised file tracking in the immigration and nationality department and *(b)* computerisation of the immigration appellate authorities.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The immigration and nationality department plans to start implementation of the file tracking system in December 1990. Responsibility for the immigration appellate authorities rests with my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many passports and letters were awaiting acknowledgement in the B1 division of the immigration and nationality department on *(a)* 28 March, *(b)* 27 April and *(c)* 31 May.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The number of passports and letters in IND awaiting acknowledgement was 3,471 on 30 March; 5,134 on 27 April; and 4,437 on 1 June. On 1 June the waiting period before acknowledgement was two working days for passports and four for letters.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the standard cost of processing applications in respect of citizenship applications.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Fees for citizenship applications are set at a level intended to cover processing costs. The present fees, set in 1986, are:

	£
Registration	60
Naturalisation on grounds of residence	170
Naturalisation as the spouse of a British citizen	60

These fees are under review to take account of prevailing cost levels.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to review staffing levels at the immigration and nationality department in Lunar house; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Staffing levels at the IND in Lunar house are reviewed regularly in the light of up-to-date workload, staffing and financial information. In the process of review the Government will also be taking account of the recommendations about staffing levels at IND made by the Home Affairs Committee in its fifth report on "Administrative Delays in the Immigration and Nationality Department", published on Wednesday 20 June. The Government's formal response to these, and the other recommendations in the committee's report, will be made in due course.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average time between receipt of application for naturalisation in the immigration and nationality department and determination of such applications as at 31 May or the nearest available date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) on 20 June at column *574*.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many letters currently await acknowledgement by the immigration and nationality department; what is the comparable figure for each quarter since 1 January 1988; what is the average time taken by the immigration and nationality department to acknowledge correspondence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On 15 June the number of items of mail awaiting acknowledgement in IND was 4,850. The comparable figures for each quarter since 1988 were:

Items of mail awaiting acknowledgement

	1988	*1989*	*1990*
January	181,892	1,228	5,622
April	122,546	4,523	3,774
July	1,086	2,165	—
October	3,126	5,844	—

On average letters are being acknowledged within three days and citizenship applications within seven days of receipt in the Department.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in how many cases in the past year the immigration and nationality department has admitted to the loss of a case file; in how many cases applicants in all categories have been asked to re-submit documents when the originals were lost or mislaid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list *(a)* the categories of application received by the immigration and nationality department and *(b)* the number of applications, in each category, which are currently (i) unopened, (ii) allocated to a caseworker, (iii) subject to inquiry, (iv) decision recommended and (v) awaiting dispatch; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The principal categories of applications received by IND are:

Variation of leave
Refugee status
Political asylum
Referred entry clearance
Travel documents
Re-entry visas
Citizenship applications

The information requested at (b) is not fully or readily available. I shall reply as soon as possible providing such information as is available.

Correspondence

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is now able to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East enclosing one from Mrs. C. D. Scott sent to him on 11 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A number of right hon. and hon. Members have written to my Department on behalf of Mrs. Scott and all have received a reply. However, we have no record of a letter being received, on behalf of Mrs. Scott, from the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist).

I have today received a facsimile copy of the hon. Member's letter, and enclosure, and will reply promptly.

Prisoners

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) for the latest date available what percentage of sentenced female prisoners had been convicted of an offence which involved violence, robbery, sex or drug trafficking;

(2) how many and what percentage of male and female prisoners in England and Wales are accused of, or have been convicted of, drug-related offences.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The latest readily available information relates to the sentenced population and is published in table 8 of "The Prison Population in 1989", Home Office statistical bulletin 12/90, copies of which are in the Library. Offences of drug trafficking are not separately identified.

Female Prisoners

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) for the latest date available how many female prisoners in England and Wales were serving a prison sentence that was *(a)* less than six months and *(b)* between six but less than 12 months;

(2) for the latest date available how many female prisoners in England and Wales were serving their sentences because of a fine default.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The latest readily available information is given in the table.

Population[1] of females under sentence in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales on 30 June 1989: by sentence length and type of sentence

Length of sentence	Type of sentence: Immediate custodial	Type of sentence: In default of payment of fine	All types
Under 6 months	82	24	106
6 months and under 12 months	143	—	143
12 months and over	1,030	—	1,030
All lengths	1,255	24	1,279

[1] Provisional figures.

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for the latest date available; how many probation psychiatric voluntary hostel places were available in England and Wales for female offenders.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* There are 91 beds funded by the Home Office for use by the probation service in voluntary after-care hotels dealing with ex-offenders with histories of mental illness or personality disorder. Only two of these beds are designated specifically for female offenders, but the remainder would be available to them.

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for the latest date available what was *(a)* the weekly cost for a female probation hostel place and *(b)* the average weekly cost of a female prison place.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* There are no hostels taking only women on probation, although there are two probation-bail hostels designated for women offenders and defendants. Other probation-bail hostels accept men and women, but the costs relating to women cannot be disaggregated.

From information available for 1988-89 for those hostels which took women only the average weekly cost per occupied place was £152. This compares with an average weekly cost in 1988-89 of £155 per occupied place in all probation-bail and bail hostels. The average weekly cost of a place at a women's prison establishment in 1988-89 was £399.

EMPLOYMENT

Pre-entry Closed Shop

15. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he expects the provisions contained in the Employment Bill to outlaw the pre-entry closed shop to take full statutory effect.

Mr. Howard: The Employment Bill, which is currently being considered in another place, includes provisions which will make it unlawful for an employer to refuse to employ a person because he is, or is not, a member of a trade union. We expect the Bill to become law before the end of this Session and intend that individuals seeking employment should have the benefit of this important protection as soon as is practicable after Royal Assent.

Work Permits

17. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals he intends to bring forward as a result of his Department's review of the work permit scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: I am discussing with colleagues the implications of my Department's review of the work permit scheme before making proposals.

Industrial Training

18. **Mr. Irvine:** To ask the Secretary for State of Employment what plans he has to improve the quality of industrial training.

Mr. Howard: Employer-led training and enterprise councils (TECs) are being set up all round the country with the primary responsibility of improving training performance within their local labour market. In addition, industry training organisations have a major role in establishing recognised standards and promoting them within their sector.

Labour Statistics

19. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total unemployment figures and the rate of unemployment in May 1990, and May 1980.

Mr. Howard: In May 1990, the seasonally adjusted level of unemployment in the United Kingdom was 1,611,000 or 5·7 per cent. of the work force, compared with a level of 1,224,400 in May 1980 or 4·6 per cent. of the work force.

68. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of unemployed in 1979; and what it is now.

Mr. Nicholls: In May 1990 the level of unemployed, seasonally adjusted, in the United Kingdom, was 1,611,000 or 5·7 per cent. compared with 1,088,500 or 4·1 per cent., in May 1979 on the consistent basis.

64. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the unemployment rate in the northern region in each of the last three years.

Mr. Nicholls: In May 1990, the rate of unemployment, seasonally adjusted, in the north region was 8·5 per cent., compared with 10·4 per cent. in May 1989 and 12·4 per cent. in May 1988.

65. **Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in Lambeth below the age of 18 years are unemployed and not in training or in full-time education.

Mr. Nicholls: In May 1990 the number of unemployed claimants aged under 18 in the Lambeth local authority district was three.

60. **Mr. Beaumont-Dark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the figure for unemployment in the west midlands in *(a)* 1980 and *(b)* 1990.

Mr. Nicholls: In May 1990 the level of unemployment, seasonally adjusted, in the west midlands, was 149,300 or 5·8 per cent., compared with 119,000 or 4·7 per cent. in May 1980 on the consistent basis.

50. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are employed in the Rugby-Daventry travel-to-work area; and what was the figure three years ago.

Mr. Nicholls: The latest available employment estimates for travel-to-work areas are from the September 1987 census of employment. There were then 46,200 employees in employment in the Rugby and Daventry travel-to-work area. This compares with a figure of 46,100 in September 1984 when the previous census of employment was taken. The figures exclude the self-employed and members of Her Majesty's forces.

51. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment by how much unemployment has fallen in Cumbria since June 1987.

Mr. Nicholls: Since June 1987, the number of unemployed claimants in the county of Cumbria has fallen by 9,292 or 48 per cent. on the unadjusted basis. Direct comparisons are slightly affected by the change in benefit regulations for under 18-year-olds in September 1988.

52. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many men and how many women *(a)* full and *(b)* part-time there were in employment in each standard planning region in the United Kingdom in June 1979 and the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is as follows:

Civilian work force in employment in each standard region of the United Kingdom

Thousands[1]

	June 1979				*December 1989*[2]			
	Males[3] *total*	*Females total*	*Full-time*	*Part-time*	*Males*[3] *total*	*Females total*	*Full-time*	*Part-time*
South East	4,839	3,285	2,006	1,279	5,019	4,152	2,659	1,492
East Anglia	481	300	178	122	537	405	243	162
South West	1,032	712	417	295	1,151	926	538	388
West Midlands	1,452	920	550	370	1,357	1,055	616	439
East Midlands	1,013	658	393	265	1,024	826	474	352
Yorkshire and Humberside	1,302	842	480	362	1,189	966	530	436
North West	1,700	1,190	719	471	1,571	1,295	754	541
North	802	522	314	208	714	573	313	260
Wales	716	441	276	165	686	528	311	217
Scotland	1,333	929	597	332	1,254	1,027	618	410
Great Britain	14,677	9,803	5,789	4,015	14,504	11,752	6,705	5,047
Northern Ireland[4]	359	239	n/a	n/a	329	262	n/a	n/a
United Kingdom	15,036	10,042	n/a	n/a	14,833	12,014	n/a	n/a

[1] Unadjusted for seasonal variation.
[2] Latest available.
[3] Regional full-time and part-time breakdown for males is not available.
[4] Figures for full and part-time employment are not available for Northern Ireland.

47. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what recent initiatives he has implemented to reduce unemployment.

Mr. Tim Eggar: My Department's aim is to support economic growth through promoting a competitive, efficient and flexible labour market. As a result many of the initiatives that we implement will help to reduce unemployment either directly—through giving more effective help to unemployed people to help them find work, or improve their chances of doing so—or indirectly, by improving the working of the labour market in other ways and removing barriers to employment.

45. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate of the proportion of new jobs created during the last five years which are of part-time and low-paid character.

Mr. Nicholls: Between December 1984 and December 1989, part-time employment in Great Britain rose by 965,000. This represented 37 per cent. of the increase in the work force in employment.

There is no official definition of low pay.

32. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide the latest unemployment figures for Sheffield expressed as a percentage; and what is the national average.

Mr. Nicholls: In May 1990, the unemployment rate for the Sheffield travel-to-work area was 8·1 per cent. on the unadjusted basis. The comparable figure for the United Kingdom was 5·5 per cent.

Tourism

16. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received on the provision of accommodation within the tourist industry after the introduction of the poll tax.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. and learned Friend has received a number of representations from a wide cross-section of the tourism industry on the possible effects of the introduction of the community charge and the uniform business rate.

20. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many tourists from the United States of America have visited the United Kingdom for each year since 1985.

Mr. Nicholls: The estimated number of visits to the United Kingdom by residents of the United States of America for the years 1985-89 are as follows:

	Number of visits
1985	3,166,000
1986	2,288,000
1987	2,800,000
1988	2,620,000
1989	2,814,000

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to reinstate section 4 grants in England.

Mr. Nicholls: There are no such plans.

71. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last met the chairman of the Heart of England tourist board; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. and learned Friend has not met the chairman of Heart of England tourist board, but my noble Friend Lord Strathclyde, the Minister with responsibility for tourism, has met members and officers of the Heart of England board during visits to the region, and hopes shortly to have an opportunity of a discussion with its chairman.

61. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many holidays in the United Kingdom were taken by United Kingdom citizens in 1989.

Mr. Nicholls: The latest estimates show that United Kingdom residents took 64·5 million holidays in the United Kingdom in 1989.

62. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to promote tourism in Essex.

Mr. Nicholls: In the year beginning 1 April 1990 the East Anglia tourist board will receive a subvention of £410,000 from the English tourist board, 66 per cent. more than in the previous year. The East Anglia tourist board is working on a number of initiatives, in partnership with local authorities and the private sector, which will benefit tourism in Essex.

56. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the Government's review of tourism.

Mr. Nicholls: I refer the hon. Member to the reply of 28 November 1989 by the then Secretary of State to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Mr. Bevan), *Official Report*, column *212*.

37. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has recently met the chair of the British Tourist Authority and English tourist board to discuss tourism; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and my noble Friend the Minister with responsibility for tourism regularly meet the chairman to discuss matters relating to tourism. The two boards are implementing the outcome of the review of tourism policy and their total grant in aid has increased by 10 per cent. compared to the amount in the last financial year.

31. **Mr. Wilshire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many overseas visits to the United Kingdom were made in the first quarter of 1990.

Mr. Nicholls: Overseas residents made an estimated 3,510,000 visits to the United Kingdom during the first three months of 1990, 4 per cent. higher than in the equivalent period of 1989.

27. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were self-employed in tourism-related industries in *(a)* 1983 and *(b)* 1989.

Mr. Nicholls: The available information is published in the footnote to table 8.1 of the June 1990 issue of *Employment Gazette*.

24. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of overseas visitors to the United Kingdom, and the income generated from such tourist activity, during the first three months of 1990; and what were the comparable figures for 1989.

Mr Nicholls: It is estimated that overseas residents made 3,510,000 visits to the United Kingdom during the first three months of 1990, 4 per cent. higher than in the equivalent period of 1989. Spending in the United Kingdom by overseas visitors in the same period is estimated to be £1,305 million, 10 per cent. higher than in 1988.

Industrial Action

21. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list those years since 1960 with a greater number of stoppages due to industrial action than 1989.

Mr Howard: The year 1989 had the lowest number of stoppages for over half a century.

41. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any proposals to alter the legislation concerning secondary industrial action.

Mr. Nicholls: The March 1989 Green Paper "Removing Barriers to Employment" (Cm. 655) proposed changes to the present law to make it unlawful to induce industrial action by workers of an employer not party to a trade dispute except in the case of lawful picketing. The current Employment Bill, which had its Second Reading in another place on 15 June, contains provisions which will bring those changes into effect.

33. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of stoppages due to industrial action in *(a)* 1977, *(b)* 1978, *(c)* 1979, *(d)* 1987, *(e)* 1988 and *(f)* 1989.

Mr. Nicholls: The recorded number of stoppages due to industrial action is given in the table:

Year	*Number of stoppages*
1977	2,737
1978	2,498
1979	2,125
1987	1,016
1988	781
1989	701

Jobcentre, Hackney

22. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to visit the jobcentre on Mare street, Hackney.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. and learned Friend has no such plans at present.

Employee Share Ownership

23. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to help promote among his European Community counterparts the introduction on a European Community-wide level of employee share ownership trusts.

Mr. Howard: Our publication "People and Companies" has been widely distributed round the European Community to draw the attention of our counterparts to the merits of our approach to employee involvement, including employee share ownership trusts.

Part-time Work

25. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement concerning the proposals for a European Community directive concerning part-time work.

Mr. Howard: The proposed directives on part-time and temporary work are misguided and unnecessary. They would damage job prospects in Britain and right across Europe. They are in conflict with the well-established principle of European Community legislation that issues which are best dealt with at national level should be left to member states to decide. We shall oppose the directives vigorously.

Training and Enterprise Councils

26. **Mr. Lee:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many training and enterprise councils have now signed their operational contracts.

Mr. Howard: Fifteen training and enterprise councils have now signed operating contracts.

34. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what role the Government envisage within the training and enterprise councils for those agencies in the voluntary sector which have participated in Government-initiated training schemes.

Mr. Eggar: Training and enterprise councils (TECs) are free to contract with the training providers they feel are best placed to deliver their plans, based on the needs they have identified. Training providers from the voluntary sector are likely to continue to have an important role in the delivery of programmes such as youth training (YT) and employment training (ET), particularly in relation to trainees with special needs.

Newspaper Industry (Disputes)

28. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received regarding current disputes in the newspaper industry.

Mr. Nicholls: Representations have been received from the National Union of Journalists about various disputes in the newspaper industry concerning trade union recognition.

Health and Safety

29. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the Health and Safety Commission's annual report 1988-89.

Mr. Nicholls: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Members for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) and for Barnsley, West and Penistone, (Mr. McKay), *Official Report*, 13 March 1990, cols. *147-48* and *149-50*.

30. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what discussions he has had with the Health and Safety Executive on resources.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. and learned Friend has had no such discussions. Officials keep in regular contact with the staff of the Health and Safety Executive over a variety of matters including resources.

Disabled People

35. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will take steps to improve the employment prospects of disabled people.

73. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what new measures he intends to introduce to enable people with disabilities to participate fully in the work force.

Mr. Eggar: My Department already maintains a comprehensive framework of services to help people with disabilities find and retain jobs. The adequacy of current measures to help people with disabilities to participate fully in the work force has been considered in the review of services for people with disabilities which my Department has just undertaken. We will be publishing the consultative document giving the results of the review within the next few days.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to alter the 3 per cent. quota provision for the employment of people with disabilities.

Mr. Eggar: All aspects of the quota scheme have been considered in the review of services to people with disabilities which my Department has just undertaken. We will be publishing the consultative document giving the results of the review within the next few days.

49. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on his proposals for the future of the quota system in respect of the employment of people with disabilities.

Mr. Eggar: All aspects of the quota scheme have been considered in the review of services to people with disabilities which my Department has just undertaken. We will be publishing the consultative document giving the results of the review within the next few days.

Civil Servants (Buy-outs)

36. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what buy-outs by civil servants in his Department are currently being considered; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I have taken no decision to privatise any further areas of my Department's activities. Therefore, I am not considering any buy-outs by civil servants.

Long-term Unemployed (Training)

38. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what further measures he intends to introduce to enable the long-term unemployed to receive training.

Mr. Eggar: Employment training already provides a full range of opportunities for all long-term unemployed people to acquire the skills and experience they need to

compete for jobs. The flexibilities available to training and enterprise councils in delivering employment training will ensure that training provision will be even more responsive to local needs.

Employment Training

39. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the future of employment training.

Mr. Eggar: The flexibilities which training and enterprise councils in England and Wales and local enterprise companies in Scotland will have in delivering employment training will make it even more responsive to the training needs of both individuals and employers in local labour markets and further reinforce its success in helping long-term unemployed people to get jobs.

Training (Young People)

40. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how he intends further to encourage training for young people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The new youth training arrangements which build on the success of YTS will deliver relevant vocational training for young people to enable them to achieve recognised qualifications. The training credits pilot schemes announced on 27 March 1990 will have the potential of strengthening the motivation of young people to seek continued education and training after leaving school. The compact initiative is helping to encourage training for young people in urban programme authority areas by guaranteeing a job with training or training leading to a job to all young people who meet their locally agreed goals.

Construction Industry (Safety)

42. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to improve safety in the construction industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: Prime responsibility for health and safety rests with employers and employees in the workplace. As part of a continuing process to promote long-lasting change in the industry, the Health and Safety Commission has proposed regulations to:

(a) strengthen management of health and safety on construction sites;

(b) require all employers with more than five employees to obtain relevant safety advice.

The Health and Safety Executive is also targeting inspection activity where it will be most effective. Inspectors will focus on more hazardous activities like roofwork and demolition and on the quality of site management and its ability to manage health and safety.

44. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employees have been killed and injured on construction sites in the past five years.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is set out in the following table:

Injuries to employees in the construction industry reported to all HSC/E enforcing authorities 1984 to 1988-89[1] [3]

Date of accident	*Fatal*	*Major*[4]	*Over three day*
1984	100	2,288	[2]—
1985	104	2,239	[2]—
[5]1986-87	99	2,736	16,468
[5]1987-88	103	2,767	16,622
[2 5]1988-89	100	2,865	16,240

[1] Provisional.

[2] Not available.

[3] Reported to HSE's Factory and Agricultural Inspectorates and all other relevant enforcing authorities, under the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations, 1980 (NADOR) and the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations, 1985 for later years.

[4] As defined in NADOR for the years 1984 to 1985. The introduction of RIDDOR widened the definition of the major injury category thereby making direct comparison of figures with those for earlier years impossible.

[5] Years beginning 1 April.

Czechoslovakia

43. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the outcome of his last visit to Czechoslovakia.

Mr. Howard: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs) on Tuesday 5 June, *Official Report*, columns *457-58*.

Women Returners

46. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to encourage women back into the workplace after having children.

Mr. Nicholls: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) on 13 March, *Official Report*, column *214*.

YTS (Scotland)

48. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many YTS trainees there were in Scotland at the latest date.

Mr. Nicholls: At 31 March 1990, there were about 45,100 young people undertaking YTS training in Scotland.

Inner-city Areas

53. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the estimated expenditure of his Department in inner-city areas in 1990-91.

Mr. Eggar: My Department will spend about £1·1 billion during 1990-91 in the 57 areas on which the Government's action for cities measures are targeted.

Scottish Conservative Party Head Office

54. **Mr. Harry Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will set up an official inquiry into employment practices and industrial relations at the Scottish Conservative party head office, Chester street, Edinburgh.

Mr. Howard: No.

Labour and Social Affairs Council

55. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment under which articles of the treaty of Rome the decisions were made at the Labour and Social Affairs Council meeting in Brussels on 29 May.

Mr. Eggar: Based on the articles of the treaty of Rome, the following decisions were made in Brussels on 29 May.

Article 118A, adoption of the Council directive on the minimum health and safety requirements for handling heavy loads.

Article 118A, adoption of the Council directive on the minimum health and safety requirements for work with display screen equipment.

Article 118A, agreement of a common position on the Council directive on the protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to biological agents.

Article 128, adoption of the council directive for a proposal for action programme on continuing training (FORCE).

Article 235, adoption of the Council decision for a third joint programme to encourage the exchange of young workers within the Community.

Other decisions taken, for which no treaty basis is required, were: adoption of resolutions on the dignity of women and men at work, long-term unemployment and the fight against racism and xenophobia.

Agriculture

57. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what the trend of full-time employment in the agriculture industry has been over the past five years; and what assessment he has been able to make of future trends.

Mr. Nicholls: The number of full-time employees in employment in the agriculture industry over the past five years is shown in the table. The Department does not make forecasts of future trends in employment.

Full-time employees in employment in the agriculture industry Great Britain: Thousands

	Number
December 1984	253·7
December 1985	247·1
December 1986	237·6
December 1987	231·5
December 1988	220·6
December 1989	208·1

Women in Work

58. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the member states of the European Community with a greater number of women in work than the United Kingdom.

Mr. Nicholls: In 1987, the latest date for which comparable data are available, the United Kingdom has more women in civilian employment than any other member state.

Female civilian work force in employment in the European Community: 1987

Thousands

	Females	*Civilian workforce in employment*	*Percentage of civilian workforce in employment*
United Kingdom	10,729	24,755	43
Germany	10,042	25,440	39
France	8,822	20,976	42
Italy	7,065	20,584	34
Netherlands	1,829	5,251	35
Belgium	1,419	3,621	39
Luxembourg	58	169	34
Ireland	346	1,067	32
Denmark	1,201	2,663	45
Greece	1,236	3,597	34
Spain	3,477	11,383	31
Portugal	1,724	4,169	41

74. **Mrs. Roe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of the projected growth in the labour force between 1989 and 2001 is female.

Mr. Nicholls: The information required is contained in the article "Labour force outlook to 2001" published in *Employment Gazette*, April 1990, a copy of which is available in the Library.

EC Commissioner for Social Affairs

59. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last met the European Commissioner for Social Affairs to discuss employment legislation.

Mr. Howard: I last met the European Commissioner at a formal Council of EC Labour and Social Affairs Ministers in Brussels on 29 May.

Hungary (Ministerial Visit)

63. **Mr. Janman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the outcome of his visit to Hungary.

Mr. Howard: I visited Hungary from 3 to 5 June. During my stay I met the newly appointed Minister of Labour, Mr. Sandor Györivanyi, and other members of the Government. I also had discussions with Hungarian business men and entrepreneurs, and visited a factory.

Discussions focused on the importance of ensuring that the climate is right for small firms to flourish, and the more immediate practical help and advice my Department can give.

On 5 June Mr. Györivanyi and I signed a joint statement on co-operation between our two countries in the labour market area. We agreed a programme of immediate assistance which will include advice and practical help in the development of training and retraining, including open learning, employment services, and small firms and enterprise.

In addition, I invited the Hungarian Government to send officials to Britain for an extended visit to study the relevance of our conciliation and arbitration systems.

I am pleased that the Hungarian Government have asked my Department for assistance and that we have been able to agree a programme of co-operation. I look forward to the development of a rewarding and beneficial relationship between our respective Ministries.

Trade Unions (Injunctions)

66. **Mr. Leigh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any proposals to alter the liability of trade unions to ex parte injunctions.

Mr. Nicholls: No. The law gives an employer threatened with an unlawful call to take industrial action the right to seek an injunction against the relevant union in order to protect his business. The procedure for obtaining an injunction against a trade union is no different from the procedure for obtaining an injunction to stop unlawful behaviour by any other organisation, and my right hon. and learned Friend has no intention of changing that.

Minimum Wage

67. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has received any representations calling for the introduction of a national statutory minimum wage.

Mr. Nicholls: Since 1 December 1989 my right hon. and learned Friend has received 21 representations on this subject.

Employment Medical Advisory Service

69. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the staffing of the employment medical advisory service within the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Nicholls: On 1 April 1990, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 134 staff in post in the Health and Safety Executive's employment medical advisory service (EMAS). In addition, there were 21 staff in post performing headquarters functions for EMAS in HSE's medical services headquarters.

Job Creation

70. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will monitor the effectiveness of job creation programmes by category of sector in which the jobs are created, examining specifically those related to infrastructure.

Mr. Eggar: The Government do not run job-creation programmes as such. Our approach has been to develop an economic and labour market framework which encourages competition, flexibility and enterprise and thus frees business to create new jobs. The success of this policy is demonstrated by the fact that, at over 27 million, employment is now at its highest level ever, and has grown by more than 3·5 million since March 1983. Within this approach, my Department operates a range of programmes designed to help unemployed people back into work, through training, counselling and help with job search.

Home Workers

72. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the number of home workers employed within the Greater London area.

Mr. Eggar: A survey conducted in 1981 found about 37,500 homeworkers in the Greater London council area. No later estimates are currently available.

Bed-and-Breakfast Accommodation

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what recent representations he has received on the 100-day rule and the provision of bed-and-breakfast accommodation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: A number of representations has been received from across the industry reflecting a wide range of views. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is fully aware of the tourism industry's concerns on this issue.

TVEI, Kirklees

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what amount of money was made available, or planned, for the technical and vocational education initiative in 1989-90 and 1990-91 for Kirklees metropolitan council area.

Mr. Eggar: Kirklees was given £284,630 in 1989-90 for its TVEI preparatory project. The planned expenditure in its preparatory project in 1990-91 is £278,820.

Employment Training

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he proposes to make any changes in the financial arrangements for those undertaking employment training to place their children in nursery, creche or playcare.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 22 June 1990]:* The former £50 limit on weekly payments to childminders has been abolished. Training and enterprise councils and training agency area offices have discretion over the means by which they ensure the provision of child care support for lone parents on employment training.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will state in real terms the amount to be spent on employment training for each of the financial years 1989-90 to 1992-93.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The following table shows, in real terms, the amount spent on employment training in 1989-90 and the amount expected to be spent in 1990-91 to 1992-93.

Expenditure at constant (1988-89) prices

	£ million
[1]1989-90	1,030
[2]1990-91	1,034
[2]1991-92	993
[2]1992-93	976

[1] Actual expenditure.
[2] Planned spend.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many training contracts with training providers for *(a)* YTS and *(b)* ET have not been renewed for the present financial year, listing in each case the name of the training provider, the reason for non-renewal and the number of training places involved for both YTS and ET.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* Information in the format requested would be available only at disproportionate cost. The process of renegotiating YT and ET contracts for this year is nearly complete. The latest information is that of about 3,450 YT contracts to be renegotiated, 105 have not been renewed, and of about 1,300 ET contracts, 15 have not been renewed.

Skills Training Agency

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the future of the privatised Skills Training Agency and its contribution to the tackling of long-term skill needs.

Mr. Nicholls: *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* A key objective of the sale was to transfer as much of the Skills Training Agency to the private sector as was possible.

The Government are highly satisfied with the successful sale of 51 skill centres, together with other STA training services.

The terms agreed for the sales were designed to give purchasers a good prospect of long-term viability as training businesses. All purchasers have indicated their intention to develop skills training that meets market needs.

Retirement Pensions

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, in light of the recent decision by the House of Lords in the case of James *v.* Eastleigh Borough Council, what advice he is now offering to employers in respect of age eligibility for retirement pensions.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have been asked to reply.

The James case deals with concessions for people over state pension age. It does not extend to social security or occupational pension schemes.

DEFENCE

Radar

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the facilities provided at the proposed military radar base at St. David's, Dyfed, could be used as part of a guidance system for either the tactical air-to-surface missile or Tomahawk missiles.

Mr. Alan Clark: The over-the-horizon radar transmitter proposed for a two-year trial at St. David's airfield, Dyfed, will be a long-range, very early warning installation, and will not have the accuracy necessary for use in conjunction with TASM or Tomahawk missiles. There are therefore no plans to utilise the OTHR as part of a missile guidance system.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give consideration to using the former United States navy base at Benbradagh mountain at Dungiven, County Londonderry, as a site for the radar installation currently proposed for Brawdy, Pembrokeshire.

Mr. Alan Clark: The site at Dungiven is too far north to be a suitable location for the proposed two-year trial of an over-the-horizon radar in the United Kingdom.

"Open Verdict"

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will obtain for his departmental library a copy of "Open Verdict" by Tony Collins.

Mr. Neubert: The MOD library already possesses a copy of this work.

Holy Loch

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what information he has on the planned retirement date for the Poseidon missile-equipped submarines currently deployed at Holy Loch;

(2) what discussions have been held between his Department and the United States authorities concerning United States Navy use of the Holy Loch base after the retiral of the Poseidon missile from United States navy service.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) on 20 March 1990 at column *521*.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what additional duties at the Holy Loch base will be performed by United States personnel to be accommodated in the new houses to be leased by the United States navy in the Dunoon-Sandbank areas.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None. The United States Navy's requirement for additional housing is to alleviate a longstanding shortfall.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current number of military and civilian personnel assigned to the United States navy base at Holy Loch; and what changes are planned in these levels over the next three years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Approximately 2,000 personnel work at the Holy Loch facility. No significant changes in numbers are currently envisaged by the United States navy.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what provision is made for *(a)* firefighting, *(b)* nuclear emergencies and *(c)* maintenance support of submarines at the Holy Loch facility during periods of absence of the USS Simon Lake.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In periods of absence of the submarine tender, the United States navy has alternative

arrangements to cover emergencies, of which Her Majesty's Government are aware. The provision of maintenance support for its submarines is solely a matter for the United States Government.

Air Defences

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current assessment of the threat to United Kingdom air defences.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The principal potential threat to United Kingdom air defences is that posed by the medium bombers of the Soviet Air Force based in the western USSR.

This force has been—and continues to be—steadily modernised by the deployment of the supersonic Backfire, which is replacing the older Badger and Blinder.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current assessment of the need for *(a)* ground attack aircraft, and *(b)* air defence aircraft; and what was the assessment one year ago.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The assessed need for combat aircraft has been reflected in the plans described in successive statements on the defence estimates. We are currently reassessing our defence requirements as part of the "Options for Change" study.

Defence Review

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what communications have taken place with the defence industry regarding the economic and industrial implications of the study of options for change;

(2) what communications have taken place with the defence industry regarding future equipment requirements of the armed forces as part of the study of options for change.

Mr. Alan Clark: I am in constant touch with industry and the whole range of procurement matters is discussed. The issues which arise are being taken into account during the current exercise.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Fishing Quotas

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he will next meet representatives of the fishing industry to discuss quotas.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he will next meet representatives of the fishing industry to discuss quotas.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he will next meet representatives of the fishing industry to discuss quotas.

Mr. Curry: I and my noble Friend the Minister of State, Scottish Office will be representing the United Kingdom at the next Fisheries Council in Luxembourg on 27 June. I expect to meet representatives of the fishing industry on that occasion.

Shellfish

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will now consider introducing a scheme of compensation for losses incurred in the course of the recent shellfish health warnings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 12 June, column *131*.

"Chickengate"

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has yet completed his consideration of the conclusions reached in the book entitled "Chickengate", co-authored by the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) and Mr. Richard North.

Mr. Maclean: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to the Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) on 18 June, *Official Report*, column *471*.

Bovine Somatotropin

Mr. Stern: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to announce the results of the experiments with bovine somatotropin.

Mr. Maclean: The companies conducting field trials using BST will decide on the announcement of the result of their work.

Bees

Mr. Allen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the impact upon the spread of bee diseases of the decision to reduce the numbers and scope of bee inspectors.

Mr. Curry: There is no evidence to suggest that the change in policy for inspections by bees officers had led to any change in the incidence of bee diseases in the United Kingdom.

Live Animals (Transport)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to bring forward legislation or orders to improve the transportation of live animals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: We intend to amend our legislation regarding the transport of unfit animals. We shall seek to negotiate high welfare standards in the context of proposed EC measures on the protection of animals in transit.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made in the discussions on the directive relating to the controls operated by Her Majesty's Government on the export of live horses and ponies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Only one Community meeting has been held to discuss the Commission's proposals on protection of animals during transport. We will be pressing to retain our controls on the export of horses and ponies.

Food Distribution

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps his Department is taking to encourage investment in fresh food distribution facilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The Government give top priority to food safety and consumer protection as indicated by the Food Safety Bill. However, investment in particular sectors of the food industry is a matter for commercial judgment. The food industry can take advantage of DTI-funded aid schemes and other general Government measures towards this end, and may be eligible for EC-funded grant schemes designed to promote rational marketing and simple processing of primary produce.

Fur Farms

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what foodstuffs are approved for consumption by mink and foxes.

Mr. Maclean: The safety and final quality of feed sold for feeding to fur livestock animals, including mink, are governed by the Agriculture Act 1970 and the Feeding Stuffs Regulations 1988, as amended. Foxes are not included in the definition of livestock animals.

Farm Animal Welfare Council

Mr. McFall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what reports he is awaiting from the Farm Animal Welfare Council.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) on 19 April 1990, *Official Report*, Vol. 170, column *1543*.

Consumer Panel

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when his consumer panel last met; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Maclean: The last meeting of the consumer panel took place on 2 May 1990. It discussed a wide range of issues including water quality, food labelling, BSE, hygiene training for food handlers and food irradiation. The minutes of this meeting are publicly available.

Food Safety

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the Consumers Association to discuss food safety.

Mr. Maclean: On 3 April 1990 representatives of the Consumers Association attended the first of the periodic meetings set up by my right hon. Friend with representatives of consumer organisations; a further meeting is planned for 12 July.

Farmers' Incomes

Mr. McFall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the National Farmers Union to discuss farmers' incomes.

Mr. Curry: I frequently meet representatives of the National Farmers Union to discuss farm incomes and other issues.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what advice he has received from the Tyrrell committee on the question of the removal of bovine brains.

Mr. Gummer: As I indicated during the debate on bovine spongiform encephalopathy on 21 May, I asked the advisory committee on spongiform encephalopathies to consider slaughterhouse practices. I received verbal advice from the committee on 13 June that the recovery of head meat from bovine skulls should not be undertaken after the removal of the brain. I have accepted this advice and have issued appropriate guidance to local authorities. I shall, of course, take account of any further advice that the committee offers in formulating future action on slaughterhouse procedures.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what procedures he has introduced to protect farmworkers who handle cattle placenta from the possibility of cross-infection with the agent responsible for bovine spongiform encephalopathy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls: I have been asked to reply.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) has recently produced an advisory note on bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) for farmers. This includes advice on calving animals suspected to be suffering from bovine spongiform encephalopathy, including the handling of placentae.

This advice has been discussed with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and reinforces the executive's advice on the procedures needed to minimise the risks of transmission of all infections from animals to man. The Health and Safety Executive is closely watching research developments in this field and will produce further advice as and when necessary.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what precautions are in force to protect workers in abattoirs who handle animal tissue deemed unfit for human consumption and bovine offals banned for human consumption from the possibility of cross-infection; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: I have been asked to reply.

The Health and Safety Executive's field staff is available to give advice on work activities to employers and employees when necessary on any health risks associated with cattle, their carcases and their products which may be infected with BSE. The HSE has produced a free leaflet entitled "BSE and carcase disposal" which sets out hygiene precautions that will protect workers from diseases of cattle known to affect man. It has also agreed guidance that has been published by the British Meat Manufacturers Association which is being distributed to all slaughterhouses, and meat preparation and butchery sectors.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the possibility of the subcutaneous transference of the infective agent responsible for bovine spongiform encephalopathy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The risk to human health from such transmission is remote, but the Health and Safety

Executive has issued advice to guard against occupational exposure by cuts and abrasions. Experimental studies are in progress to determine the transmissibility of BSE to various host species by parenteral and oral routes of exposure.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculure, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a table showing the distribution of the total number of confirmed cases of BSE, by county, in the United Kingdom in the four weeks to 17 June.

Mr. Maclean: The information for Great Britain is as follows:

County	*Number*
Avon	20
Bedfordshire	4
Berkshire	7
Buckinghamshire	10
Cambridge	4
Cheshire	30
Cleveland	1
Clwyd	8
Cornwall	46
Cumbria	11
Derbyshire	23
Devon	97
Dorset	103
Dumfries	7
Durham	7
Dyfed	47
Essex	3
Fife	5
Glamorgan Mid	4
Glamorgan South	2
Gloucestershire	26
Grampian	15
Gwent	5
Hampshire	39
Hereford and Worcestershire	18
Hertfordshire	5
Highland	2
Humberside	4
Isle of Wight	9
Kent	23
Lancashire	18
Leicestershire	28
Lincolnshire	4
London	1
Lothian	1
Manchester	1
Norfolk	20
Northants	8
Northumberland	7
Nottinghamshire	5
Orkney	1
Oxon	13
Powys	5
Salop	24
Somerset	106
Staffordshire	26
Strathclyde	9
Suffolk	14
Surrey	4
Sussex East	15
Sussex West	22
Tayside	1
Warwickshire	13
Wiltshire	64
Yorkshire North	33
Yorkshire South	5
Yorkshire West	8
Total	1,041

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food under what circumstances cattle may be awarded a veterinary certificate stating they are free from BSE; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: There is no test for BSE in the live animal, so no such certificate can be given.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he has taken to ascertain whether BSE or a related condition is present in Holsteins of north American origin; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: BSE has been confirmed in most breeds, including Holsteins. I am not aware that any of these originated in north America. The epidemiological survey carried out into BSE discounts imported cattle as being the cause.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if the infective agent responsible for BSE has been detected in cattle placenta; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: No, but transmission experiments are in progress using placenta from BSE-affected cattle.

Cattle and Sheep Exports

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy in respect of the export from Britain of scrapie-infected sheep.

Mr. Maclean: It is up to importing countries to determine what conditions they wish to impose upon sheep exported from Great Britain.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list those countries which have banned imports from Britain of *(a)* live cattle and *(b)* live sheep, giving the date of the introduction of such ban in each case.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is set out in the table:

Country	*Date*
(a) Live cattle	
Australia	December 1988
Austria	May 1990
Canada	February 1990
Finland	January 1989
Israel[1]	
New Zealand	December 1988
Saudi Arabia	February 1990
Sweden	October 1988
Tunisia	February 1990
Turkey	June 1990
United States of America	July 1989
USSR	March 1990
(b) Live sheep	
Austria	May 1990
Canada	May 1990
Sweden	October 1988
Turkey	June 1990
USSR	March 1990

[1] Not applicable—no health certification agreed.

Southwood Committee

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he has taken to avoid a potential conflict of interest resulting from the presence of the Southwood committee of members operating in practice in the embryology research area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I am fully confident that the Southwood working party's recommendations were made after an objective assessment of all the scientific data available.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list those members of the Southwood committee who are expert in the scrapie family of diseases giving in each case their relevant qualifications.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) on 5 June, *Official Report*, column *497*.

Tyrrell Committee

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the members of the Tyrrell committee who have received any financial remuneration, other than as expenses as members of the committee, from his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: One member of the Tyrrell committee, Dr. Richard Kimberlin, who is an independent consultant with over 30 years' experience in the field of spongiform encephalopathies, provides expert advice to my Department.

Nitrate Sensitive Areas

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he has made an assessment of the percentage of farmers in the 10 designated nitrate sensitive areas who will have to reduce their fertiliser use in order to qualify for payment under the nitrate sensitive area scheme; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what reductions in the use of nitrate fertilisers he anticipates as a result of the introduction of 10 nitrate sensitive areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: One of 18 obligations within the basic payment scheme is a requirement to apply no more than the economic optimum amount of inorganic nitrogen fertiliser for any crop, not more than 25 kgN/ha below that optimum for winter wheat or barley, and not more than 50 kgN/ha below for oilseed rape. I would expect the latter reductions to result in lower applications for most participants with arable land. More definitive information will be provided through the evaluation of the pilot scheme.

Notifiable Diseases

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food under what circumstances animal diseases for which there exist no practicable diagnostic tests are made notifiable; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: There are a number of factors to be considered in determining whether a disease should be made notifiable, including any implications it may have for public and or animal health and whether it is amenable to diagnosis, either in the field or in the laboratory.

Set-aside Land

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he intends to extend the countryside premium for set-aside land to new areas of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) on 18 June, *Official Report*, volume 174, column *467*.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 27 June 1990

PRIME MINISTER

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Prime Minister if, pursuant to her reply on 14 June, *Official Report*, column 464, concerning capital expenditure on road and rail facilities related to the channel tunnel, she will tabulate in the *Official Report* each of the principal items comprising the £2,000 million projected expenditure on these items, stating for each the sources of the capital expenditure incurred and the amounts when shared between different sources.

The Prime Minister: The £2 billion of public investment planned on roads and railways to the channel tunnel comprises the following:

	£ million (1989 prices)	
Trunk roads		
Completing and widening (part of) M20 from M25 to Folkestone and upgrading A20 to Dover	265	
Upgrading M2/A2 route	115	
Upgrading A27/A259 south coast route	330	
		710
Local authority roads in Kent		75
British Rail investment		
Intercapital passenger rolling stock	350	
Waterloo international terminal	100	
North Pole (west London) maintenance depot	75	
Initial order of freight locomotives and track electrification	80	
		[1]605
Infrastructure improvements for passenger services		[2]210
Freight Infrastructure		[3]145
Passenger rolling stock for services beyond London and related infrastructure improvements Ashford international station Night trains from London Further freight locomotives and wagons		[4]110-375
		1,855-2,120

[1] Already approved by Government.
[2] Only £45 million of this subject to Government approval.
[3] Government approval not required.
[4] Detailed proposals not yet submitted.

General Election (Observers)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister what representations she has received calling for impartial international observers from the United Nations or other organisations to observe during the period of the next general election in the United Kingdom to ensure that it is conducted and financed fairly.

The Prime Minister: None.

Spicer and Oppenheim

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Prime Minister what is the number and nature of occasions when Spicer and Oppenheim have advised her Government in the last two years; and what was the cost.

The Prime Minister: This information is not held centrally.

Pharmaceutical Industry

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Prime Minister if she will transfer the responsibility of the Department of Health for the pharmaceutical industry to the Department of Trade and Industry.

The Prime Minister: There are no plans to do so.

Council of Europe

Sir Michael Shaw: To ask the Prime Minister what changes have been made in the composition of the United Kingdom delegation to the consultative assembly of the Council of Europe.

The Prime Minister: I have appointed my hon. Friend the Member for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson) as a full member in place of my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill), and my hon. Friend the

Member for Poole (Mr. Ward) as a full member in place of my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson). I have also appointed my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) as a substitute member.

These changes will take effect from the close of the meeting of the standing committee on Tuesday 3 July.

NHS Staff Review Body

Mr. Hind: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement about the chairmanship of the Review Body for Nursing Staff, Midwives, Health Visitors and the Professions Allied to Medicine.

The Prime Minister: Sir James Cleminson's period as chairman will come to an end when the review body completes its supplementary report on senior nurses. The Government are very grateful to him for the leadership, skill and dedication which he has shown as chairman since his appointment in 1986. I have appointed Mr. Michael Bett to succeed him.

Retired People

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on how the living standards, environment, quality of life and general prospects of *(a)* the retired in Britain, *(b)* others in the country and *(c)* their European counterparts have fared since 1979.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The improvement in living standards since 1979 is demonstrated by a number of indicators. For example, real household disposable income per head rose by 26 per cent. between 1979 and 1989. The retired have shared in this prosperity. The average increase in pensioners' total net incomes was 31 per cent. over and above inflation between 1979 and 1987, which is the latest date for which information is available.

Directly comparable data for other European countries are not available. However, real output per head in the United Kingdom has risen faster since 1979 than in many other Europan countries, including France and Germany.

The rising expectation of life, the fall in infant mortality and improvement in housing standards are set out, together with a range of other indicators, in "Social Trends" and "Regional Trends". Both publications also contain some comparisons with other European countries. Copies are available in the Library of the House.

TRANSPORT

Roads

121. **Dr. Blackburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of land in public ownership being used for the building of motorways and trunk roads over the next five years.

Mr. Atkins: The information is not available in the form requested.

Weighbridges

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether weighbridges are now provided for all commercial vehicles entering the United Kingdom from the continent of Europe by sea.

Mr. Atkins: The Department has provided weighbridges with the agreement of the port authorities at most United Kingdom ferry ports to enable its traffic examiners to weigh incoming heavy goods vehicles. In addition, a trial has just been completed of automated weighing systems in five ports. In the light of a consultant's report on the trial which is expected shortly, we shall be considering whether to extend the installation of automated weighing systems to other ports. Preliminary negotiations have already taken place with some ports.

Rail Services

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made in considering the approval of the construction of the new trains required to operate the through passenger services to the continent via the channel tunnel from the north of the country; when he expects these trains to be ordered; and what undertakings have been given that they will be completed in time for the service to commence from the opening of the tunnel.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail published its plans for services beyond London on 14 December and I refer to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee) on that date, *Official Report*, column *767*. I understand that BR currently intends to submit its investment proposals for approval this summer, with a view to ordering the trains later this year and commencing services when the tunnel opens.

Young Drivers

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether there are any plans to restrict the types of cars that young people can drive on the basis of engine capacity.

Mr. Atkins: I have no plans at present to impose such a restriction.

Motorways (Tourist Signs)

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the destinations chosen for brown tourist signs on motorways.

Mr. Atkins: Tourist sign destinations are not chosen by the Department. They are applied for and authorised against published criteria. The following destinations have been authorised for inclusion on tourist signs on motorways in England by region:

London
Hendon RAF Museum
Wembley Stadium

South West
Exmoor
Bickton Park
Devon[1]
Bristol Zoo
SS Great Britain and Historic Harbour
Cheddar Caves
Slimbridge Wildfowl Trust
Castle Combe Racing Circuit
Somerwest World
Wells
Glastonbury
Wookey Caves
Cricket St. Thomas Wildlife Park
Yeovilton Air Museum
Forest of Dean
Bowood House

South East
Birdworld
Marwell Zoological Park
Hampshire Farm Museum
Upper Hamble Country Park
Royal Victoria Country Park
Southampton/Old Town Waterfront
Broadlands
Beaulieu/National Motor Museum
Paultons Park
Historic Portsmouth
Historic Ships (Portsmouth)
Sea Life (Portsmouth)
D Day Museum (Portsmouth)
The Pyramids (Portsmouth)
Brands Hatch
Hever Castle
Chartwell
Sevenoaks[1]
Rochester
Castle (Rochester)
Cathedral (Rochester)
Chatham
Historic Dockyard (Chatham)
Ice Rink (Gillingham)
Historic Maidstone
Leeds Castle
Eurotunnel Exhibition Centre
Chessington World of Adventures
Sandown Park
Wisley Royal Horticultural Society Gardens
Thorpe Park
Windsor Castle
Royalty and Empire (Windsor)
Safari Park (Windsor)
Blenheim Palace
The Parl Sports Centre
Waterperry Gardens
Child Beale Wildlife Trust
Land of Littlecote
Ice Rink and Ski Centre (Bracknell)

East Midlands
Chatsworth
Gulliver's Kingdom
Heights of Abraham
Derbyshire Dales
Sherwood Forest[1]
American Adventure
Billing Aquadrome

Eastern
Whipsnade Zoo
Whipsnade Wild Animal Park
Woburn Abbey
Safari Park (Woburn)
Hatfield House
The Ice Bowl

Stanborough Park
Chiltern Open Air Museum
Model Village (Bekonscot)
Imperial War Museum (Duxford)
Wimpole Hall/Home Farm

West Midlands
Drayton Manor Park
Historic Coventry
Cathedral (Coventry)
Coombe Abbey Country Park
Weston Park
Cosford Aerospace Museum
Yorkshire and Humberside
National Museum of Photography, Film and Television (Bradford)
Yorkshire Sculpture Park
Doncaster Racecourse, Exhibition Centre and Leisure Park
Elsham Country Park
Piece Hall (Halifax)

North West
Wigan Pier
Park Hall, Camelot
Martin Mere Wildfowl Trust
Lancaster Historic City
Morecambe Bay
Frontierland
Historic Carlisle
Borders Tourist Route to Edinburgh follow A7
West Pennine Moors
Last Drop Village
Hollingworth Lake
Liverpool Maritime City
Albert Dock
Southport
Pleasureland
Lord Street
Knowsley Safari Park
Tatton Park
Dunham Massey Hall
Quarrey Bank Mill
Blackpool
Stanley Park and Zoo
North Shore (Blackpool)
Derby Pool—Splashland
Illuminations (only when on)

Northern
Durham Historic Cathedral City
Beamish Museum
North Pennines and Weardale

[1]Denotes directions to a tourist information point or centre.

Notes

(1) Words in brackets are not included on the signs themselves, but explain the location of the signs for the purpose of this list.

(2) Some destinations are combined on single signs.

(3) Alton Towers is shown on blue tourist signs in the North West, East Midlands and West Midland regions. These will be changed to brown signs in due course.

(4) Many tourist destinations are signed from trunk and "A" roads, for which there are no central records.

Luton Airport

Mr. Bright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when his officials were last in touch with Luton borough council about the prospective sale of Luton international airport to private sector owners; and what issues or problems were then discussed.

Mr. McLoughlin: I very much welcome the moves by Luton council to sell Luton airport to the private sector. My officials communicate regularly with officers of Luton borough council on a range of airport matters, including its possible sale. My hon. Friend will be aware that the council was recommended by its advisers to await the Civil Aviation Authority's advice to my right hon. Friend on airport and airspace capacity before holding detailed discussions with interested parties. Publication of the authority's advice is expected next month.

Road Accidents

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what information his Department holds on the incidence of accidents on stretches of three-lane carriageways where the centre lane may be used by vehicles travelling in either direction;

(2) if he has any plans to phase out three-lane carriageways where the centre lane may be used by vehicles travelling in either direction.

Mr. Atkins: In England wide single carriageways marked in three lanes but without indication of priority —double white lines—were dropped from the Department's standards for new trunk roads about 20 years ago. Many stretches of such carriageway then in existence have since been phased out and re-marked as two lanes. A few sections remain where they are judged to be safe and appropriate to prevailing traffic conditions. Information about such sections of local roads is for local highway authorities. While road accident statistics record the number of lanes they do not distinguish between those three-lane roads with double white lines and those without. The position in Wales and Scotland is a matter for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and for Scotland respectively.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list all schools which had achieved grant-maintained status by 1 April 1990 showing for each *(a)* the total amount of public funding in 1990-91 with all allocations under different heads, *(b)* the number of pupils, the age range and the number of pupils in each year group and *(c)* the total funding for each school under its last year of local education authority funding.

Mrs. Rumbold: The table below shows the full-year equivalent amounts of annual maintenance grant—AMG —received by the first 20 grant-maintained schools last year. Provisional figures for 1990-91 have been set at a standard notional 6 per cent. above these amounts. Calculations of final AMG figures for 1990-91 are now being finalised as the Department receives information from relevant local education authorities about their spending plans for the year.

The 1989-90 figures below do, in turn, reflect a 6·6 per cent. increase over what we estimate to have been LEA direct spending levels on these schools in 1988-89. In addition to AMG, schools receive small special purpose grants, for example to mirror what is available to LEAs under the Government's education support grant scheme.

Grant-maintained schools
Annual maintenance grant (AMG) and pupil numbers for 1989-90

Name of school[1]	*Former LEA*	*Total AMG*[2]	*Total*	*Pupil numbers*[3] *Aged 11 or under*	*Aged 12*	*Aged 13*	*Aged 14*	*Aged 15*	*Aged 16*	*Aged 17*	*Aged 18*	*Aged 19*
Audenshaw High	Tameside	1,222,998	725	141	148	146	141	149	0	0	0	0
Bacup and Rawtenstall	Lancashire	1,354,254	741	113	105	111	118	111	91	87	5	0
Bankfield High	Cheshire	1,008,831	434	64	96	70	99	105	0	0	0	0
Baverstock	Birmingham	1,700,068	980	223	233	175	179	170	0	0	0	0
Castle Hall Middle	Kirklees	618,989	381	[4]191	83	107	0	0	0	0	0	0
Colyton	Devon	726,449	433	57	47	68	78	67	62	52	2	0
Heckmondwike	Kirklees	1,078,422	565	102	92	94	89	92	60	29	7	0
Hendon	Barnet	1,754,224	836	103	125	119	166	174	101	42	6	0
King's Grantham	Lincolnshire	1,230,509	747	114	117	118	117	106	86	83	6	0
London Oratory	ILEA[5]	3,372,123	1,168	177	177	180	182	166	171	90	25	0
Old Swinford	Dudley	1,029,967	544	56	65	88	79	85	84	83	4	0
Queen Elizabeth's	Lincolnshire	609,091	329	35	47	59	55	55	47	31	0	0
Queen Elizabeth's	Barnet	1,857,623	1,036	179	180	180	172	175	82	62	6	0
Queensbury	Bedfordshire	1,408,042	637	0	0	150	182	197	65	43	0	0
St. Francis Xavier	Liverpool	2,016,008	1,008	0	177	178	183	174	161	76	55	4
St. James's CE	Bolton	1,096,270	662	95	116	151	143	156	1	0	0	0
Skegness	Lincolnshire	1,051,865	568	51	77	81	91	99	81	81	6	1
Small Heath	Birmingham	1,746,432	771	151	159	118	163	177	3	0	0	0
Wilmington Girls	Kent	811,061	451	59	74	52	82	89	53	42	0	0
Wilson's	Sutton	1,393,670	725	120	118	120	111	118	85	53	0	0

[1] Eighteen schools began operating as grant-maintained from September 1989. A further two began doing so from January 1990.
[2] Full-year equivalent figures.
[3] Based on January 1989 figures, as used for 1989-90 AMG calculations.
[4] Includes 91 pupils under 11 as the school has a 9 to 13 age range.
[5] With effect from 1 April 1990, the relevant LEA became Hammersmith and Fulham.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Incomes

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average income level of each 1 per cent. of the population with the highest incomes up to the total of 20 per cent. of the population with the highest incomes.

Mr. Lilley: Available information is given in the table. Estimates for 1990-91 are based on a projection of the 1987-88 survey of personal incomes and are provisional. Since some investment income from which tax is deducted at source is not reflected in the survey, these estimates are uncertain and more detailed estimates cannot therefore be given.

Average income of individuals liable to tax at 1990-91 levels of income

Group of individuals liable to tax[1]	*Average income £ per annum*
Top 1 per cent.	97,000
Top 5 per cent.	51,000
Top 10 per cent.	39,000
Top 20 per cent.	30,000

[1] Husband and wife counted separately.

Enterprise Zones

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what limit he can impose on the amounts that firms situated in enterprise zones may offset against any taxable benefit tied to that location in respect of their activities, or that of any of their subsidiaries making losses at locations outside that zone.

Mr. Lilley: The tax reliefs which are available to businesses in enterprise zones are governed by legislation and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has no proposals for any change in the rules.

Mortgage Arrears

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on the number of people six to 12 months in arrears on their mortgage repayments.

Mr. Ryder: The latest available figures show that at end 1989 there were approximately 58,000 mortgage loans six to 12 months in arrears. This represents less than ½ per cent. of total owner-occupied dwellings in the United Kingdom.

Gilts

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he plans the next issue of gilts.

Mr. Ryder: The Government's funding policy is as set out in annex A to chapter 2 of the 1990-91 "Financial Statement and Budget Report". Gilt issues and purchases will be made as this policy dictates.

Dublin Docks

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he plans to amend the designation of the Dublin docks area as a high-tax area for the purposes of the controlled foreign companies' legislation.

Mr. Lilley: The Inland Revenue maintains and publishes a list of countries, some of which are qualified in respect of particular provisions in their law, in which companies can operate without coming within the controlled foreign companies legislation. That list is kept under review and updated when necessary in the light of changes is the tax provisions of other countries.

Income

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* the method by which he calculates personal real disposable income.

Mr. Lilley: Personal disposable income is calculated by deducting from total personal income before tax the sum of United Kingdom taxes on income, social security contributions, payments of the community charge, but not, in the past, payments of rates and transfers abroad. Real personal disposable income is derived by dividing personal disposable income by the consumers' expenditure deflator—the ratio of consumers' expenditure at current prices to consumers' expenditure revalued at constant

prices. A description of the personal sector and of the methods of calculating the various compoenents of the personal disposable income calculation can be found in chapter 6, part A of the Central Statistical Office's "United Kingdom National Accounts: Sources and Methods".

Parallel Currencies

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has discussed his proposals for parallel currencies with *(a)* the President of the European Commission and *(b)* the president of the Bundesbank; whether he has any plans to do so before the intergovernmental conference; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 26 June 1990]:* As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer said on 21 June in reply to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) at column *655*, he will be discussing his proposals further with his colleagues in the European Community, over the coming weeks.

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on his proposals for parallel currencies as outlined in his speech to the German Industry Forum.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 26 June 1990]:* I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer my right hon. Friend the Chancellor gave my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) on 21 June, at column *655*.

CIVIL SERVICE

Census

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what are the reasons for the Central Office of Information's decision to recruit a private advertising firm to undertake a publicity campaign to promote the April 1991 census; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: I have been asked to reply.

The census offices have commissioned the Central Office of Information to assist them in a publicity campaign to create public awareness of the 1991 census. The Central Office of Information will be handling this work in the same way as it handles work for other Government Departments. The Central Office of Information will be appointing an advertising agency, as it does for all Government advertising campaigns.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Missions (Fax Machines)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which missions abroad are fitted with fax machines.

Mr. Sainsbury: Most of our posts overseas are fitted with facsimile machines. I refer the hon. Member to the current edition of the "HM Diplomatic Service Overseas Reference List", a copy of which is in the Library of the House, which provides facsimile numbers in each case.

Europe Day

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contribution was made by Her Majesty's Government to Europe Day on 8 May.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister contributed a message to a volume prepared by the Jean Monnet Foundation to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Schuman plan.

The United Kingdom was represented at the ceremonies in Brussels for Europe Day on 8 May by Her Majesty's permanent representative to the European Communities.

China

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Minister of State's visit to China in July represents any change in the policy of no high level contacts with China; and if the visit's discussions will be limited to the question of Hong Kong.

Mr. Maude: It has always been accepted by our European partners that we have a special need to maintain contact and gradually to rebuild good working relations with China over Hong Kong. My visit is in pursuance of that aim. Details of the programme remain to be settled, but it is intended that the discussions should cover Hong Kong and other issues of common concern.

Republic of Ireland

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the occasions, if any, at international conferences or meetings within the last five years when Her Majesty's Government have formally rejected or objected to the territorial claim over the United Kingdom contained in the constitution of the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Hurd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to a similar question on 20 June 1990. British delegates at all international conferences and meetings explicitly represent the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and this clearly demonstrates our position.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Football Clubs

123. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what analysis he has made of the steps being taken by football clubs to implement the findings of the Taylor report.

Mr. John Patten: Analysis of responses to inquiries made last year of the police, fire authorities and local authorities, which are responsible for the issue of safety certificates, about implementation of the urgent recommendations of the interim report of the Hillsborough inquiry indicated that nearly all of them had then been implemented at football league grounds, as had many of the non-urgent recommendations. The majority of the safety recommendations of the final report which are aimed at football clubs comprise recommendations which

were in the interim report, with the exception of those on all seated accommodation. We shall be looking to the Football Licensing Authority to check the progress of clubs towards the introduction of all-seated accommodation at football league grounds.

Scientific Expertise

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what response he has made to the representations of Sir David Napley that scientific and forensic expertise ought to be made available to defences.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend has received no direct representations from Sir David Napley on the availability of scientific and forensic expertise for the defence although we are aware of his recent newspaper article on the subject. The establishment of forensic science units independent of the Government is a matter for private initiative.

Dog Fighting

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many prosecutions have been brought for dog fighting in England in each of the last five years; and by whom such prosecutions were brought;

(2) how many prosecutions have been brought for dog fighting in Wales in each of the last five years; and by whom such prosecutions were brought.

Mr. John Patten: Information collected centrally does not distinguish offences relating to dog fights from other offences under the Protection of Animals Act 1911.

Firearms

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has regarding the number of specialist civilian firearms officers employed by police forces to supervise the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988; and what steps he is taking to promote their use.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No records are maintained of specialist civilian firearms officers employed to supervise the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 though returns made by provincial forces to Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary at the end of December 1989 indicated that 80 civilian staff were employed on firearms registration duties with a further 151 in support duties—part-time staff are counted on a two for one basis. The Metropolitan police have 24 such staff.

Home Office guidance on the use of civilian staff suggests that they can be used on clerical and administrative duties involved with firearms and other functions where there is no need for police powers.

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding the implementation of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 by different police forces; and what steps he is taking to promote a consistent approach across different forces.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend has received representations from a number of different sources including Members of both Houses of Parliament, the shooting organisations and individual members of the public about the implementation of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988. Administration of firearms controls is the responsibility of individual chief officers of police. To help ensure consistency of practice in and between police forces, the Home Department has issued advice on the administration of all aspects of firearms legislation, including the new controls, in the publication "Firearms Law: Guidance to the Police". Copies of the document, which is available to the public, have been placed in the Library. The advice in the guidance is subject to review both by the Home Department and the Firearms Consultative Committee.

Daylight Saving

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will invite public consultation on the introduction of daylight saving by initiating differential time zones between Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. I do not consider that this would be a practical proposition.

Immigration Ministers

Mr. Aitken: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the outcome of the meeting of Trevi and European Community Immigration Ministers in Dublin on 14 and 15 June.

Mr. Waddington: A major theme of Trevi Ministers' discussions was the need to improve further co-operation against drug trafficking. We approved a paper examining the links between drug trafficking and other organised crime, and endorsed new arrangements for a co-ordinated response to requests for technical assistance including training from drug producer and transit countries. At my instigation, Trevi Ministers also agreed to an accelerated timetable for work on the proposal for a European drugs intelligence unit, and to examination of the need for such a unit to have effective links with other European countries including those in eastern Europe.

As Trevi Ministers, we also reviewed progress during the Irish Presidency on measures to develop police co-operation across the whole range of crime in the light of completion of the single European market after 1992. We approved a programme of action setting out a range of measures, a copy of which I am placing in the Library.

The meeting of Ministers concerned with immigration, attended also by a Vice-President of the Commission, was the eighth in the series of such meetings held towards the end of each Presidency since 1986.

Ministers took stock of the work carried out in the ad hoc working group on immigration during the Irish Presidency and considered the future programme of work. The main conclusions which we reached are set out in a press release of which I am placing a copy in the Library.

I was pleased to join 10 of my Community colleagues in signing a convention on asylum which establishes criteria for determining which member state is responsible for examining a claim for asylum when more than one member state is involved. I am placing a copy of the convention in the Library, and it will also be laid before the House in the normal way.

Dogs

Mr. Knowles: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to announce proposals for the control of dogs.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Government have today published a consultation paper, "The Control of Dogs", to seek public reaction to proposals which my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary together with my right hon. Friends, the Secretaries of State for Scotland, for Wales and for the Environment wish to make. This paper co-ordinates a number of proposals aimed at tackling dog control problems directly and without the need for a national dog registration scheme.

Proposals to improve the control of dogs canvassed in the paper include a new offence of allowing a dog to be dangerously out of control; additional powers for local authorities and the police to seize and detain or destroy a dangerous dog; new powers for the courts to impose muzzling and other controls on dogs; additional controls which might apply only to certain breeds or types of dogs, or the banning of such dogs; a new offence of allowing a dog to stray persistently; and a fixed penalty system for enforcement of the collar and tag rules or other dog control provisions.

Copies of the paper have been placed in the Library. Comments on these proposals are requested by 15 November.

Race Relations

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions *(a)* under the race relations provisions of the Public Order Act 1986 and *(b)* under the Malicious Communications Act there have been since their passing.

Mr. John Patten: Information is given in the table. The 1989 data will not be available until the autumn.

Number of prosecutions under section 18 of the Public Order Act 1986 and the Malicious Communications Act 1988

England and Wales

Act	*1987*	*1988*
Public Order Act 1986[1] Section 18	6	22
Malicious Communications Act 1988[2]	n/a	3

[1] Came into force on 1 January 1987.
[2] Came into force on 29 September 1988.
n/a = Not available.

Ambulance Dispute

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total of costs billed to health authorities by the Metropolitan police to cover emergency cover during the ambulance workers' dispute.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Metropolitan police have charged the South West Thames regional health authority £9·68 million for its assistance.

Murder Statistics

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the murder rate per 1,000 of the population in the constituency of Basildon in 1989.

Mr. John Patten: The available information is that there were 11 homicides recorded by the Essex police force in 1989, a rate of 0·008 per 1,000 population.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons were *(a)* charged with and *(b)* convicted of the killing of children in (i) England and Wales and (ii) the Basildon constituency in each year since 1965.

Mr. John Patten: The numbers of persons indicted and convicted for homicide offences are published annually in Table 4·7 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales", copies of which are available in the Library. The number of such cases where one or more victims was less than 16 years of age are given in the table for the years 1982-88. Information on homicides in the Basildon constituency is not available, but figures for the Essex police force area for the years 1982-88 are included; corresponding figures for the years 1965-1981 could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Persons indicted[1] for homicide where one or more of the victims was aged under 16 years of age, by outcome of proceedings

Number of persons

Year	*Indicted for homicide*	*Convicted of homicide*			
		Murder	*Sec. 2 manslaughter*	*Other manslaughter*	*Infanticide*
England and Wales					
1982	68	18	22	19	6
1983	72	16	11	28	10
1984	64	8	13	29	2
1985	79	22	9	26	8
1986	60	18	7	18	3
1987	77	20	11	36	1
[2]1988	58	12	6	28	6
Essex police force area					
1982	1	1	—	—	—
1983	2	—	1	1	—
1984	1	—	—	1	—
1985	2	1	—	1	—
1986	2	—	—	1	—

Year	Indicted for homicide	Convicted of homicide: Murder	Sec. 2 manslaughter	Other manslaughter	Infanticide
1987	1	—	1	—	—
[2]1988	3	—	—	2	1

[1] As at 1 June 1989.
[2] 1988 figures are not yet complete: there were 277 suspects for whom court proceedings were not completed by 1 June 1989.

Football Grounds

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what advice his Department has issued to local authorities on their responsibilities for granting safety certificates for, and overseeing reductions in, standing accommodation at football grounds in England and Wales for the 1990-91 football season.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The Home Office has given advice to local authorities in England and Wales on their responsibilities under the Safety of Sports Grounds Act in a number of circulars over the past 15 years. The safety standards which local authorities are currently advised to apply for both seated and standing accommodation are those recommended in the 1986 edition of the "Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds" produced by the Home Office and the Scottish Office, subject to certain changes recommended in Lord Justice Taylor's interim and final reports on the Hillsborough tragedy of which local authorities in England and Wales were advised in circulars on 4 August 1989 and 7 February 1990.

We are advised that it would not be appropriate to use safety certificates to require football grounds to reduce standing accommodation which meets accepted standards of safety or when specific powers are available in other legislation. The circular of 7 February 1990 therefore advised local authorities that they should not be used for this purpose. It is for the football clubs to respond to Lord Justice Taylor's recommendations on all-seated accommodation in the first instance. Powers under section 11 of the Football Spectators Act will be used in due course if it proves necessary to do so.

ENERGY

Civil Servants (Workplaces)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessments under Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations have been undertaken at all workplaces used by civil servants in his Department.

Mr. Wakeham: Assessments under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations have been carried out by the Department of Energy at those premises where it is the major user. Where the Department is a minor occupier the responsibility for such assessments lies with the major occupier.

Hinkley Point C

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he intends to seek the views of Parliament in the form of a debate before he makes any recommendations on the report of the inspector on the Hinkley Point C pressurised water reactor proposal.

Mr. Baldry: No. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State set out his intentions for handling the inspector's report in his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) on 14 June at column *287*.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Community Charge Rebates

122. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received regarding eligibility for community charge rebates.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Department of Social Security is responsible for the community charge benefit scheme. I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 23 May at column *208*. In the one month since that reply the Department has received a further 526 items of correspondence about the community charge benefit scheme.

Pensioners' Incomes

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide what information he has about the level of investment income for pensioners, according to the level of their weekly pension income.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The latest available information, from the 1987 family expenditure survey, is set out in the table.

Table[1]: Average investment income according to levels of weekly income from state pension and supplementary benefit[2]

RP and supplementary benefit £	Average savings/ investment income £
00·00 to 39·93[3]	13·45
40·00 to 59·99	15·24
60·00 plus	33·56

[1] Source: Family expenditure survey.
[2] It is not possible to identify the state retirement pension separately from supplementary benefit from the family expenditure survey.
[3] Income bands selected to provide representative sample sizes.

Blind People

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he is taking to ensure provision of social security benefits to blind people with additional costs.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) on 26 February at column *61*.

Industrial Deafness

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people who were previously denied benefits under the five-year rule governing claims for industrial deafness benefit have re-applied since the ruling of the Law Lords in October 1989 on good cause grounds in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole.

Mr. Scott: Eleven applications for review have been received from people in the Greenock and Port Glasgow area following the Court of Appeal ruling. Figures for Strathclyde and Scotland as a whole can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Income Support

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much it would cost in the current financial year to extend to transitional protection claimants the full annual uprating of income support.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The cost in additional income support has been estimated at about £35 million.

Energy Costs

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to the answers of 10 May, *Official Report*, column 191, and 30 April, *Official Report*, column 419, about energy consumption, what is the square footage of office space to which these figures relate.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The area is 17,383,684 sq ft.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much was invested in improving the energy efficiency of his Department in the latest available year.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* Information is not available separately for the Departments of Health and Social Security. In the financial year 1989-90, the Departments combined invested £133,000 in energy efficiency measures. Further investment was made by the Property Services Agency, but the amount cannot be identified separately from the agency's overall expenditure on energy efficiency.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many tenants qualify for housing benefit in Ceredigion; what were the corresponding figures for the last three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 22 June 1990]:* The information requested is in the table.

	1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
Number of Local Authority and private tenants receiving housing benefit (rounded to the nearest 50)	4,600	3,750	3,500

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

EC Legislation

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the short title of any legislative Act approved by European Community member states since 1 January in relation to which each state must take national implementing measures; and what action has been taken by each state in relation to each such measure.

Mr. Redwood: The table lists the directives relevant to completion of the single European market which have been formally adopted by the Council of Ministers since 1 January 1990. A period of grace, typically 18 months, is allowed for member states to transpose directives into national law. It is generally too early, therefore, to comment on what action member states will take to implement these directives. In addition, directives in other areas of application, most notably concerning health and safety at the workplace, have also been adopted during this period. A full list of these and other legislative acts—regulations, decisions and recommendations—is recorded in the Official Journal of the European Communities, copies of which are available in the House of Commons Library.

Directives relevant to completion of the single market adopted since 1 January 1990

Marketing of compound feedingstuffs
Amendment to Directive 87/102 concerning consumer credit
Bovine semen—amendment to Directive 88/407
Acceptance of pure-bred breeding pigs for breeding
Acceptance of hybrid breeding pigs for breeding
Production and trade in medicated feedingstuffs
Amendment to Directive 77/93 on protective measures against the introduction into member states of organisms harmful to plants or plant products.
Amendment to Directive 80/390 in respect of mutual recognition of public offer prospectuses and stock exchange listing particulars.
Third Directive concerning motor liability insurance
Maximum tar yield of cigarettes
Active implantable electromedical devices
Non-automatic weighing instruments.

Chinese Bicycles

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what consultations have been undertaken within the EEC on the French Government plan to control the importation of bicycles of Chinese origin by quota; and if he will support similar measures to be extended to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Redwood: Member states have not yet been consulted about any plans by the French Government to restrict imports of bicycles from China. In seeking such action the French Government would have to submit a formal application to the Commission giving detailed evidence of the injury, or threat of injury, to domestic producers from the imports in question. My officials have received no requests from United Kingdom manufacturers for action to restrict imports into the United Kingdom of Chinese bicycles, but we will consider carefully any case with supporting evidence put forward by the industry.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been the percentage increase in Chinese bicycle imports in the current year over 1989; and what action he is proposing to take to protect United Kingdom manufacturing interests.

Mr. Redwood: The percentage increase in imports of bicycles from China to the United Kingdom, for January to April 1990 over the same period for 1989 was 30·1 per cent. by volume. Imports of bicycles from China into the United Kingdom are covered by the EC's generalised system of preferences. My Department is in contact with United Kingdom bicycle manufacturers and will be meeting them shortly to discuss what action could be taken.

Securities Regulation

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action he will take with regard to the regulatory position in the light of the case of Dunsdale Securities; and if he has any plans to increase the powers of the Financial Intermediaries, Managers and Brokers Regulatory Association.

Mr. Redwood: It is the responsibility of the Securities and Investments Board to ensure that the regulatory framework established by its own rules and those of the self-regulating bodies, including FIMBRA, provides the appropriate level of protection for investors. The Secretary of State has responsibilities for general oversight of the regulatory system under the Financial Services Act, but not for its day-to-day operation.

Consumer Affairs Council

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on what matters were agreed at the European Community Consumer Affairs Council on 13 June.

Mr. Forth: The directive on package travel was adopted. There was agreement in principle that the European home and leisure accident surveillance system should be extended and that the programme should be adoped later in June. It was agreed that the rapid exchange of information system should be extended, the matter being remitted to the Committee of Permanent Representatives to consider further detailed procedures.

Consumer Credit Advertising

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) whether he proposes to make changes in the consumer credit advertising regulations with regard to low start mortgage repayments;

(2) whether he proposes to make changes in the consumer credit advertising regulations with regard to home income plans.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* I have no plans to do so, but I am always ready to consider reasoned suggestions for amending regulations.

National Front (Printers) Ltd.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he gave his approval to the company name National Front (Printers) Ltd. under section 26 of the Companies Act 1985.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* Applications for names requiring the Secretary of State's approval under section 26 of the Companies Act 1985 are considered using established criteria and within the framework of administrative law. There were no grounds on which the application could properly have been rejected.

End User Certificates

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action he intends to take to prevent the abuse of end user certificates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 18 June 1990]:* Where there is evidence of attempts to provide misleading information about the end use of equipment which is the subject of an export licence application, the matter is carefully investigated.

WALES

Teachers (Welsh Language)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of teachers of Welsh language and literature required to implement the national curriculum for Welsh; and what proposals he has to make up any shortfall.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Estimates of the number of teachers required to deliver the national curriculum for Welsh are being prepared in the light of discussions with local education authorities, and using recent information on pupil numbers. It is clear that additional teachers of Welsh will be required as the national curriculum is introduced.

The need for additional teachers will be met through a mix of initial teacher training—ITT—and in-service training. With regard to ITT we have issued new criteria for the training of primary teachers which will require all initial teacher training institutions in Wales to provide opportunities for students to learn Welsh and improve their Welsh language skills while they are training; added Welsh to the list of secondary shortage subjects for which a bursary of £1,500 will be available in initial teacher training; and introduced the Welsh-medium supplement which could produce teachers capable of teaching Welsh in English medium primary schools if students fail to gain posts in Welsh medium schools.

In order to take advantage of the skills available within the existing teaching force we have provided funding to enable courses to be developed for serving primary and secondary teachers to prepare them to teach Welsh as a second language; and provided additional funding for LEA in-service training for Welsh—£900,000 has been made available this year.

The teaching as a career unit was established to promote teaching as a career. Its activity in Wales is sharply focused on the need to recruit additional propsective teachers of Welsh and Welsh-medium teachers. A total of £116,000 has been made available through education support grants for LEAs in Wales to support the development of measures to increase the recruitment of teachers in the shortage subjects including Welsh.

Teacher Training Courses

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many postgraduate students in Wales pursued initial teacher training courses in 1989; and how many benefited from his Department's initiative for meeting the shortfall in Welsh-medium teachers.

Sir Wyn Roberts: A total of 883 post graduate students commenced initial teacher training in 1989. Forty-two of these students are benefiting from the Welsh incentive supplement.

Teaching (Welsh-speaking Graduates)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will extend his initiative to train additional Welsh-medium teachers to graduate in Welsh language and literature in order to attract sufficient Welsh-speaking graduates into the teaching profession to implement the objectives of the national curriculum.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Welsh incentive supplement is aimed at encouraging students who need additional help to develop their language skills to train for Welsh-medium teaching. Additional work is required of these students. Graduates in Welsh would clearly not need additional help and thus there is no case for making the supplement available to this group.

Countryside Change (Survey)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what contribution his Department is making to the survey on countryside change being conducted by the institute of Terrestrial Ecology at the University college of North Wales for the Natural Environmental Research Council.

Sir Wyn Roberts: None. This is a Great Britain-wide survey funded by the Department of the Environment and the Natural Environment Research Council.

Computers

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of the school timetable on average Welsh school pupils spend using computers.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This information is not held centrally.

Obstetrics

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many junior doctors are employed in obstetrics on a whole-time equivalent basis in the national health service in Wales in the current year; and how many were employed in each of the past five years.

Mr. Ian Grist: The available information, which relates to staff in obstetrics and gynaecology, is as follows:

Junior doctors in post as at 30 September[1] (whole-time equivalents)

	Number
1984	109·6
1985	116·4
1986	111·7
1987	113·4
1988	122·0
[2]1989	127·2

[1] Senior registrar, registrar, senior house officers and house officers. Excluding locums.
[2] Provisional.

Elderly People

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) whether he will list, by health authority, the number of beds available in continuing care for elderly people in the national health service in Wales;

(2) what steps he is taking to ensure continuing care provision in the national health service for elderly people in Wales;

(3) whether he will list, by health authority, the number of beds in continuing care for elderly people which have been contracted out in Wales.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is not held centrally. It is for local health authority management to decide the nature of the continuous care service it provides, in the light of local needs and circumstances and the overall level of provision.

Mental Illness

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much money has been allocated in the current financial year by his Department to support the implementation of the all-Wales strategy on mental illness *(a)* to each local authority in Wales, *(b)* to voluntary organisations in each local authority area and *(c)* to voluntary organisations in Wales as a whole.

Mr. Grist: Provisional allocations have been made in respect of proposals put forward by each of the eight county joint planning teams as follows:

	£
Clwyd	227,100
Dyfed	200,000
Gwent	245,300
Gwynedd	126,597
Mid Glamorgan	137,700
Powys	101,813
South Glamorgan	316,799
West Glamorgan	241,500

In many cases where a proposal involves participation by more than one agency, it has yet to be established how the funding will be apportioned. Some £96,000 has been allocated to the voluntary sector in respect of services being provided on an all-Wales basis.

School Nurses

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many secondary schools in each country in Wales are currently served by a school nurse based on the premises.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information on the number of school nurses based on individual secondary school premises is not collected centrally. The numbers of secondary schools served by a school nurse in each county in Wales is as follows:

Number of secondary schools served by a school nurse, 1988-89

	Number
Clwyd	30
Dyfed	16
Gwent	17
Gwynedd	5
Mid Glamorgan	13
Powys	3

	Number
South Glamorgan	25
West Glamorgan	26
WALES	135

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy that a school nurse be provided at each secondary or high school in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This is a matter for determination locally.

Rural Housing

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he intends to issue planning guidance on land for low-cost housing in rural Wales.

Mr. Grist: There was an excellent and constructive response to the consultation which the Welsh Office carried out last year. Thirty-two local planning authorities and 16 other organisations wrote in reply to the Welsh Office letter and my right hon. Friend and I are grateful for the time and thought which they gave to the proposed planning guidance.

Most of the respondents supported the objectives of the guidance and agreed that in suitable places it would encourage the sale of land for low-cost housing at less than full residential value and hence reduce the cost of providing the accommodation itself. There were reservations about the degree of benefit, concern about possible adverse environmental effects of a large-scale growth of housing in rural communities and about the cost of servicing a proliferation of sites in villages, as well as many comments of detail.

My right hon. Friend has concluded that to complement existing policies for the provision of low-cost housing in rural areas planning guidance should be issued along the lines of the consultation paper. He recognises proper concerns about the environment and about design and will ensure that in the guidance the importance which he attaches to these will be emphasised. He will also take the opportunity to stress that the scale of provision which he envisages will not be great and certainly not such as to swamp any village with new houses or to put any community at risk because of overprovision of low-cost housing whose disposal is constrained to a low-priced local market. The guidance will be included in a comprehensive planning policy guidance note on land for housing.

Meanwhile the Secretary of State takes the view that in considering planning applications for dwellings in rural areas local planning authorities may accept as a material consideration the fact that watertight arrangements are in place which will ensure that the proposed dwellings are available only to provide affordable accommodation for local people. The local planning authority will of course also have to take into account the provisions of the development plan and all other material considerations. In so doing, they will be expected to have regard to the environmental impact of the proposal on the community and to the need for sympathetic design as well as to the extent of the local housing need which the proposal sets out to satisfy.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Televising of the House

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list those organisations and individuals who can receive the television pictures of the House of Commons chamber, those who have terminated their receivers since the beginning of the experiment and those who have applied for a signal but have been refused.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The list of organisations and individuals within the House and its outbuildings who receive a clean feed from the Chamber is as follows: Mr. Speaker; Mr. Speaker's Secretary; the Chairman of Ways and Means; the Votes and Proceedings Office the Supervisor of Broadcasting; and the Press Gallery, within which some broadcasting organisations have made their own separate arrangements. There are of course also monitors in each of the Division Lobbies.

In addition, I understand that some Government Departments have arranged through the Central Office of Information to take the clean feed, though this facility does not apply to Ministers' rooms in the House.

So far as organisations outside the House are concerned, all the main broadcasters within the United Kingdom,—the BBC, ITV, Channel 4, Sky TV and BSB —are entitled under the terms of the first report of Session 1988-89 of the Select Committee on Televising of Proceedings of the House to receive the clean feed. Westminster Cable TV has also been approved for this purpose. As regards foreign-based broadcasters, BBC and ITN make available on the daily Eurovision news exchange extracts from the clean feed of up to two minutes, while House of Commons Broadcasting Unit Ltd. has licensed WTN and Visnews to supply overseas customers with material from the House of Commons of not more than five minutes duration. In addition, House of Commons Broadcasting Unit Ltd. has licensed a large number of foreign broadcasters to take longer coverage, including:

Country	*Broadcasting organisation*
Australia	ABC Channel 9
Canada	CBC
Germany	ARD ZDF
Hong Kong	TVB News Asia TV
Ireland	RTE
Japan	NHK
United States	ABC CBS CNN C-Span NBC

House of Commons Broadcasting Unit Ltd. has also licensed the Press Association to provide newspapers with still photographs of the Chamber. These are made, using a freeze-frame technique, from a clean feed supplied for the purpose.

There are a further 26 organisations, mainly in broadcasting or the press, who are already authorised to take a clean sound feed and who, on the basis of a policy decision taken by the Select Committee, are also entitled, without the need to seek separate permission, to take a clean television feed if they wish. I understand that very few of these organisations have in fact exercised their right to receive the television feed, although precise information about their identity is not readily available since as indicated, they do not need the approval of the Select Committee to do so. The full list of 26 is as follows:

British Forces Broadcasting Service
Manx Radio
South African Broadcasting Corporation
National Public Radio (USA)
Radio stations affiliated to the National Association of Hospital Broadcasting Organisations
Scandinavian Broadcasting (Danish (DR), Finnish (YLE), Norwegian and Swedish radio and television)
Voice of America
Falkland Islands Broadcasting
Associated Press Ltd.
IBS News Ltd.
Radio Television Hong Kong
Radio Basildon
London Broadcasting Co. Ltd. (who are authorised to supply the feed to national newspapers)
Israel Broadcasting Authority
Norddeutscher Fundfunk Hamburg
Westdeutscher Rundfunk Koln
Deutsche Welle, Koln
Wall Street Journal London Bureau
Reuters Ltd.
Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB)
Sound Productions (Overseas Promotions) Ltd.
TV Asahi
Christian Science Monitor
Telerate Europe/Gulf
Bank of England
New York Times London Bureau

I know of no case in which a person or organisation entitled to receive the clean feed has decided to stop doing so. Apart from the hon. Member, the only direct representation for the granting of a clean feed which the Select Committee has received and rejected was from the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), acting on behalf of his party.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Extradition

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether a request has been made at any time to the Government of the Republic of Ireland to implement article 2 of the European convention on the suppression of terrorism with regard to extradition between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Cope: At the last meeting of the Inter-Governmental Conference on 19 April, Ministers of both Governments commissioned officials to undertake a review of arrangements for dealing with fugitive offenders. We will continue to pursue these matters through the conference.

Social Security

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps have been taken to improve the budgetary allocation in respect of the social fund to each of the social security offices in South Down.

Mr. Needham: This year's allocations to social security offices took greater account of the level of demand for social fund payments in each area. A copy of a paper describing the allocation formula is available in the Library.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the budgetary allocation to each of the social security offices in South Down in each of the years *(a)* 11 April 1988 to 31 March 1989, *(b)* 1 April 1989 to 31 March 1990, and *(c)* 1 April 1990 to 31 March 1991.

Mr. Needham: The information requested can be obtained from the Library.

Public Bodies (Losses)

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish in statistical form the financial value of losses written off by each education and library board and each area health board in Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in each of the last seven years.

Mr. Cope: The information for the latest seven years available in each instance is as follows:

Education and Library Boards

Board	*1982-83* £	*1983-84* £	*1984-85* £	*1985-86* £	*1986-87* £	*1987-88* £	*1988-89* £
Belfast	97,036	410,686	1,245,945	687,847	310,699	768,319	467,225
North-Eastern	52,822	116,478	148,542	176,672	271,347	239,386	337,388
South-Eastern	40,725	225,092	336,254	287,153	455,409	287,783	275,042
Southern	68,420	235,973	187,556	222,678	295,427	345,319	274,195
Western	59,522	158,677	209,170	237,127	180,622	345,913	203,172

Area health boards

Board	*1982-83* £	*1983-84* £	*1984-85* £	*1985-86* £	*1986-87* £	*1987-88* £	*1988-89* £
Northern	45,102	43,663	46,568	34,682	45,711	105,206	78,778
Southern	29,302	116,817	21,445	48,294	137,260	87,317	200,487
Eastern	224,852	177,355	114,550	123,710	117,135	101,753	397,693
Western	17,364	32,828	44,351	9,894	120,773	235,667	108,819

Northern Ireland Housing Executive

	£
1983-84	798,829
1984-85	758,451
1985-86	1,149,130
1986-87	1,459,219
1987-88	1,601,077
1988-89	1,194,274
1989-90	1,216,838

Maternity Services

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his policy on the integration of hospital-based maternity and community midwifery care; whether he proposes to issue guidelines to health boards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 19 June 1990]:* In Northern Ireland there is an integrated hospital and community midwifery care service. The primary responsibility for deciding the most appropriate management arrangements which will ensure the continued provision of a high quality and cost-effective service rests with health and social services boards.

There are no proposals to issue any guidance.

Salmon

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many salmon were taken by commercial nets in the Foyle area by *(a)* drift nets, *(b)* draft nets, *(c)* fixed nets and *(d)* anglers in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 20 June 1990]:* The information requested is as follows:

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*
(a) Drift nets	29,822	21,252	37,165	65,654	18,299	24,528	32,280	12,587	17,321	55,108
(b) Draft nets	16,438	11,781	20,304	15,481	10,292	14,066	12,709	5,434	16,176	31,090
(c) Fixed nets	2,963	1,748	2,688	2,117	941	1,927	1,365	462	842	330
(d) Anglers (declared catch)	1,134	1,517	2,125	831	379	1,814	1,172	390	960	na
TOTAL	50,357	36,298	62,282	84,083	29,911	42,335	47,526	18,873	35,299	86,528

n.a Not available.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Terrorism

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table to show for each *(a)* police county and *(b)* police division, with breaks at each change of such administrative area, the number of deaths from terrorist action since 1 January 1969 until the latest available date, or as much of such information as is conveniently available to him.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 20 June 1990]:* The following table details the total number of deaths due to the security situation in Northern Ireland since 1969. Figures have been compiled using current RUC divisional boundaries.

Deaths as a result of security situation
1 January 1969 to 31 May 1990

Division	*Total*
A	323
B	430
D	632
E	49
G	62
H	418
J	135
K	189
L	171
N	282
O	62
P	44

SCOTLAND

Departmental Research (Expenditure)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total identifiable expenditure on research by his Department in each year since 1979; what proportion was awarded on a customer-contractor basis; and what proportion of his total departmental budget was expended on research for each year.

Mr. Rifkind: The information is in the following table. All of it was awarded on a customer-contractor basis.

£ million, cash

	Expenditure on research	*Percentage of departmental budget*
1979-80	28·5	1·6
1980-81	35·7	1·5
1981-82	40·8	1·6
1982-83	42·8	1·4
1983-84	49·5	1·8
1984-85	53·3	1·8
1985-86	53·8	1·7
1986-87	53·4	1·6
1987-88	51·6	1·5
1988-89	54·6	1·4

Local Government Finance

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he plans to take to encourage people entitled to transitional allowance and particularly pensioners to lodge claims both in 1989-90 and 1990-91; and whether he will consider an advertising campaign to that end.

Mr. Rifkind: The Scottish Office undertook an advertising campaign in the national press earlier this year and issued more than 150,000 leaflets explaining the scheme to local authorities and interested organisations. Additionally, most local authorities have made extensive efforts to encourage applications from pensioners and the disabled who may be eligible for increased relief under the scheme. We do not consider that any further action needs to be taken.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he has made of the percentage of those entitled to transitional allowances on the poll tax in 1989-90 who have actually claimed.

Mr. Rifkind: Ninety per cent. of those people estimated to be eligible for transitional relief should be identified automatically from local authorities' records. At this stage it is not possible to estimate the number of pensioners and the disabled who will receive increased relief for which application must be made.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people in Scotland were liable to pay the poll tax in *(a)* 1989-90 and *(b)* 1990-91.

Mr. Rifkind: Returns from community charges registration officers indicate that, as at 5 September 1989, a total of 3,904,189 people were liable to pay the personal community charge. Comparable figures are not yet available for 1990, but in setting their community charges earlier this year, local authorities assumed that 3,887,531 people would be liable to pay the personal community charge in 1990-91. These figures include students, who are liable for only 20 per cent. of the community charge, but exclude those liable for collective or standard community charges.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of second homes for each local authority, on the basis of information collected for the poll tax.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information on second homes is not collected for the purpose of levying the community charges. The number of premises liable for the standard community charge for each district and islands council area as at 5 September 1989 is set out in the table.

	Number of standard charge premises September 1989
Berwickshire	420
Ettrick and Lauderdale	372
Roxburgh	482
Tweeddale	235
Clackmannan	592
Falkirk	1,117
Stirling	1,876
Annandale and Eskdale	654
Nithsdale	886
Stewartry	872
Wigtown	846
Dunfermline	131
Kirkcaldy	441
North East Fife	1,731
Aberdeen	3,390
Banff and Buchan	2,005
Gordon	1,545
Kincardine and Deeside	1,260
Moray	2,060
Badenoch and Strathspey	1,021
Caithness	1,023
Inverness	1,350
Lochaber	916
Nairn	251
Ross and Cromarty	2,022
Skye and Lochalsh	868
Sutherland	1,033
East Lothian	2,273
Edinburgh	14,469
Midlothian	1,442
West Lothian	2,348
Argyll and Bute	5,085
Bearsden and Milngavie	257
Clydebank	910
Clydesdale	997
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	539
Cumnock and Doon Valley	780
Cunninghame	2,981
Dumbarton	1,620
East Kilbride	743
Eastwood	572
Glasgow	20,875
Hamilton	1,397
Inverclyde	1,869
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	1,092
Kyle and Carrick	1,502
Monklands	1,301
Motherwell	1,835
Renfrew	3,913
Strathkelvin	723
Angus	2,059
Dundee	4,699
Perth and Kinross	3,894
Orkney	700
Shetland	902
Western Isles	587
Scotland Total	111,763

Hospital Laundering

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what capital expenditure has been incurred on the building of new national health service laundries and the renovation of existing laundry facilities over the last two years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No new laundries have been built in the last two years. Expenditure by health boards on renovating and upgrading laundries has been within their delegated expenditure limits. Details of this expenditure are not held centrally.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what capital expenditure has been incurred by health boards on the purchase of new laundering and dry-cleaning equipment over the past two years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of the capital expenditure incurred on the purchase of a new laundry and dry-cleaning machine and on the construction of new, and renovation of existing, laundry facilities over the past two years was for the creation of additional laundry capacity.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is not held centrally. It is for individual health boards to determine what laundry facilities they require.

Housing

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of housing starts and completions in *(a)* Inverclyde district, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole in each quarter of 1988, 1989 and the first quarter of the current year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The available information is set out in the following table. Figure for the period January to March 1990 are not yet available.

Housing starts and completions for years 1988 and 1989

Year	Inverclyde		Strathclyde		Scotland	
	Starts	Completions	Starts	Completions	Starts	Completions
1988						
Quarter 1	30	86	2,280	1,495	5,208	4,291
Quarter 2	70	37	2,310	1,954	5,068	4,494
Quarter 3	27	49	1,671	1,955	4,488	4,450
Quarter 4	56	29	1,946	2,147	4,626	5,020
1989						
Quarter 1	76	49	2,771	1,946	5,642	4,707
Quarter 2[1]	156	54	2,930	2,171	6,058	5,078
Quarter 3[1]	18	51	1,932	2,170	4,748	4,679
Quarter 4[2]	86	85	2,112	2,274	5,090	5,172

[1] Figures for Scotland include estimates.
[2] Figures for Strathclyde and Scotland include estimates.

Dog Fighting

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many prosecutions have been brought for dog fighting in Scotland during each of the last five years; and by whom such prosecutions were brought.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Statistics on prosecutions for dog fighting are not separately identifiable in the Scottish Home and Health Department classification of crimes and offences.

Elderly People

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will list, by health board, the number of beds available in continuing care for elderly people in the national health service in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The average number of available staffed beds for long term care of elderly patients, by health board is as follows:

Average available staffed beds year ending 31 March 1990

Health board	Number
Argyll and Clyde	746
Ayrshire and Arran	610
Borders	192
Dumfries and Galloway	308
Fife	591
Forth Valley	515
Grampian	1,087
Greater Glasgow	1,599
Highland	392
Lanarkshire	853
Lothian	1,087
Orkney	51
Shetland	89
Tayside	652
Western Isles	108
Scotland	8,880

In addition, there was for all Scotland an average of 5,914 available staffed beds for geriatric psychiatry.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will list, by health board, the number of beds in continuing care for elderly people which have been contracted out in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The average numbers of available staffed beds in joint user and contractual hospitals for the year ending 31 March 1989, the latest date for which information is centrally available, were as follows:

	Number
Argyll and Clyde	14
Greater Glasgow	24
Lanarkshire	54
Lothian	160
Scotland	252

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to ensure continuing care provision in the NHS for elderly people in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The level of service provision is a matter for individual health boards taking account of local needs. The Government have endorsed the SHARPEN report "Scottish Health Authorities' Review of Priorities for the Eighties and Nineties" which gives the highest priorities to services for old people with dementia, in hospitals and in the community, and to care in the community with particular reference to services for elderly people.

Glasgow High Court

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to meet the future accommodation needs of the High Court in Glasgow.

Mr. Rifkind: Land has been purchased at the rear of the existing justiciary buildings, Glasgow, with a view to making provision for all the work of the High Court in Glasgow to be conducted on the Saltmarket site. Further preparatory work is in progress and court users and others will be consulted on the proposed provision in due course.

Redundancies

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all notified redundancies in Scotland of more than 300 employees since 1979 giving the employer, date of announcement and number of jobs lost.

Mr. Rifkind *[holding answer 13 June 1990]:* Information cannot be provided in the precise form

requested. The names of individual employers notifying redundancies to the Department of Employment are treated as commercial in confidence. Additionally, data on redundancies confirmed are unlikely to be complete, as employers are not obliged to advise the Department of Employment of the redundancies actually effected following notification. The remaining information sought is set out in the table.

Year	*Redundancies notified (300 employees or more)*	*Number of employees*	*Redundancies confirmed*
1979	29,515	34	[1]
1980	19,003	28	[1]
1981	25,081	30	[1]
1982	23,292	30	[1]
1983	18,280	22	11,948
1984	11,243	13	7,691
1985	10,030	15	8,262
1986	8,612	17	4,370
1987	7,806	12	4,618
1988	8,121	15	2,661
1989	19,203	11	4,866

[1] No information available.

Home Improvement Grants

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how the amount of the financial allocation for the new system of home improvement grants for the financial year 1991-92 will be determined.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The Government have no immediate plans to introduce a new system of improvement and repairs grants in Scotland. Resources for housing capital expenditure in 1991-92 will be allocated, as in previous years, on the basis of local authorities' relative needs and with reference to their capital programmes and housing plans.

Procurator Fiscal, Orkney

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what savings he anticipates will be made in the present financial year as a result of downgrading the post of procurator fiscal in Orkney from a full-time to a part-time appointment.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The present arrangements for discharging the duties of the procurator fiscal, Orkney are expected to save £25,000 in the current financial year.

HEALTH

Community Care

124. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has made an estimate of the additional costs to be incurred by local authorities in 1991-92 due to the new legislation on community care; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) on 23 May at column *199*.

Departmental Research (Expenditure)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total identifiable expenditure on research by his Department in each year since 1979; what proportion was awarded on a customer-contractor basis; and what proportion of his total departmental budget was expended on research for each year.

Mr. Dorrell: Research and development by the Department of Health, all of which is managed on the customer-contractor principle, is funded through the research budgets for health and personal social services, procurement directorate, national health service information technology and building and engineering.

For 1988-89, the latest year for which out-turn figures are available, the total such expenditure was £15·8 million, forming 0·086 per cent. of total Department of Health expenditure.

Available information for earlier years has been published in the Cabinet Office Annual Review of Government Funded Research and Development.

South London Hospital for Women

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent discussions he or officials in his Department have had, and with whom, on the future use to be made of the now closed South London hospital for women.

Mr. Dorrell: None. We understand that the West Lambeth health authority has plans to submit an approval in principle submission to the South East Thames regional health authority for a proposal to use the site to meet a variety of health needs in the area.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the basis on which financial help will be provided to health authorities after the establishment of hospital trusts in their areas.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: All district health authorities will receive a revenue allocation with which to purchase services for their residents whether from NHS trusts, directly managed units or the private or voluntary sectors.

Minor Surgery

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what encouragement the Government are giving to general practitioners to undertake more minor surgery.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We are keen to encourage more GPs to provide minor surgery, which is a service popular with patients. The GPs' new contract introduces for the first time specific remuneration for this work. GPs admitted to the minor surgery List will receive a sessional payment of £100 provided they perform at least five of the procedures listed in the regulations each quarter. A GP is allowed to claim no more than three sessional payments a quarter. Where a GP carries out minor surgery on behalf of a partnership or group practice he or she may claim a higher number of payments in a quarter up to a maximum of three times the number of partners or members of the group. These arrangements will provide a strong incentive to GPs to extend their skills, resulting in an enhanced

service to their patients. In consequence, patients will be saved the inconvenience of attending out-patients departments.

Project 2000

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations he has received from the Royal College of Nursing on the implementation of Project 2000.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: None. We understand that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has recently received a letter concerning the implementation of Project 2000 from Christine Hancock, the General Secretary of the Royal College of Nursing.

Lyme Disease

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of Lyme disease were reported in the last 12 months.

Mr. Dorrell: In 1989, a total of 16 laboratory reports of Lyme disease in England and Wales were received by the public health laboratory service's communicable disease surveillance centre. The provisional number of reports received for the first five months of 1990 was five.

Births Basildon

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the number of babies born at Basildon hospital in each of the last seven years.

Mr. Dorrell: Births at particular hospitals have only been analysed by OPCS since 1989. However, records analysed by the Basildon and Thurrock district health authority give the following information.

Year	*Number of births*
1983	2,323
1984	2,378
1985	2,455
1986	2,397
1987	2,470
[1]1988-89	2,646
[1]1989-90	2,695

Source: Basildon and Thurrock district health authority.
[1] Financial year.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the numbers of babies born in *(a)* Basildon constituency and *(b)* the Basildon and Thurrock district health authority area in each of the last seven years.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested is given in the tables.

Live and still births for Basildon borough constituency

	Livebirths	*Stillbirths*
1982	1,418	9
1983	1,435	9
1984	1,420	7
1985	1,461	4
1986	1,418	4
1987	1,462	6
1988	1,523	9
1989	1,589	3

Live and still births for Basildon and Thurrock DHA

	Livebirths	*Stillbirths*
1982	3,827	25
1983	3,901	20
1984	4,010	18
1985	4,143	16
1986	4,057	19
1987	4,297	13
1988	4,460	23
1989	4,420	11

Hospital Laundering

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer of 6 March, *Official Report*, column *579*, if he will detail the relevant monitoring arrangements to ensure that health authorities take account of all relevant expenditure when determining the cost of their in-house laundering and dry cleaning facilities.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To ensure independent assessment those involved in compiling an in-house tender and service costing are expressly excluded from participation in the tender evaluation exercise. All costings are also open to scrutiny by the relevant district health authority, the regional health authority and to internal and external auditors.

Children (Social Services)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to collect the statistics necessary to estimate the number of children who are not receiving care from local authority social services and social workers in cases in which there is a statutory duty to provide such care.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There are no present plans to do so. The regional offices of the social services inspectorate will continue to monitor the situation within their areas.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the waiting list initiative.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) on 18 January at columns *403-4*.

NHS Manager

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the number of managers within the national health service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Managers may be employed in a wide range of professions and disciplines in the National Health Service; there is no single definition on which a total figure could be based. About 900 general manager posts, and an estimated 8,000 at senior and middle manager level, are currently included in management pay arrangements.

Health Authorities

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will introduce measures to ensure all members of health authorities are directly elected; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No.

Obstetrics

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many junior doctors are employed in obstetrics on a whole-time equivalent basis in the National Health Service in each regional health authority in England in the current year; and how many were employed in each of the past five years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested is given in the table.

Hospital junior doctors in Obstetrics and Gynaecology showing whole time equivalents at 30 September each year

Year	*1988*	*1987*	*1986*	*1985*	*1984*	*1983*
England	1,866·7	1,725·7	1,758·3	1,761·7	1,762·4	1,768·9
Northern	124·7	125·7	135·5	134·8	135·5	137·2
Yorkshire	121·8	103·3	126·1	120·7	116·0	130·9
Trent	183·1	169·8	175·5	167·2	163·8	159·9
East Anglia	67·1	70·0	64·0	65·4	64·5	66·4
North West Thames	166·9	148·8	142·1	157·8	145·9	150·9
North East Thames	183·6	159·1	180·3	185·1	177·0	175·9
South East Thames	142·4	139·7	128·8	124·8	130·8	129·4
South West Thames	102·0	100·4	100·7	96·0	95·8	99·6
Wessex	67·8	76·3	72·4	78·3	98·4	77·2
Oxford	99·9	93·1	91·9	93·8	84·0	86·3
South Western	115·0	93·9	96·0	90·7	94·1	92·6
West Midlands	190·6	178·3	176·7	177·8	170·8	169·4
Mersey	90·8	91·0	77·3	91·8	91·2	101·3
North Western	178·6	159·0	176·0	169·8	165·1	168·2
SHAs	32·4	20·4	14·5	7·3	29·5	23·7

Source: Medical and dental census.
Notes:
1. Includes permanent paid and honorary staff.
2. Junior doctors includes senior registrar, registrar, senior house officer and house officer.

Central Blood Laboratories Authority

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what negotiations are taking place, or scheduled to take place, with the United States firm, Baxters, in relation to the Central Blood Laboratories Authority operations at Elstree and Churchill hospital, Oxford; what are the terms of reference of the negotiations; when he expects them to be completed; and what plans he has to report publicly on the outcome.

Mr. Dorrell: The Central Blood Laboratories Authority conducts regular negotiations with other organisations in the plasma fractionation industry with a view to gaining access to methods and processes which might lead to more efficient utilisation of the plasma received from the National Blood Transfusion Service. Baxter Inc is one such company. These negotiations are commercially sensitive and remain confidential.

Regional Health Authorities

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what account he took of the additional costs of PTB and A and C pay restructuring when deciding cash allocations to regional health authorities;

(2) whether the increased cost consequences of PTB and A and C pay restructuring are to be met from additional central funding or out of existing regional health authority and district health authority allocations.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Health authorities should meet increases in prices and pay, including the costs of restructuring negotiated in the Whitley councils, from their cash allocations, income generation schemes and cost improvement programmes.

The PTB and A and C pay restructurings were negotiated in 1989. By the end of the two year period 1989-90 to 1990-91, the gross extra resources available to the National Health Service in England will have increased by over £4 billion or 20 per cent.

Corwin

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action has been taken by the Committee on Safety of Medicines on the drug Corwin; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the right hon. Member to the reply that I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Sir Michael McNair-Wilson) on 21 June at columns *677-78*.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimates there are of the number of prescriptions of Corwin to patients with severe heart conditions.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the right hon. Member to the reply that I gave the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) on 21 June at column *678*. Prescriptions do not indicate the nature of severity of the patient's condition.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will request the Committee on Safety of Medicines to re-evaluate the evidence about the heart drug Corwin and to reconsider its recommendations.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The safety profile of Corwin has been closely monitored since its introduction onto the market in May 1988 by inclusion on the Committee on Safety of Medicine's (CSM) intensive monitoring scheme

for all newly marketed products. The CSM has reviewed all the evidence related to the safety profile of the product on a number of occasions. Restrictions have been placed on the use of the product following re-consideration by CSM as recently as January 1990. Doctors were informed of these restrictions in a letter from ICI Pharmaceuticals, who market the product, and in CSM's bulletin "Current Problems" number 28, a copy of which is available in the Library. The use of Corwin is now to be initiated only in hospital after careful assessment of the patient who is to be regularly followed up. The CSM is satisfied that the product can be used safely if these recommendations are followed, but will continue to monitor the situation carefully.

Drug Safety

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give consideration to adopting in the United Kingdom the United States Food and Drug Administration's system of publishing summary basis of approval reports when a product licence is given to a pharmaceutical drug.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Commission of the European Community (EC) suggested publication of a summary basis of approvals in proposals for a future licensing system for licensing in the EC. Further proposals are expected from the Commission soon and we shall consider these carefully. Section 118 of the Medicines Act 1968 currently prohibits disclosure of information obtained for the purposes of the Act.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will request all pharmaceutical companies to inform the Committee on Safety of Medicines when they withdraw a licence application to the United States Food and Drug Administration for a drug which has a British licence and to give the reason for the withdrawal.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There are standard provisions attached to every product licence granted to a medicinal product in the United Kingdom. These provisions require the licence holder to inform the licensing authority of any information that casts doubt upon the continued validity of the data which was submitted for the purpose of the assessment of safety, quality and efficacy of any medicinal product to which the licence relates. Licence holders are also required to provide details of adverse reaction reports received worldwide by them. These statutory requirements provide sufficient safeguards to ensure that the licensing authority and the Committee on Safety of Medicines are informed of all relevant issues relating to a licensed medicinal product by the pharmaceutical company holding the licence.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make public all discussions in the Committee on Safety of Medicines on matters pertaining directly to patients' health.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The deliberations of the Committee on Safety of Medicines (CSM) are confidential. Information on potential problems with medicines is sent regularly to all prescribers by means of CSM's "Current Problems" bulletin; in the case of major drug safety hazards the professions are alerted by means of a letter from the Chairman. Other means of publicity may be used when necessary. Drug prescribing information and guidance is also available from a number of other sources, for example the British National Formulary, which the Department issues free to all doctors twice yearly.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will introduce legislation requiring the Committee on Safety of Medicines to consider whether or not a drug is more efficacious than other drugs already on the market before it grants a product licence.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There are no plans to amend section 19(2) of the Medicines Act 1968 which requires the licensing authority to leave out of account any question of relative efficacy.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to request the Committee on Safety of Medicines, whenever there is a withdrawal of a licence application to the United States Food and Drug Administration for a drug which has a British licence, to re-evaluate the safety evidence.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The licensing authority would consult the Committee on Safety of Medicines (CSM) in the event of important new information being made available in relation to a medical product which was licensed in the United Kingdom. Withdrawal of a licence application made to the United States Food and Drug Administration could occur for a number of reasons. In the United Kingdom holders of product licences for medicinal products are required to inform the licensing authority of any information that casts doubt upon the continued validity of data which were submitted for the purpose of the assessment of safety, quality and efficacy of the licensed product. Licence holders are also required to provide details of adverse reaction reports received by them.

Elderly Patients

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the daily per capita food allowance is for elderly patients in continuing care in the NHS in England.

Mr. Dorrell: The decision as to the level of dietary requirements rests with each individual health authority.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what steps he is taking to ensure continuing care provision in the NHS for elderly people in England;

(2) whether he will list by region the number of beds in continuing care for elderly people which have been contracted out in England;

(3) whether he will list, by region, the number of beds available in continuing care for elderly people in the NHS in England.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested is not held centrally. The Government consider continuous nursing care services to be an integral part of NHS provision for elderly people who require them. There are several ways in which the NHS may arrange the provision of long-term, or continuous nursing care, where it is needed: by provision of community nursing to the patient's own homes; a long stay geriatric ward; in some districts a NHS nurse managed unit; or by beds in private nursing homes paid for under contractual arrangement. It is for local health authority management to decide the nature of the continuous care service it provides, in the light of local needs and circumstances and the overall level of provision.

Hospitals (Health and Safety)

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether specific additional funding will be available to meet the cost of implementing health and safety measures in hospitals as required by recent changes in the law.

Mr. Dorrell: Resources to enable health authorities to meet their responsibilities under health and safety legislation are included within existing financial allocations. The level of expenditure is for individual authorities to assess in the light of their own local circumstances.

Beverley Lewis

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether his Department has completed its consideration of the reports from the health and social services authorities and the coroner's report on the death of Beverley Lewis; and what further action he intends to take.

Mr. Dorrell: We have received and are carefully considering these reports, and shall soon be in a position to decide what further action would be appropriate.

Child Migrants Trust

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will attend the opening of the Child Migrants Trust office at 8 Kingston road, West Bridgford, Nottingham NG2 7AQ; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have written to the Child Migrants Trust expressing my regret that due to a long-standing prior ministerial engagement to visit a hospital I am unable to attend the opening of the office on 29 June. I hope that the occasion will be enjoyable and that the opening will be an important stage in the work of the trust. The Government have made a grant of £20,000 to the trust to support that work.

Family Planning Services

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to improve the family planning service provided by *(a)* general practitioners, including women doctors and *(b)* health authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[pursuant to her reply,* 19 June 1990, column *508]:* People should be free to choose their source of family planning advice. We look to all health authorities to provide a full range of family planning services to meet the particular needs and preferences of the local population and to strike a proper balance between services provided by specialist clinics and general practitioners. Ninety eight per cent. of general practitioners provide family planning services and advice. Women have increasingly turned to GPs for planning and advice so that now about two thirds of the 4 million people who make use of the service each year in England go to their general practitioners.

The letter to regional general managers referred to in my earlier reply, a copy of which has been placed in the Library, reaffirms previous guidance on family planning services. This particularly emphasised the need to give choice to encourage full take up, the need for separate, less formal, arrangements for young people and their wider health role for instance in cervical smear testing.

Spending on NHS family planning services has increased in recent years. Annual spending on NHS family planning services has risen from £37·7 million in 1979 to £90·3 million in 1987-88.

Children at Risk

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if his Department intends to issue an explanatory circular to local authorities regarding the conduct of case conferences on children at risk, following the recent Court of Appeal ruling on disclosure of social work records.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The conduct of case conferences will be addressed in a revision of "Working Together", in the light of the Children Act, and in training materials commissioned from Nottingham university under the Depatment's central training initiative.

DEFENCE

Regiments

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, further to his reply of 14 June, *Official Report,* columns 326-27, concerning regiments; if he will give the numbers of people employed in or connected with each regiment listed.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As at 30 April 1990, the total trained strength of the Army was 136,869. The number of Army personnel employed at each of the arms and services of the Regular Army on that date is as follows:

	Officers	*Soldiers*	*Total*
Staff Officers	787	—	787
Household Cavalry and Royal Armoured Corps	1,186	8,930	10,116
The Royal Regiment of Artillery	1,256	10,981	12,237
Corps of Royal Engineers	1,333	11,579	12,912
Royal Corps of Signals	1,073	9,787	10,860
Infantry	3,470	32,392	35,862
Army Air Corps	324	1,250	1,574
Royal Army Chaplains Department	154	—	154
Royal Corps of Transport	896	8,124	9,020
Royal Army Medical Corps	918	2,513	3,431
Royal Army Ordnance Corps	1,002	6,135	7,137
Corps of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers	968	12,692	13,660
Corps of Royal Military Police	144	2,120	2,264
Royal Army Pay Corps	440	1,499	1,939
Royal Army Veterinary Corps	29	123	152
Small Arms School Corps	29	104	133
Military Provost Staff Corps	7	95	102
Royal Army Educational Corps	499	—	499
Royal Army Dental Corps	207	190	397
Royal Pioneer Corps	102	1,158	1,260
Intelligence Corps	272	905	1,177
Army Physical Training Corps	49	351	400
Army Catering Corps	164	3,985	4,149
Army Legal Corps	58	—	58
General Service Corps	3	—	3
Long Service List Soldiers	—	766	766
Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps	490	958	1,448
Women's Royal Army Corps	311	4,061	4,372

A complete breakdown could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Low Flying

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he has taken to research the relationship between the heights at which (i) RAF Tornados and (ii) Tornados operated by the Luftwaffe are regularly flown and the respective accident rates for these forces.

Mr. Neubert: None. The total number of accidents involving Tornados flown by either the RAF or the Luftwaffe would form too small a statistical sample to enable meaningful conclusions to be drawn.

However, after any RAF aircraft accident, a board of inquiry investigates the full circumstances (in which aircraft height may or may not be a relevant factor) and makes recommendations to minimise the risk of recurrence.

Missiles

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has received any representations from allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation favouring the cancellation of the deployment of the tactical air-to-surface missile and Tomahawk missiles on British soil.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many representations he has received concerning the deployment of the tactical air-to-surface missile and Tomahawk missiles in the United Kingdom; and how many have been opposed to the deployment.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In the last year we have received about 20 letters from right hon. and hon. Members and members of the public concerning the deployment of United States TASM and Tomahawk missiles to the United Kingdom. Most of these letters have been related to CND propaganda campaigns opposing, among other things, the possible deployment of TASM to the United Kingdom.

Atomic Weapons Establishment

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether, in the course of his inquiry into the atomic weapons establishment, Sir Francis Tombs was given access to commercially confidential information.

Mr. Neubert: No information which was classed as commercially confidential was given to Sir Francis (now Lord) Tombs in the course of his inquiry into the Atomic Weapons Establishment.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what safeguards have been established to ensure that all the companies competing for the contract to manage the atomic weapons establishment had equal access to commercially useful information.

Mr. Neubert: All potential bidders for the management contract at the atomic weapons establishment were given a detailed invitation to tender document, attended a bidders conference and site tour and were given full opportunity to raise additional queries during an extensive pre-bid inquiry phase.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has decided to retain the safety division of the atomic weapons establishment after the introduction of private contractors.

Mr. Neubert: Safety will continue to be given the highest priority at the atomic weapons establishment after the introduction of a management contractor and the subsequent full contractorisation of the establishment. The safety division will become part of the contractorised establishment and will be supplemented by an additional layer of safety oversight from MOD.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has yet decided on the financial criteria that will be used to monitor the performance of the management contractors to be appointed at the atomic weapons establishment.

Mr. Neubert: The broad criteria against which the management contractor's performance is to be assessed were included in the invitation to tender for the interim contract phase which was issued to potential bidders on 6 April 1990. The detailed arrangements will be finalised during contract negotiation.

Sales Mission, Malaysia

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the costs of the RAF mission to Malaysia to assist in the sale of Tornado aircraft.

Mr. Archie Hamilton *[holding answer 20 June 1990]:* I assume that the hon. Member refers to the deployment of six RAF Tornadoes to Malaysia in March 1990. The purpose of this deployment was to participate in an integrated air defence system exercise under the auspices of the five power defence arrangement with Malaysia, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand. The opportunity was also taken to promote wider British interests in the region, including defence sales, through a number of visits and presentations. I regret that a total cost for this deployment to the far east is not available and could not be provided without disproportionate effort, but all costs were met from within existing RAF allocations apart from a contribution of £40,000 from United Kingdom industry in recognition of the defence sales benefits of elements of the deployment.

EMPLOYMENT

Training

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many people participated in each of the last four years in London, Birmingham and Manchester in *(a)* employment training, and the earlier programmes it replaced, *(b)* the youth training scheme and *(c)* the enterprise allowance scheme;

(2) how much expenditure, excluding administrative costs, has been spent in each of the last four years in London, Birmingham and Manchester on *(a)* employment training, and the earlier programmes it replaced, *(b)* the youth training scheme and *(c)* the enterprise allowance scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Health and Safety Executive

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) when the Health and Safety Executive plan of work 1990-91 was due to be published; and whether there are any implications for resourcing issues;

(2) what representations he has received from *(a)* the Health and Safety Executive and *(b)* the Health and Safety Commission on resourcing issues;

(3) what additional resources he intends to allocate for the current financial year to the Health and Safety Executive; and whether there are any conditions attached.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. and learned Friend met the chairman of the Health and Safety Commission (HSC) and a number of commissioners on 31 May to discuss their plan of work for 1990-91 and beyond. He has approved the plan and it will be published shortly. I also refer to my answer on 26 June to the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes).

In approving the plan of work the Secretary of State has discussed with HSC the resources required to put it into effect. He has agreed with the Commission that he will find the necessary resources from within his Department's provision for 1990-91.

Employment Service Offices

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many extra staff he proposes to employ at the Kidsgrove and Burslem offices as a result of the proposed reorganisation;

(2) what is his current and projected estimate of the number of people using the Biddulph jobcentre and unemployment office who will be affected by the proposed reorganisation of jobcentres and unemployment offices in Staffordshire and who will use alternative premises in Kidsgrove and Burslem as a result;

(3) how many redundancies will result from the proposed organisation of jobcentres and unemployment offices in Staffordshire;

(4) what is his estimate of the cost and projected cost to his Department of reimbursing travelling costs of those people currently attending the jobcentre and unemployment office in Biddulph to enable them to attend alternative premises in Kidsgrove and Burslem.

Mr. Nicholls: The Employment Service became an executive agency on 2 April 1990. Mr. Mike Fogden, the Employment Service agency's chief executive will be replying in writing to the hon. Lady.

Civil Servants (Workplaces)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessments under Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations have been undertaken at all workplaces used by civil servants in his Department.

Mr. Nicholls: In keeping with the requirements of the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations the Department has carried out a programme to identify the risks associated with all substances and processes which are found within its many workplaces. This has confirmed that the exposure to hazardous substances within the normal office environment is low enough not to represent a significant health risk. Where the hazard is greater steps have been taken to control the use of such substances or processes, or to eliminate their use.

Wage Rates

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will rank by average *(a)* male wage rates and *(b)* female wage rates in each of the counties in Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Nicholls: Information on wage rates is not available. However, information on the average earnings of full-time employees on adult rates by county in Great Britain is published in table 110 for males, and table 113 for females, of part E of the 1989 new earnings survey report, a copy of which is in the Library. Figures by county are not readily available for Northern Ireland.

Earnings

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the increase in the real value of average male earnings since 1979.

Mr. Nicholls: Average gross weekly earnings of full-time adult males increased by 28 per cent. in real terms between April 1979 and April 1989. The increase does not relate to the same individuals at the different dates.

Child Care Facilities

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what funds from his Department are currently available to support the provision of nursery, creche or playcare facilities in education establishments and elsewhere.

Mr. Nicholls: The Department does not provide any direct funding to support the provision of child care facilities, but training providers and employers are encouraged to help parents while their training is taking place. Training and enterprise councils will be able to contribute to help with child care from their local initiative funds. They will also have an important role in encouraging other organisations to help with child care. Lone parents on employment training are entitled to receive the costs of caring for their children under 16.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much was invested in improving the energy efficiency of his Department in the latest available year.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Funding

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to increase funding for the public employment service in Staffordshire.

Mr. Nicholls: The Employment Service became an executive agency on 2 April 1990. Mr. Mike Fogden, the Employment Service agency's Chief Executive, will be replying in writing to the hon. Lady.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Badger Tuberculosis

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on his Department's current programme of testing the efficacy of badger tuberculosis vaccine; and if such research has been affected by the research into BSE.

Mr. Maclean: Further work at the central veterinary laboratory will begin this July. Research into BSE and other priority projects has contributed to delays in this work.

Animal Feedstuffs

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received about the use of cattle offal in pig and poultry feed.

Mr. Maclean: I have received representations from various quarters on this issue.

Foodstuffs (Toxic Chemicals)

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what tests are applied to ascertain residue levels of toxic chemicals in imported foodstuffs from *(a)* eastern Europe, *(b)* the European Common Market and *(c)* the rest of the world: how many tests were carried out in each of the past five years and on what types of foods; and what changes he intends to make in this system.

Mr. Maclean: Imported foodstuffs are examined by Ministry and local government staff for residues of pesticides and veterinary medicines and for a wide range of potentially toxic substances such as heavy metals, natural toxins and environmental contaminants. Details of the tests and statistics relating to them are not at present held centrally, but information on the surveillance of food imports is included in reports of the Government's steering group on food surveillance, copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

Council directive 89/397/EEC on the official control of foodstuffs includes a requirement, from 1992, for some statistics on food law enforcement to be communicated to the Commission.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what scientific research findings underlie the decision not to include United Kingdom beef sold in the United Kingdom in the new European Community provision relating to the certification of beef as being BSE-free.

Mr. Maclean: As far as boneless beef is concerned, the standards applied to meat for export will be the same as those for meat for the home market. As far as bone-in beef is concerned, I do not believe that there is any scientific justification for the Community measures.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has concerning the number of pathological tests carried out for BSE in each of the European Community countries.

Mr. Maclean: Cases of BSE have been confirmed in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland. It became a notifiable disease throughout the European Community from 1 April 1990. I have no information about the number of examinations carried out.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on how many occasions officials of his Department have been notified of suspected incidence of BSE in cattle which die or are slaughtered before being officially inspected.

Mr. Maclean: Precise information is not available, but the numbers are small.

Pesticides

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the average length of time currently taken to register new pesticides in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* France and *(c)* West Germany.

Mr. Maclean: In the United Kingdom an application for registration of a new pesticide active ingredient has currently to wait approximately three and a half years before full evaluation can start. The time taken for evaluation will vary according to the nature of the ingredient and the quality of the application.

On 3 April 1990 my right hon. Friend the Minister announced several measures to accelerate the throughput of new active ingredients, including a 60 per cent. increase in the number of scientists working on registration in 1990-91.

I have no comparable information on registration times in France and West Germany.

Suckler Cow Premium

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures he intends to implement to increase the level of the suckler cow premium following the recent meeting of European Community Agriculture Ministers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: I have nothing to add to the answer given to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) on 15 June 1990.

Fish Conservation

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has for both safeguarding British interests and ensuring proper conservation in the light of the threat to cod and haddock stocks.

Mr. Maclean: The United Kingdom already safeguarded its share under the common fisheries Policy of the North sea fishery available to the European Community having secured 47 per cent. of cod and 78 per cent. of haddock and for the second year running we have again in fact secured an 87 per cent. share of haddock.

The best means of protecting and conserving fish stocks are setting total allowable catches to allow the stock to recover to permit catches at higher levels and to ensure technical conservation measures are effective. Total allowable catches for North sea cod and haddock for 1990 have, therefore, been set at considerably reduced levels. In

addition we introduced special measures for this year to reduce the fishing of North sea haddock by means of restricting day at sea or using highly selective gear with the aim of speeding the recovery of the stock.

Further, we have made proposals to the Community for measures to increase the selectivity of gear to reduce the catches of immature fish and at the forthcoming Fisheries Council my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) will be pressing hard for firm proposals from the Commission.

Agriculture Council

Mr. Marland: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the Agriculture Council held in Luxembourg on 25 and 26 June.

Mr. Gummer: I represented the United Kingdom at this meeting together with my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry), Parliamentary Secretary in my Department.

The most important decision taken was that vaccination against foot and mouth disease, currently practised in eight member states, should be discontinued throughout the Community on 1 January 1992. The main protection against the disease will thereafter be provided by the slaughter of animals from infected herds as has been the case in the United Kingdom for many years. It is a major British achievement to secure Community acceptance of our policy in this area and the decision is a big step towards establishing the single market. The possibility that the health of animals in the United Kingdom could be put at risk from contact with animals vaccinated against foot and mouth disease and imported from other member states was previously one of the main obstacles to establishing the free movement of animals throughout the Community.

Agreement was reached in principle on a regulation defining the conditions which must be met by products marketed in the Community as "organic". This will protect and reassure consumers and help to ensure equal conditions of competition in this growing sector of the market. The United Kingdom has led the way in organic food production and much of the work concerning these methods of agriculture has been pioneered in this country. The setting up of the United Kingdom register of organic food standards has now borne fruit at a Community-wide level.

Other agreements reached included one to encourage the non-food uses of agricultural products linked to an extension of farmland to be set aside, and one on a revised regime for dried grapes, which will for the first time impose an absolute limit on expenditure in this sector.

In a discussion on animal welfare I stressed that the Council must move ahead rapidly to establish better Community rules.

Among other significant decisions on veterinary matters was one to establish procedures so that in future a greater proportion of expenditure undertaken to curb outbreaks of animal diseases, notably foot and mouth disease, will be met from Community funds. Another decision establishes the rules concerning veterinary checks on intra-Community trade in live animals.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 30 April, *Official Report*, column *458*, if he will break down the figure of £0·7 million between solid fuel and liquid fuel.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 22 June 1990]:* Within the total of £700,000, less than £5,000 was attributable to solid fuel.

ENVIRONMENT

National Rivers Authority

7. **Mr. Aspinwall:** to ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress and performance of the National Rivers Authority.

Mr. Trippier: The National Rivers Authority has already demonstrated clearly its determination to be an effective guardian of the water environment. It has successfully prosecuted a number of polluters and many more have received formal warnings. The authority is carrying out a national survey of water quality this year; it is actively pursuing solutions to low river flows caused by over-abstraction; and it is co-operating with the water supply undertakers in making contingency plans to deal with drought. Across all its functions the NRA is energetically engaged in a number of reviews of key policy areas.

88. **Mr. Paice:** to ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next intends to meet the chairman of the National Rivers Authority to discuss progress in improving river quality.

Mr. Trippier: I met the chairman of the National Rivers Authority on 1 May to discuss a range of issues relating to the water environment. I hope to do so again shortly in the context of considering the NRA's corporate plan.

Local Government Finance

17. **Mr. Favell:** to ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has had any recent representations seeking replacement of the community charge with a tax on property values.

Mr. Portillo: I continue to receive a good number of representations on all aspects of local government finance. Some of them are in favour of a tax based on property values, but such a tax would exhibit all the unfairness of the rating system.

Mr. Blunkett: to ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the assumed rate of poll tax collection he is using in formulating his grant proposals for 1991-92.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 26 June 1990]:* My right hon. Friend expects to make his proposals in respect of the local authority grant settlement for 1991-92 later this year.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to monitor the level of poll tax collection in England for 1990-91.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 26 June 1990]:* As with other aspects of the community charge my Department is

monitoring closely the progress which authorities are making with collection. We have been in touch with a number of authorities and have included relevant questions in a quarterly statistical survey of all charging authorities to be made in July.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assumptions he made on poll tax collection rates in formulating his grant settlement for 1990-91.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 26 June 1990]:* The assumptions in respect of, among other things, any surplus or shortfall in the yield from community charges for 1990-91 are set out in footnote 2 on page 2 of the revenue support grant distribution report (England) which was approved by the House on 18 January 1990.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each charge-capped local authority the information he considered, other than that submitted by the authority itself or already held by his Department, in formulating his proposal for the level of their cap.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 26 June 1990]:* I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when, subject to the approval of Parliament, he intends that the poll tax cap for Lambeth should take legal effect in respect of the poll tax to be paid.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* My right hon. Friend will lay before the House of Commons a draft order setting out his decisions on the final cap of Lambeth once he has considered fully the arguments which the council has put forward in support of its case for a higher figure than the cap which he proposed. If the House approves the draft order my right hon. Friend will make it and a statutory notice confirming the final cap will be served on the council as soon as reasonably practicable thereafter. The authority then has 21 days to set a revised budget; a new community charge must be set as soon as reasonably practicable thereafter. Until a new charge has been set charge payers in Lambeth are liable to pay the charge originally set.

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will update to 1990-91 the answer given to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) on 2 February 1989, *Official Report*, columns *359-60*, showing the distributional effect of the community charge in comparison with domestic rates;

(2) if he will update to 1990-91 the answer given to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) on 2 February 1989, *Official Report*, columns *359-60*, showing the numbers of gainers and losers by family type and income band from the introduction of the community charge.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 13 June 1990]:* The information requested has been placed in the Library. The figures have been calculated on the same basis as those which were placed in the Library on 15 February showing the distributional impact of the community charge. Equivalent income has been calculated using the McClements scale factors.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to ensure that all student nurses, whether undertaking training on Project 2000 or on any other undergraduate nursing course, are eligible for 80 per cent. community charge relief for 1990-91; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Under the Personal Community Charge (Students) Regulations 1989 (S.I. 1989-443) all nurses training under Project 2000 and all pre-registration undergraduate nursing students are already elegible for the student relief from the personal community charge.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to arrange for patients who suffer from multiple sclerosis to be exempted from the community charge.

Mr. Chope: Resident hospital patients and those cared for in residential care homes, nursing homes or hostels are exempt from the personal community charge. In a small number of cases multiple sclerosis can cause severe intellectual deterioration. Most such sufferers are in residential care and are therefore exempt on those grounds; those who are still living in the community will be exempt on the grounds of severe mental impairment if they are entitled to a prescribed benefit and have been stated to be severely mentally impaired in a certificate of a registered medical practitioner.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department has received a copy of "Coping with the Community Charge? The Preparations for Implementation" published by the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux in April; and if he will make a statement on representations received from the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux.

Mr. Portillo: Copies of the report were received by my Department last April. My officials will shortly be meeting representatives of the national association to discuss its contents.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received regarding Mr. and Mrs. Western of Beechdale, Nottingham, regarding lack of relief from the poll tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I wrote to the hon. Member on 8 June.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will raise the amount of central Government grant for Nottingham city council.

Mr. Chope: Nottingham city council's grant was calculated on the same basis as for all other authorities. This basis was approved by the House on 18 January and we have no plans to make changes for the current year.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidelines his Department is issuing to general practitioners regarding the criteria used for assessing people as being eligible for exemption from the community charge on the grounds of brain damage.

Mr. Portillo: Guidelines to general practitioners on the criteria to be used in assessing eligibility for the exemption from the community charge on the grounds of severe

mental impairment are issued by the Department of Health. Guidance was originally issued in a letter from the Department of Health, dated 3 November 1989; further guidance is to be issued shortly and this will be copied to charging authorities by my Department.

115. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** to ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what a person on average male earnings would pay in local income tax in 1990-91 in order to raise the same amount of revenue as the community charge on average in England.

Mr. Portillo: The level of local income tax payable by a person on average male earnings would depend on the tax allowances available to that person.

Illustrative figures placed in the Library on 4 April showed that, on average, the bill payable in England by a person with a taxable income of £12,800 would be £725.

112. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from county councils about their standard spending assessments.

Mr. Chope: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike).

113. **Sir Bernard Braine:** to ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance he has issued to local authorities on whether councillors who are refusing to pay their community charge are entitled to vote on decisions which affect their council's policy towards the pursuit of community charge defaulters.

Mr. Portillo: It is a criminal offence for a councillor, except in the circumstances specified in statute, to speak or vote on a matter in which he or she has a pecuniary interest. Paragraph 8 of the national code of local government conduct, which was approved by both Houses of Parliament, reminds councillors of this. If a councillor is in arrears on any payment due to the council, this can constitute pecuniary interest in questions relating to the collection of such arrears. Paragraph 31 of the code also advised councillors that they should avoid placing themselves in a position that could lead the public to think that they are receiving preferential treatment, for instance, by being in substantial arrears to the council.

105. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received regarding the community charge.

Mr. Portillo: I continue to receive a number of representations on a wide range of matters concerning the community charge.

106. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate how many people have refused to pay the community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: This information is not available centrally and there are very few cases of wilful refusal to pay.

107. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has recently calculated the cost to *(a)* a man on average male earnings and *(b)* a woman on average female earnings of a system of local government finance based on capital value rates with a local income tax element based on Kirklees council's 1990-91 budget.

Mr. Chope: No. Figures were placed in the Library on 4 April showing possible tax rates with a system of either capital value rates or local income tax based on local authorities' reported 1990-91 levels of income. From these, illustrative bills showing the effect of combining the two taxes can be calculated by taking the appropriate proportion of each.

103. **Mrs. Peacock:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what would be the average capital value rates bill in England in 1990-91 on a property worth *(a)* £50,000, *(b)* £75,000 and *(c)* £100,000 in order to raise the same amount of revenue as with the community charge.

Mr. Chope: Figures placed in the Library on 4 April show illustrative levels of capital value based rates in 1990-91 were such a system to be used to raise the same amount nationally as the community charge. The implied average bills in England for properties worth *(a)* £50,000, *(b)* £75,000 and *(c)* £100,000 are £528, £792 and £1,056 respectively.

100. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from local government organisations in favour of replacing the community charge with a roof tax.

Mr. Portillo: None.

98. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what he estimates will be the effect on the community charge in 1991 of the pay settlement for local government staff.

Mr. Portillo: The effect of the local authority pay settlement on community charges will depend on the extent to which authorities feel obliged to reduce the numbers employed to accommodate the settlement.

It is important that local authorities should make every effort to keep their expenditure under control so that community charges are set at a reasonable level.

91. **Mr. Janman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to meet local authority leaders to discuss the introduction of a roof tax in place of the community charge.

Mr. Portillo: No.

93. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to amend the community charge legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The Government have already announced that they intend to bring forward legislation to amend the law on the standard community charge as it relates to caravans.

48. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what interested groups, including local authority organisations, he has invited to submit views on changes to the community charge; and if he will make a statement.

94. **Mrs. Wise:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what interested groups including local authority organisations he has invited to submit views on changes to the community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: A large number of views on the community charge have been received, some solicited and others unsolicited.

40. **Mr. Bidwell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many suggested alternatives he has received for amending the community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The Department continues to receive a good many representations and suggestions on all aspects of local government finance.

62. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he can take against councils who refuse to use their powers to pursue community charge defaulters.

Mr. Portillo: Financial propriety is a matter for the local authority's auditor. Under section 20 of the Local Government Finance Act 1982 where a loss has been incurred or deficiency caused by the wilful misconduct of any person, the auditor shall in carrying out his audit certify that the amount of the loss or deficiency is due from that person and may recover that amount for the benefit of the authority. Where a loss has been incurred as a result of wilful misconduct, those responsible are liable to be surcharged for the amount involved. Where they are councillors, and the amount exceeds £2,000, they are automatically disqualified from being a councillor for five years.

84. **Mr. Harry Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if Britons living abroad registering to vote in the United Kingdom will be liable to pay the poll tax in the local government area where they register.

Mr. Chope: A person is subject to the personal community charge if he or she has his or her sole or main residence in England, Wales or Scotland and is not exempt. Anyone living abroad may be subject to the standard charge if they have a relevant freehold or leasehold interest in a domestic property where no one is solely or mainly resident regardless of whether that person is or is not on the electoral register.

69. **Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last examined the standard spending assessments allocated to local authorities for their capital programmes.

Mr. Chope: The basis of the capital financing standard spending assessment is set out in the revenue support grant distribution report (England) approved by the House on 18 January.

64. **Mr. Rees:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish his alternative proposals for the operation of the community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Buckley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish his alternative proposals for the operation of the community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: We expect to complete our review of the operation of the community charge in the next few weeks.

41. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department is considering any further modifications to the poll tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: We are reviewing the operation of the community charge to see whether any anomalies need to be addressed.

34. **Mr. Charles Wardle:** to ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people are registered to pay the community charge; and how many ratepayers there were in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Chope: The latest information for England available to the Department shows that 35·98 million people were registered on 1 December 1989 as subject to a personal community charge, while on 1 April 1989 there were 18·92 million domestic hereditaments on the valuation list.

20. **Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his review of the poll tax has taken into consideration capacity to earn in relation to ability to pay.

Mr. Portillo: Ability to pay is already taken into account by the provision of community charge benefit which is expected to give about one in four charge payers a reduction of up to 80 per cent. of the full community charge.

National taxes finance the largest share of local government spending and the top 10 per cent. of households by income pay about 15 times as much towards the cost of local government services as the bottom 10 per cent.

22. **Mr. David Shaw:** to ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress of his review of the community charge.

36. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** to ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress of the Government's review of the poll tax.

Mr. Portillo: We are continuing to review the operation of the community charge to see whether any anomalies need to be addressed.

Land Register

18. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the amount of land currently on the Land Register; and when he estimates that it will be closed down.

21. **Sir Charles Morrison:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the amount of land currently on the Land Register.

67. **Mr. Wells:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the amount of land currently on the public Land Register; and when he expects to close it down.

82. **Mr. Marland:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the amount of land currently on the Land Register.

109. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the amount of land currently on the Land Register.

118. **Mr. Bevan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the amount of land currently on the Land Register.

Mr. Michael Spicer: On 30 September 1989, 82,400 acres were on the register. This is 25 per cent. less than at the end of 1985. We are currently considering the role of the register and whether further measures might be appropriate to reduce the amount of public sector vacant land.

89. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much of the land on the Land Register is also designated as derelict land; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: Entries on the register do not include this information. However, replies to my Department's derelict land survey, the results of which will be published shortly, indicated that in April 1988 some 14,000 acres of derelict land were on the register. The total amount of land registered was some 88,000 acres.

Uniform Business Rate

19. **Mr. Robert Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any proposals to extend the transitional arrangements governing the introduction of the uniform business rate for smaller businesses to 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The Local Government Finance Act 1988 empowers us to provide transitional arrangements for years beyond 1995. We shall certainly be prepared to use these powers to protect businesses facing large increases after the 1995 revalu tion, if this proves to be necessary.

102. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to replace the 100-day rule for liability to pay the uniform business rate for bed and breakfast operations.

Mr. Chope: We have received a considerable number of representations on this subject from all sides of the industry to which we are currently giving careful consideration. We have not yet reached a conclusion on what, if any, changes should be made.

Housing Finance

23. **Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to meet the chairman of the Building Societies Association to discuss housing finance.

Mr. Chope: Ministers and officials from the Department of the Environment meet representatives of the Building Societies Association and of the Council of Mortgage Lenders, which represents a wide spectrum of mortgage lenders, including the vast majority of building societies, from time to time.

Disposal Notices

24. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many disposal notices he has issued under the 1980 Act during the last 12 months.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Four notices of proposed directions in relation to unused or underused public sector land and two directions, including one of those where a notice was issued within the period.

Avon County Council

25. **Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what considerations concerning the effect on services he took into account in deciding the level of the community charge cap for Avon county council.

Mr. Portillo: Avon's final cap represents my right hon. Friend's view of what is achievable and appropriate in all the circumstances of the county council on the basis of the information before him. It is for Avon to decide what action to take to live within its cap.

Housing, Hackney

26. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to visit Hackney to discuss housing with local councillors.

Mr. Chope: No. The Department has regular contacts with the council and will be discussing its housing needs with it as part of the forthcoming housing investment programme round.

Radioactive Waste

27. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment under what circumstances disposal of radioactive material is permitted in local authority landfill sites.

Mr. Trippier: Radioactive waste may be disposed of only if an authorisation has been issued under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. Authorisations are issued after careful assessment of the environmental impact of the proposed disposal. They impose strict conditions and activity limits which are designed to ensure that any dose of radiation to the general public is below the maximum permissible as recommended by the International Commission on Radiological Protection.

Detailed information about disposal routes and practices for radioactive wastes, including disposals at local authority landfill sites, is contained in part II of the HMSO publication entitled "Radioactive Substances Act 1960—A guide to the administration of the Act", a copy of which is in the Library.

77. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he plans to restrict further the discharge of radioactive liquids to the public sewerage system.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Discharges of radioactivity to the public sewerage system are already closely regulated under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 (RSA60) by authorisations issued by Her Majety's inspectorate of pollution. These authorisations impose strict conditions and activity limits, set at levels which ensure proper protection from such disposals for members of the public, sewerage workers and the environment. I am satisfied that RSA60 provides a fully satisfactory regime for regulating radioactive waste disposals and I have no plans for further changes other than those proposed in part V of the Environmental Protection Bill currently before Parliament.

House Building, Hampshire

28. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what communication he has had with Hampshire county council regarding house building in the county until the year 2001; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend wrote to the chairman of Hampshire county council's planning and transportation committee on 5 May. He welcomed the progress being made on the preparation of a draft countywide structure plan. He made clear his strong support for the work of the London and south-east regional planning conference and stressed the importance of the regional guidance for the south-east particularly in regard to the housing provision figures for the years 1991 to 2001 annexed to it. I understand that Hampshire county council will undertake formal public consultation on a draft plan later this year.

Private Rents

29. **Ms. Gordon:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to take action against private landlords who have not reduced the rent inclusive of rates following the introduction of the community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope I refer the hon. Lady to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) on 8 February, *Official Report*, Vol. 166, column *756*.

81. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received concerning private tenants whose landlords have not reduced their rent by any rates element.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) on 23 May, *Official Report*, vol. 173, column *249*.

Ozone Layer

30. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment and if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's negotiating position at the United Nations conference on the ozone layer in London on 27-29 June.

Mr. Trippier: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 25 June.

39. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the London conference on the ozone layer.

Mr. Trippier: The second meeting of the parties to the Montreal protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer beings today in London. Some 100 countries are represented. Our aims are to achieve a significantly strengthened protocol and to persuade as many countries as possible to join it.

Right to Buy

31. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has as to the number of local authority tenants who have bought their homes under the right to buy legislation.

Mr. Chope: Some 950,000 tenants have bought their homes under the right to buy from local authorities in England since April 1979.

Cryptosporidiosis

32. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to receive the report from the drinking water inspectorate on the outbreak of cryptosporidiosis in parts of North Humberside.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The drinking water inspectorate has received a report from Yorkshire Water Services Ltd. on the outbreak. It awaits further information from the company and a report from the incident control group which comprises representatives of the health authority, local authorities, public health laboratory service, the communicable disease surveillance centre and Yorkshire Water Services Ltd. after considering this information the inspectorate will report to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Council Rents

33. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest information on the average rate of rent increases for 1989-90 for council tenants.

Mr. Chope: The estimated average weekly rent for local authority dwellings in England at April 1989 is £20·70 and the provisional figure for April 1990 is £23·36, an increase of 12·9 per cent.

Association of County Councils

35. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the Association of County Councils; and whether the charge-capping of some local authorities was discussed.

Mr. Chris Patten: I last met representatives of the Association of County Councils on 21 May, together with representatives of other associations. Charge capping was not discussed.

Housing Corporation Approvals

37. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many new approvals will be made by the Housing Corporation in this financial year.

Mr. Chope: The Housing Corporation is currently discussing with housing associations which new schemes will receive approval this year, and will make an announcement in due course.

Local Government Efficiency

38. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy towards encouraging more efficient local government.

Mr. Portillo: More efficient local government is to everyone's benefit. The potential savings from improved efficiency could be used to reduce charges or to deliver better services at the same charge. The community charge and the introduction of compulsory competitive tendering will each encourage greater efficiency.

85. **Sir George Young:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to meet the Controller of the Audit Commission to dicuss the potential for efficiency savings in local government.

Mr. Portillo: I met the Controller on 18 June.

Audit Commission figures released on 13 June 1990 showed that at March 1990 auditors had identified recurrent value improvement opportunities totalling £1,328 million a year, of which £662 million had already been implemented.

It is the duty of the auditor of each local authority to be satisfied by examining the accounts and otherwise, that the authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

78. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to meet local authority leaders to discuss the potential for efficiency savings in local government.

Mr. Portillo: This year, as in the past, meetings will be held with leaders of the local authority associations to discuss the revenue support grant settlement. The potential for efficiency savings in local government will be among the subjects under consideration.

World Indoor Games

42. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to meet representatives of Sheffield city council to discuss funding for the world indoor games.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so at this date.

Eutrophication

43. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to tackle the problem of eutrophication in British waters.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Eutrophication is a problem in only a few British waters. It is tackled on a case-by-case basis which takes into account local conditions. The National Rivers Authority has the responsibility for setting the standards of effluents discharged into those waters. The most common method of control is the removal of phosphates at sewage treatment works. Other measures being taken which will reduce inputs of nutrients to our coastal waters are listed in the United Kingdom North sea action plan. The decision to ban dumping of sewage sludge at sea, and to treat all substantial sewage discharges to sea will further reduce nutrient inputs by between 10 per cent. and 20 per cent.

Forests

44. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to establish new community forests.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Government have authorised three such forests—at Tyne and Wear, south Staffordshire and east London—as pilots for this joint initiative by the Countryside and Forestry Commissions. In due course we shall consider their proposals relating to nine other candidate sites: north Bristol, Cardiff, Cleveland, Hull, west Manchester, east Merseyside, Neath-Port Talbot, Southampton-Portsmouth and South Yorkshire. However no decisions on extension of the programme have yet been made.

Water Charges

45. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received concerning the working of the water infrastructure charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend has received numerous representations about the new system of water and sewerage infrastructure charges. The detailed application of the charges is for individual water and sewerage companies, within the terms of their instruments of appointment. The Government believe that the new system provides a much fairer way of funding the provision of infrastructure capacity for new developments then the previous system whereby new customers were subsidised by existing ones.

Air Pollution, London

46. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on ozone levels in central London.

Mr. Trippier: The United Kingdom ozone monitoring network includes a site in central London. Between January and June 1990, ozone levels measured at this site averaged 11 parts per billion (ppb). Over the same period, an hourly average of 75 ppb was exceeded on seven occasions, The World Health Organisation hourly guideline value is 75 to 100 ppb.

The Department has produced a "Layman's Guide to Low Level Ozone", a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Integrated Pollution Control

47. Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he hopes to see the practice of integrated pollution control, which is being pioneered in Britain, spread throughout Europe.

Mr. Trippier: I do indeed. Although the EC recognised the benefits of an integrated system of pollution control in the fourth action programme, Britain has gone further than any country in Europe to put such a system into practice on a national basis. Given the scope for pollution reduction offered by an integrated system of control, I hope that other member states and European Governments will follow our lead.

South Africa (Sport)

49. **Mr. John Carlisle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is considering any change in policy by Her Majesty's Government towards sporting links with South Africa.

Mr. Moynihan: The Government consider that it would be premature to do so. Therefore, we remain fully committed to the Commonwealth statement on apartheid in sport, the Gleneagles agreement.

Empty Properties

51. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any proposals to take powers to require owners to utilise empty private properties.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No. It is in owners' interest to make such properties available for renting, rather than keeping them empty, thanks to the changes to private renting legislation we made in the Housing Act 1988.

Stationery

52. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of his Department's notepaper is produced from mill off-cuts.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: All the letterhead paper and ministerial notepaper used in the Department of the Environment is produced from mill off-cuts.

Housing Action Trusts

53. **Mr. Sedgemore:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many housing action trusts have been established under the provisions of the Housing Act 1988.

Mr. Chope: None.

Housing Corporation

54. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to meet the chairman of the Housing Corporation to discuss housing development.

97. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to meet the chairman of the Housing Corporation to discuss housing development.

Mr. Chope: My hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning meets the Chairman of the Housing Corporation from time to time to discuss housing development and other matters.

58. **Mr. Bell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about funding for the Housing Corporation.

119. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the funding for the Housing Corporation for 1989-90, 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Chope: The Housing Corporation's gross capital expenditure in 1989-90 was £935 million, and is planned to increase to £1,100 million in 1990-91, £1,563 million in 1991-92 and £1,736 million in 1992-93.

Housing Waiting Lists

55. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the latest figures for the local authority housing waiting lists.

Mr. Chope: The latest information available to the Department is for the number of households on housing waiting lists at April 1989, as reported by local authorities in their 1989 housing investment programme (HIP1) returns; the figures appear in column B51 of "HIP1 All Items Print (1989)", a copy of which is in the Library.

Council House Building

56. **Mr. Carr:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many new council properties for rent he expects to be completed during 1990 and 1991.

Mr. Chope: In the first four months of 1990, 4,300 new council dwellings are provisionally estimated to have been completed. The Government do not forecast council housing output. Housing associations are becoming the main providers of new subsidised housing for rent.

Land Use

57. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is continuing to monitor the use of derelict or under-used land, once in public ownership, now transferred to private ownership under the privatisation programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: No. The efficient use of their assets is a matter for the companies concerned.

Recycling

59. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is taking to introduce recycling credits for waste collection authorities.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Government intend to place a duty on waste disposal authorities to pay recycling credits to waste collection authorities in respect of waste diverted from disposal facilities by recycling. If Parliament approves this proposal, comprehensive guidelines will be published to advise authorities on how the system should operate.

114. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what responses he has received from local authorities regarding the idea of recycling credits for waste collection authorities.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We have received 136 written responses from local authorities and oral comments from 10 others. Most were in favour of the proposals.

83. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to promote the recycling of office grade paper.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: It is important to establish a reliable chain of collection and processing facilities. I was pleased to support the Friends of the Earth paper round project at its launch on 25 June; this project is receiving grant aid from my Department through UK 2000 to help to set itself up. The paper-making industry is expanding its manufacturing capacity and the Government are also giving a lead in specifying recycled paper wherever possible: my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, announced last week that the Department is prepared to pay a reasonable premium for recycled paper in order to encourage industry to increase volume production of such paper.

Planning

60. **Mr. Michael Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations he has held with the Council for the Protection of Rural England on planning issues in rural areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: My hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning met the Council for the Protection of Rural England last month, following a meeting that my

right hon. Friend had with it last October. The CPRE commented earlier this year on my Department's draft planning policy guidance note on "The Countryside and the Rural Economy", and recently sent my right hon. Friend a copy of its report on planning controls over agricultural dwellings. We are studying its comments along with others received.

120. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when he expects to publish the results of the consultations of outside opinion on proposals for prior to demolition planning applications in respect of dwelling houses;

(2) when he expects to publish the results of the consultations on proposals for pre-demolition planning applications in respect of dwelling houses, prior to site redevelopment.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Responses to the Department's consultation paper "Planning Permission: Demolition of Houses" were invited by 25 June. Over 90 responses have been received so far. They are being analysed, but I cannot yet say when I shall be able to announce the Government's conclusions.

99. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to introduce new planning legislation.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I propose to introduce legislation when the parliamentary timetable permits.

87. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to review the planning procedures for rural areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: My Department is finalising the planning policy guidance note on "The Countryside and the Rural Economy" in the light of the many comments received on the consultation draft, and continues to keep the operation of the planning system under review.

68. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent submissions he has received regarding future planning strategy for south-east England.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I continue to receive many submissions which touch upon future planning strategy for south-east England. I hope later this year to receive advice on the subject from the London and south-east regional planning conference, "SERPLAN".

Eastern Europe (Pollution)

61. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking in assisting eastern European countries to tackle environmental pollution.

Mr. Trippier: In a meeting of EC and eastern European Environment Ministers in Dublin on 16 June, at which I represented the United Kingdom, I made clear the United Kingdom's determination to play a full part in tackling the appalling environmental problems of eastern Europe. We are already active in the multilateral PHARE—Poland and Hungary Assistance for Economic Restructuring—programme co-ordinated by the European Commission. This has earmarked £216 million for restructuring the economies of Poland and Hungary, more than a sixth of it for the environment, and we have provided key experts for fact-finding missions. I am hopeful that a significant proportion of the £144 million allocated to extending the programme to other eastern European democracies will stimulate environmentally sound projects and investments.

In addition, my Department is working closely with the United Kingdom know-how fund. We have sent a local government mission to Poland and discussed co-operative action with the British water industry. We have invited representatives of industry, environmental groups, universities and the media to a seminar next month on all aspects of environmental help. I have also invited the Polish and Czech Environment Ministers to this country in the autumn after which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I hope to visit east Europe to see for ourselves what needs to be done.

Derelict Land

63. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he will take to assist those local authorities which face the problem of increasing dereliction.

Mr. Moynihan: The Department maintains a vigorous programme of derelict land reclamation through the derelict land grant programme. We have provided £71·5 million for this purpose in 1990-91, and I anticipate that about 1,300 hectares of derelict land will be reclaimed. Delelict land is also reclaimed by the urban development corporations and through the operation of city grant, and the urban programme.

My Department's survey of derelict land in England in 1988 showed that the overall level of dereliction had in fact decreased by some 5,000 hectares since the last survey in 1982, although there are areas where the amount has increased. My Department will continue to target assistance at the worst areas of dereliction.

The measures for dealing with dereliction were reviewed last year, and we are currently considering responses to the consultation document, "A Review of Derelict Land Policy". We will be announcing policy changes later this year which will ensure that these measures continue to assist local authorities to tackle the reclamation of derelict land effectively.

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much derelict land in public ownership has been entered on the register of derelict land for each of the last five years for which records exist.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Member for Wirral, West (Mr. Hunt) as Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities on 21 March to my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin), [*Official Report*, Volume 169, column 669].

75. **Mr. Donald Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is satisfied with the rate at which land in public ownership currently on the register of derelict land is being disposed of.

92. **Mr. Lawrence:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is satisfied with the speed of disposals of land from the register of derelict land.

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to improve the effectiveness of the register of derelict land.

Mr. Moynihan: As I stated to my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) on 26 April, we are currently considering whether further measures might be appropriate to reduce the amount of public sector vacant land.

73. **Mr. Andrew Hargreaves:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much vacant land in public ownership is entered on the register of derelict land; and what was the acreage in each category of *(a)* the public sector, *(b)* statutory undertakers and *(c)* nationalised industries.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave on 21 March to my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind), *Official Report*, Vol. 169, column *668-69*.

70. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the amount of land currently on the register of derelict land; and what steps he is taking to reduce it.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer my hon. Friend to the replies I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) earlier today and to my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) on 26 April.

River Pollution

65. **Mr. Irvine:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in cleaning up the rivers of the United Kingdom; and what standard has been achieved against the European Community average.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: There has been an overall improvement in the quality of rivers since the first national survey carried out in 1958. The most recent river quality surveys, carried out in 1985 throughout the United Kingdom, showed that 95 per cent. of the United Kingdom's rivers were of good or fair quality. A review of river classification schemes across the European Community published in 1988 by the water research centre showed that the average figure in the EC for rivers of comparable quality was 75 per cent.; the review also indicated that no other member state bettered the United Kingdom's position.

74. **Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of United Kingdom rivers are of good or fair quality; and what information he has on the situation in the rest of Europe.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The river quality surveys carried out in 1985 throughout the United Kingdom showed that 95 per cent. of the United Kingdom's rivers were of good or fair quality. A review of river classifiction schemes across the European Community published in 1988 by the water research centre showed that the average figure in the EC for rivers of comparable quality was 75 per cent.; the review also indicated that no other member state bettered the United Kingdom's position.

Building Regulations

66. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is planning any alterations to the building regulations between the present time and 31 December; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: A review of the Building Regulations 1985 is currently being undertaken. A number of consultation proposals has been issued, but alterations arising from these proposals are not likely to be made before the first half of 1991.

Housing Finance

71. **Mrs. Golding:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any proposals under consideration for the reform of housing finance.

Mr. Chope: A major reform of housing finance was given effect by the Housing Act 1988 and the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and is now being implemented.

Agricultural Land

72. **Mr. Hannam:** to ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many acres currently in agricultural use are estimated as being needed to satisfy the housing requirements in the south and south-west of England in the next 10 years.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) on 21 March, *Official Report*, column *668*.

Homelessness

76. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** to ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest available figure for homelessness; and what was the figure in 1979.

Mr. Michael Spicer: In the 12 months to March 1990 English local authorities accepted responsibility for securing accommodation for 132,890 households under the homelessness provisions of the Housing Acts; in 1979 the figure was 57,200. However, because of a change in the reporting system between 1980 and 1982, the figure for 1979 is not strictly comparable with those for later years.

116. **Mr. Cox:** to ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the organisations which will deal with homelessness in London that he has met during the last three months.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have met the following voluntary organisations dealing with homelessness in London during the last three months: West End Co-ordinated Voluntary Services; Look Ahead Housing Association; St. Mungo's Housing Trust; the Salvation Army; Shelter; the Thomas Coram Foundation for Children the Shelter Housing Aid Centre; CHAR; Centrepoint (Soho); and Thames Reach.

111. **Mr. Buckley:** to ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement about the number of families becoming homeless through mortgage repossession.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 21 June 1990 to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), *Official Report*, at column *642*.

104. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the latest figures for the number of homeless households in England and Wales.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The latest estimates of households accepted as homeless in England appear in table 1(a) of "Local authorities' action under the homeless provisions of the 1985 Housing Act: England. Results for the first quarter 1990. Supplementary Tables", which is in the Library.

For information about Wales I refer the hon. Member to my hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

European Football Competitions

79. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he had in Italy regarding the admission of English football teams into European competitions next season.

Mr. Moynihan: I made it clear to the president of the Italian Football Association, who is vice-president of UEFA, during my visit to Italy last month that it would be unwise of the Government to take a view or for UEFA to reach a decision on the return of English clubs to European competitions until we were able to assess the behaviour of English supporters both in the 1989-90 domestic season and at the World Cup finals.

EC Directives

80. **Mr. Ground:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is Britain's record on infraction proceedings arising from European Community environment directives; and what are the comparable figures for other Community countries.

Mr. Trippier: According to figures published for the first time this year by the European Commission, as at 31 December 1989 the number of current infraction proceedings against each member state on environmental matters was as follows:

	Number
Spain	57
Belgium	47
Greece	45
France	41
Italy	40
United Kingdom	31
Federal Republic of Germany	29
Netherlands	24
Ireland	21
Portugal	14
Luxembourg	12
Denmark	5

These figures cover all stages of proceedings for alleged failure to comply with treaty obligations, including letters of notice. A number of the cases recorded against the United Kingdom have since been terminated.

There are just two cases against the United Kingdom which have been brought by the Commission to the European Court of Justice, both of which have yet to be heard. According to the Commission, the comparable figures for other member states are as follows:

	Number
FRG	8
Belgium	7
France	7
Italy	7
Greece	3
Spain	3
Nethelands	2
Luxembourg	1
Denmark	0
Ireland	0
Portugal	0

Climate Change

86. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his reponse to the findings of recent scientific research on the specific impact of human activity on climatic changes.

Mr. Trippier: The Prime Minister set out the Government's response to the report on the science of climate change produced by working group I of the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change in her speech on 25 May 1990 at the opening of the Hadley centre for climate prediction and research.

Water Pollution

90. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his discussions with the other European Community Environment Ministers on the directive concerning the discharge of dangerous substances into water.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I refer my right hon. Friend to the answer my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) on 12 June at columns *160-61*.

Environmental Protection (Fiscal Measures)

95. **Sir Russell Johnston:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department has made a recent assessment of the possible use of fiscal measures to improve protection of the environment.

Mr. Trippier: Fiscal measures are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Toxic Waste

96. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to seek to establish Europe-wide controls on the transport of toxic waste.

Mr. Trippier: Movement of hazardous waste involving EC member states is regulated by national law implementing the relevant EC directive. The Government have urged the Commission to bring forward proposals quickly to amend this directive to give effect to the global system of controls to be established under the Basle convention. The Government have also taken a lead in proposing measures to reduce transfrontier movements of waste to the environmentally justified minimum and as a result EC Environment Ministers agreed earlier this month to aim for self-sufficiency in waste disposal facilities.

Action For Cities Programme

101. **Mr. Ken Hargreaves:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what amount the Government are currently spending on inner city regeneration under the action for cities programme.

Mr. Portillo: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) on 17 May, *Official Report*, column *503*.

Rents to Mortgages Scheme

108. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the rents to mortgages scheme will include help for participants who might encounter difficulties with meeting the mortgage payments.

Mr. Chope: No such scheme has been announced for England.

Caravan Sites

110. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to review the workings of the Caravan Sites Act 1968.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have no plans to review the workings of the legislation.

Urban Development Corporations

117. **Mr. Burt:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the performance and progress of the urban development corporations.

Mr. Portillo: The 10 English urban development corporations are making good progress in regenerating their areas. They have secured £9 billion of private sector investment, created or attracted nearly 50,000 jobs and facilitated the completion of over 15,000 dwellings.

Local Government (Responsibilities)

Mr. David Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a list of the extra responsibilities placed by national Government on to local government except for education for each of the two years ended 5 April and his best estimate of the cost of compliance to local government.

Mr. Chope: The major new burdens, other than those relating to education, falling to local government in 1990-91 include: community charge collection, the implementation of the Children Act, new initiatives in waste disposal management, and the structural maintenance of bridges after existing EC derogation in respect of lorry weights ends in 1999.

The major new burden, other than those burdens relating to education, falling to local authorities in 1989-90 was preparation for the introduction of the community charge.

The best estimates of the costs of these burdens plus savings resulting from improvements in efficiency or the removal of responsibilities, such as the ending of the rating system, were taken into account, along with all the other relevant factors, when we made the settlements for 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Waste Disposal Sites

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number and current status of waste disposal sites in England by disposal authority, waste type, town, location of facility, and land size, or so much of such information as is available.

Mr. Trippier: The Department of the Environment does not hold a definitive list of waste disposal sites in England. Each disposal authority is required to maintain a register containing details of all disposal licences issued by the authority which are in force. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the authorities concerned.

European Badger

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what protective status the EEC accords to the European badger.

Mr. Trippier: None.

Beach Pollution

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the main measures taken since 1974 by his Department to combat pollution of beaches in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement on recent progress.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The EEC bathing water directive was adopted in 1975. In December 1979 the present administration announced a list of 27 bathing waters to be monitored under the terms of the directive. Further bathing waters were added in 1985 and subsequent years. At present 440 bathing waters have been identified including all major seaside resorts. During the 1989 bathing season 76 per cent. met the directive's mandatory standards for coliform bacteria.

A £1·4 billion investment programme was announced last year to bring all bathing waters into compliance within 10 years. On 5 March my right hon. Friend announced, at column *452*, a further £1·5 billion investment programme to ensure that all substantial discharges of sewage are treated before discharge to inland or coastal waters. Discussions are now being held with the water industry to work out the detailed implementation of this policy.

Measures are also being taken to reduce litter on beaches. The Environmental Protection Bill places a new duty on local authorities and some other landowners to do all that is practicable to keep their land, including beaches, clear of litter and refuse.

Low Flying

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment pursuant to hs reply to the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) on 23 May, *Official Report*, column *255*, what consideration is being given in his Department's review of noise control to the noise created by low-flying military aircraft.

Mr. Trippier: Noise from defence establishments is formally excluded from the terms of reference of the noise review working party. However, the members of the working party are aware of the issues raised by low-flying military aircraft, and the Ministry of Defence was represented at the meeting at which aircraft noise as a whole was discussed.

Hazardous Substances

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessments under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations have been undertaken at all workplaces used by civil servants in his Department.

Mr. Trippier: My Department's policy is to provide a safe working environment and safe methods of work that are without risk to the health and safety of its employees. Under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988 (COSHH) my Department has assessed departmental working environments and found no instances of significant exposure to a hazardous substance.

The assessments will be reviewed on a continuing basis, and amended where there are any significant changes to work.

County Councils (Reserves)

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the latest information available to him on the proposed changes in financial reserves held by English county councils during the 1990-91 financial year, and his estimate of the proportions of net revenue expenditure represented by such reserves at 31 March 1990 and 31 March 1991.

Mr. Chope: The available information derived from authorities' budget returns is given in the table. Negative values indicate drawings from reserves and positive values indicate the building up of reserves.

	Budgeted Changes in Financial Reserves 1990-91	*Reserves at 1 April 1990 as percentage of 1989-90 net revenue expenditure*	*Budgeted reserves at 1 April 1991 as percentage of 1990-91 net revenue expenditure*
	£ million	*Percentage*	*Percentage*
Avon	0	N/A	3
Bedfordshire	−3·9	5	3
Berkshire	6·5	N/A	1
Buckinghamshire	−4·5	7	5
Cambridgeshire	−7·1	17	13
Cheshire	0	3	3
Cleveland	0	2	2
Cornwall	0	6	6
Cumbria	6·2	N/A	4
Derbyshire	0	2	1
Devon	4·8	7	7
Dorset	−2·5	3	2
Durham	−0·8	9	8
East Sussex	0·2	2	1
Essex	−18·2	5	2
Gloucestershire	−0·2	2	2
Hampshire	4·6	1	1
Hereford & Worcester	0	3	2
Hertfordshire	−2·0	3	3
Humberside	0·2	3	3
Isle of Wight	1·3	1	2
Kent	0	2	2
Lancashire	43·6	1	3
Leicestershire	−0·4	4	3
Lincolnshire	−6·8	10	7
Norfolk	0	4	4
Northamptonshire	0	3	3
Northumberland	0	N/A	7
North Yorkshire	−5·0	4	2
Nottinghamshire	−10·5	9	7
Oxfordshire	−0·5	5	4
Shropshire	0·3	4	4
Somerset	−1·0	5	4
Staffordshire	0	5	4
Suffolk	0	4	3
Surrey	0·3	3	3
Warkwickshire	−3·4	3	2
West Sussex	−0·4	16	14
Wiltshire	−2·9	4	2

N/A—not available

Boundary Commission Reports

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the local government boundary commission reports he is currently considering, stating the date he received each and setting out reasons for any delay in making a decision.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[pursuant to his answer, 21 June 1990, Official Report, columns 638-39]:* The reports under consideration are:

	Commission's report number	Date of receipt
Review of counties		
Bedfordshire: boundaries with Buckinghamshire and Cambridgeshire	566	[1]14 November 1988
Berkshire: boundaries with Buckinghamshire, Hampshire, Oxfordshire and Surrey	558	[1]31 August 1988
Buckinghamshire: boundaries with Hertfordshire, Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire	571	[1]5 May 1989
Hampshire: boundaries with Dorset, West Sussex and Wiltshire	580	1 February 1990
Leicestershire: boundaries with Derbyshire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and Warwickshire	577	[1]9 October 1989
South Yorkshire: boundaries with Doncaster (North Yorkshire) and Bassetlaw (Nottinghamshire)	585	4 June 1990
Staffordshire: boundaries with Cheshire, Derbyshire, Hereford and Worcester, and Warwickshire	582	[1]12 February 1990
Surrey: boundary with Hampshire	578	19 January 1990
Reviews of parishes within districts/boroughs		
Chorley	—	1 May 1990
Northampton	—	2 January 1990
Woodspring	—	12 February 1990

[1] Decision to be announced shortly.

By statute, a period of at least six weeks has to be allowed for representations to be made to the Secretary of State following the submission of proposals to him by the local government boundary commission. In practice, a longer period is given. In addition, pressure of other work on the staff concerned has meant that we have not been able to deal with all difficult cases as quickly as we would have wished.

Admission Charges

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in light of the recent decision by the House of Lords in the case of James *v.* Eastleigh Borough Council, what advice he is now offering to the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England in respect of concessionary admission charges for elderly people.

Mr. Trippier: This is a matter for the Commission.

North Sea (Dumping)

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration he has given to speeding up the prohibition of the dumping of sewage and other waste in the North sea; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I hope to publish shortly a guidance note on implementation in the United Kingdom of the decisions agreed at the Hague conference on the North sea on 7 and 8 March. The conference was concerned with all types of waste input to the sea, including the dumping from ships of treated sewage sludge and sewage discharges to coastal waters. On these matters the United Kingdom policy remains as set out in the answer given respectively by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Mr. French) on 5 March and by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) on 5 March.

Radioactive Waste Management

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how he, or his Department, makes appointments to the panel of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Council.

Mr. Trippier: My colleages the Secretaries of State for the Environment, Scotland and Wales decide what appointments should be made to the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the meetings of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Council are open to the public.

Mr. Trippier: The meetings of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee are not open to members of the public. However, the committee publishes annual reports summarising the work it has undertaken throughout the year.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what vacancies are current or forthcoming on the panel of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Council.

Mr. Trippier: There are no vacancies in the membership of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee. The terms of office of eight members come to an end later this year.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the membership of the panel of the

Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Council; and if there is any provision for the representation of any environmental public interest groups on this panel or at meetings of the panel.

Mr. Trippier: The membership of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee is as set out in the latest annual report, with the one exception that Professor J. R. Greening has now retired. A copy of the annual report has been placed in the Library. The committee holds regular meetings with a wide range of public interest groups and takes their views into account in providing advice to Ministers.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what funding is available to facilitate public attendance at meetings of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Council.

Mr. Trippier: No funds are available for this purpose as the meetings of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee are not open to the public.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the remit of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Council.

Mr. Trippier: The remit of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee is set out in the first annual report of May 1980, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what public interest groups have representation on the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Council; and whether such groups make suggestions to him for individuals to be nominated to take part in the work of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Council.

Mr. Trippier: The membership of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee is set out in the annual reports, copies of which are placed in the Library. My right hon. Friend considers all suggestions for nominations to the committee, including those from public interest groups.

Tourist Resorts

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for assisting local authorities which have a large influx of visitors during the summer months.

Mr. Chope: There is an allowance in the other services block standard spending assessment fot the costs related to tourism, based on the annual average number of nights that visitors stayed in a given local authority's area.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider a specific tourism grant for major holiday resorts to cover the additional costs associated with a large increase in population for parts of the year.

Mr. Chope: There is no need to establish a specific grant for this purpose. The costs which fall to local authorities as a result of seasonal influxes of tourists are already taken into account in the annual revenue support grant settlement.

South West Water

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to ensure that the inspector who conducted the inquiry at the Old Postern, Dartington, on 18 June, into South West Water's application for a drought order on the River Avon, is given the details of the accidental discharge of titanium dioxide into the River Erme on 15 June and of the damage done to aquatic life; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The discharge of titanium dioxide into the River Erme on 15 June has no direct bearing on South West Water's application for a drought order affecting the River Avon, because the rivers are not linked. I understand from the National Rivers Authority that, although this discharge affected the appearance of the Erme, it did not affect aquatic life. The Secretary of State's decision on the drought order application will be issued as soon as possible.

Air Pollution

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the information held by the Department of the Environment press office about daily ozone pollution levels is available to members of the public; and whether he plans to further improve the availability of information from the national air pollution monitoring network to the public.

Mr. Trippier: As announced last August when the low-level ozone public information system was set up, information is available to any member of the public who contacts the DOE press office (telephone number 071 276 3000—public inquiries unit) during episodes of elevated ozone levels. The Department is constantly looking at ways to improve its services.

Warrington and Runcorn Development Corporation

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total cost to the Warrington and Runcorm development corporation of *(a)* redundancy money paid to staff joining business ventures employed by the corporation and *(b)* the provision of rent-free accommodation to business ventures employed by the corporation.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* In accordance with its contractual obligations the corporation made redundancy payments totalling £4·6 million to staff who joined business ventures. The fees paid to business ventures by the development corporation took account of their use of corporation premises.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment for how long rent-free accommodation was provided by Warrington and Runcorn development corporation to business ventures employed by them; and what was the loss of revenue to the corporation.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The corporation ensured that the provision of accommodation to business ventures was reflected in the level of fees which it paid for their services. There was therefore no loss of revenue to the corporation. The length of time that busines ventures used corporation accommodation varied from 12 months to 30 months.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the redundancy payments made by Warrington and Runcorn development corporation to each of their officials, together with their grades, who joined a business venture employed by them.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The information requested could be provided in the Form requested only at disproportionate cost. A total of £4·6 million was paid to 283 members of staff, an average of £16,300.

Toxic Algae

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the report of the National Rivers Authority's task force on the problems of toxic blue-green algae, and the related deaths of sheep and dogs at Rutland Water, will be published.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 26 June 1990]:* The report is nearing completion and will be published as soon as possible.

Social Deprivation

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in rank order the social deprivation index for local authorities for 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 26 June 1990]:* I have today placed a table in the Library showing for each charging authority the value of the all ages social index for 1990-91, described in annex A to the revenue support grant distibution report (England), together with its rank in England, and the equivalent figures for 1989-90, described under indicator C9 in the rate support grant report (England) 1989-90. The values of the indicators cannot be compared directly.

Private Rented Housing

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on changes in the size of the private rented housing market; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) earlier today.

Norman Shaw North (Water Supply)

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his answer of 14 June, *Official Report*, column *296*, if his Department has yet determined the source of the coli-aerogenes discovered in the water supply of the Norman Shaw North parliamentary building.

Mr. Chope: Since my answer of 14 June there have been further developments. The presence of coli-aerogenes was again detected in the supply, but because the chlorine level was above the minimum standard, the Parliamentary Works Office was advised that the supply did not have to be shut off. Both the system in the building and the mains have since been sterilised and the subsequent test results are good.

It is not easy to establish the source of this sort of contamination, but it seems that the problem did not orginate in the building but in the mains.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 28 June 1990

NATIONAL FINANCE

Income Tax

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the revenue from *(a)* the higher rate of income tax and *(b)* the top 10 per cent. of income tax payers in 1986-87 and the latest year for which figures are available; and what is the projection for the current financial year.

Mr. Lilley: The information is as follows:

	Income tax liability at rates in excess of basic rate[1] *£ billion*	*Total income tax liability of top 10 per cent. of income tax-payers £ billion*
1986-87	2·8	[3]16·9
1987-88	3·7	[3]18·4
1990-91[2]	4·4	[4]24·9

[1] The figures are the additional tax liability resulting from the difference between each higher rate and the basic rate of tax.
[2] Estimates are based on a projection of the 1987-88 Survey of Personal Incomes and, are therefore, provisional.
[3] Counting a husband and wife as one income tax payer.
[4] Counting a husband and wife as separate income tax payers.

Borrowing Requirement

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what means the Government intend to use to finance its borrowing requirement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Government's funding policy is as set out in annex A to chapter 2 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report 1990-91".

Capital Inflows

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of short-term capital inflows in 1988 and 1989.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The available information for 1988 and 1989 on the main categories of financial transaction in the capital account of the balance of payments is published by the Central Statistical Office in the press notice issued on 13 June—CSO (90) 80—a copy of which is in the Library. It is not particularly meaningful to distinguish between short-term and other capital flows.

European Monetary Proposals

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has assessed the expert and lay public reaction to his European monetary proposals announced on 21 June.

Mr. Major: I am studying reactions to my proposals and look forward to discussing these proposals further with my European Community colleagues in the coming weeks.

Petrol Duties

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue was raised in excise duty on *(a)* unleaded and *(b)* leaded petrol (i) in the three months prior to 20 March and (ii) subsequently.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue was raised in excise duty on *(a)* unleaded and *(b)* leaded petrol (i) in the three months prior to 20 March 1990 and (ii) subsequently.

Mr. Ryder: Data are not readily available for the exact periods prior to and after 20 March. For the period 15 December to 14 March, £417 million duty was collected on unleaded petrol and £1,128 million on leaded petrol. Provisional figures for the period 15 March to 14 May show that £347 million duty was collected on unleaded petrol and £847 million on leaded petrol.

European Currency

Mr. Hind: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on his proposals for a common European currency.

Mr. Lilley: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer gave my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) on 21 June, *Official Report*, column *655*.

Output Statistics

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest information on the output per hour worked in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* Japan.

Mr. Ryder: Output per hour worked in the United Kingdom in 1986, the latest year for which data are available, is estimated to have been about 50 per cent. higher than in Japan.

Personal Income

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the increase in real personal disposable income during the last 12 months for which figures are available.

Mr. Lilley: During the first quarter of 1990 aggregate real personal disposable income was 5 per cent. higher than in the corresponding period in 1989.

Inflation

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was *(a)* the level of the retail prices index and *(b)* the underlying rate of inflation in June 1989 and at the current time.

Mr. Ryder: The annual rate of increase of the retail prices index was 9·7 per cent. in May 1990. The underlying rate of inflation, as measured by the retail prices index excluding mortgage interest payments and rates-community charge, was 7 per cent. The corresponding inflation rates in June 1989 were 8·3 per cent. and 5·8 per cent. respectively.

Interest rates

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the effects of interest rates on Welsh economic performance.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend has received a number of such representations.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many letters he has received in 1990 from businesses about the level of interest rates.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend has received a number of such letters.

Home Carers

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the range of possibilities for tax relief for those who employ carers in the home; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: All aspects of the tax system are kept under review.

Shareholders

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the latest estimate of the number of individuals owning shares.

Mr. Lilley: According to the latest survey carried out in January and February this year for the Treasury and the stock exchange, nearly 11 million individuals own shares.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will review the introduction by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise of the serious misdeclaration penalty and default interest on value added tax.

Mr. Ryder: The working of the penalty for serious misdeclarations and the charging of interest on all underdeclarations will be closely monitored by Customs during the two years following their introduction on 1 April 1990 and reviewed in the first half of 1992.

Energy Conservation

Mr. Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has any proposals to use tax incentives to stimulate energy conservation work.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has no present plans to do so.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much was invested in improving the energy efficiency of the Treasury in the latest available year.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* Until now the Treasury's energy conservation role has been limited to running internal publicity campaigns on energy efficiency and day-to-day energy management. Costs have been de minimis. However, the hon. Member will be interested to know that as refurbishment of the Department's buildings takes place, such works will incorporate substantial energy conservation measures.

CIVIL SERVICE

Agencies

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what further candidates for agency status have been announced in the last two months.

Mr. Luce: Three further candidates for executive agency status have been announced in the last two months: Chessington computer centre in the Treasury; the fisheries enforcement services in the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland; and the estates directorate in the Department of Health. This brings the total number of announced agency candidates to 26, in addition to the 31 established agencies.

THE ARTS

Training Institutes

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Minister for the Arts what support his Department is giving to institutions training actors, actresses and other artistes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: Some training for the stage is provided in higher education institutions funded by the Department of Education and Science through the Universities Funding Council and the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council, and by further education colleges funded by local education authorities. In addition to this general support, the DES makes a direct grant to the Royal Ballet School and the Arts Council funds the National Opera Studio, which provides advanced training for singers. Most professional training for actors and dancers is however provided by independent establishments whose students may receive discretionary awards from their local education authorities.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister for the Arts how much was invested in improving the energy efficiency of his Department in the latest available year.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* Under the guidance of the Cabinet Office, staff are encouraged to follow simple but effective no-cost measures to help reduce energy wastage. Major investments to improve energy efficiency are the responsibility of Property Holdings and the departments which are the major occupiers of the two buildings in which my office is located.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

China

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what arrangements were made or conditions agreed with the Governments of the United States of America and the People's Republic of China which enabled Dr. Fang Li Zhi and his wife to leave the United States embassy in Beijing and enter the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: Following agreement between the United States and Chinese Governments that Dr. Fang should be

allowed to leave Peking, Dr. Fang and his wife have been given leave to enter the United Kingdom for an initial period of six months, which can be extended. No special conditions apply to this arrangement. Dr. Fang is a distinguished astrophysicist and intends to pursue his academic work for a time here. We warmly welcome the Chinese Government's decision to allow Dr. Fang and his wife to leave, and are glad that we have been able to contribute to a positive solution to this long-standing problem.

Ivory (Hong Kong)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to ask the Hong Kong authorities to destroy all current stocks of confiscated ivory; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 14 June 1990]:* No. This is a matter for the Hong Kong authorities. There is no obligation under CITES regulations to destroy stocks of confiscated ivory.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current total of confiscated ivory now held by the Hong Kong authorities.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 14 June 1990]:* I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 21 June in which I stated that the current total of confiscated ivory held by the Hong Kong authorities was 2·4 tonnes. There has been no change since then.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why India and Canada are included as countries of export of seized ivory in his reply of 5 June, *Official Report*, column *472*, but are not listed in his reply of 8 May, *Official Report*, column *25*, as being countries of export of ivory seized by the Hong Kong authorities.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 14 June 1990]:* We are making further inquiries with the Hong Kong authorities. I shall give the hon. Member a substantive answer as soon as possible.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his reply of 5 June, *Official Report*, column *472*, what are the countries of destination for the 702·5 kg of ivory seized in transit by the Hong Kong authorities.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 14 June 1990]:* According to the accompanying shipping documents, the intended destination was Macau.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what grounds the Hong Kong authorities seized 15·5 kg of mammoth ivory imported by Lee Chor Mui from Japan, as detailed in his reply of 8 May, *Official Report*, column *25*.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 14 June 1990]:* The mammoth ivory imported by Lee Chor Mui was seized for further investigation because customs officers initially suspected that it might be elephant ivory. Once the ivory had been examined and confirmed to be mammoth ivory, which is not controlled under CITES, it was returned to Lee Chor Mui.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why no reference was made in his reply of 5 June, *Official Report*, column *472*, to the 15·5 kg of mammoth ivory seized from Lee Chor Mui.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 14 June 1990]:* No reference was made in my reply of 5 June to the mammoth ivory seized from Lee Chor Mui because imports of mammoth ivory cannot be identified from Hong Kong Government's trade statistics.

Moreover, as the ivory in question was not elephant ivory, it did not appear in the import statistics compiled by the CITES management authority.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

School Trips (Seat Belts)

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to make the fitting and wearing of seat belts compulsory in minibuses and coaches used for school trips; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The responsibility for this matter rests with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, who is pursuing possible action.

Musical Education

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take steps to protect the level of opportunities for musical education in the light of the current proposals to merge the Royal Academy of Music and the Royal College of Music.

Mr. Jackson: The committee which conducted the review of the London music conservatoires was appointed by the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council. The latter has now published the committee's report and invited comment on it by the end of September. It will then be for the council to decide what action to take in the light of the report and of the responses to the consultation on it. My right hon. Friend looks forward to hearing what conclusions the council comes to in due course.

It is clear from its terms of reference that in appointing this committee the council had in mind the need

"to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of the provision of music education"

in its sector and is seeking to discover how the three London music conservatoires within its aegis

"may be organised so as to train young performing musicians to the highest national and international standard".

Copies of the committee's report have been placed in the Library of both Houses.

School Buses

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what advice he has given to education authorities concerning child safety on school buses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. Friend works closely with his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport on these matters. Two documents have been issued recently. First, "Children and Roads: a Safer Way", which was sent last month to all local education authorities and heads of all schools, sets out the

Government's proposals for reducing the number of child casualties on our roads, and includes a section on safer bus travel. Secondly, there is the Department of Transport's consultative document of 6 June, incorporating proposed regulations for distinctive signs on school buses and related safety measures, which has been issued to a large number of interested organisations for comment by 31 August.

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to how many children travel to school each day by school bus in each education authority area.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The information is not collected centrally in England.

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what advice he has given to education authorities concerning the criteria to be applied in determining whether a child qualifies to travel to and from school by school bus.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Local education authorities in England must decide the arrangements they consider necessary to transport pupils to and from school in the light of local circumstances and of the relevant legislation. In 1981, the Department sent a circular letter to education authorities in England giving general guidance on school transport issues. The advice it contains remains current. A copy is in the Library of the House.

Physical Education

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to announce the membership of the national curriculum working party on physical education; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend hopes to make an announcement in the near future.

Further Education Colleges

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list those local education authorities which are now operating a system of local financial management for further educaton colleges.

Mr. Jackson: The following local education authorities in England are operating a system of local finanical management for further education colleges.

Avon
Barking
Barnsley
Bedfordshire
Berkshire
Birmingham
Bradford
Brent
Bromley
Buckinghamshire
Bury
Calderdale
Cambridgeshire
Cheshire
Cleveland
Cornwall
Coventry
Croydon
Cumbria
Derbyshire
Devon
Doncaster
Dorset
Dudley
Durham
East Sussex
Enfield
Essex
Gateshead
Gloucestershire
Hampshire
Haringey
Harrow
Havering
Hereford and Worcester
Hertfordshire
Hounslow
Humberside
Isle of Wight
Kent
Kingston upon Thames
Kirklees
Knowsley
Lancashire
Leeds
Leicestershire
Lincolnshire
Liverpool
Manchester
Newcastle
Newham
Norfolk
Northamptonshire
North Tyneside
Northumberland
North Yorkshire
Nottinghamshire
Oldham
Oxfordshire
Redbridge
Richmond upon Thames
Rochdale
Rotherham
Salford
Sandwell
Sefton
Sheffield
Shropshire
Solihull
Somerset
South Tyneside
Staffordshire
Stockport
Suffolk
Surrey
Tameside
Trafford
Wakefield
Walsall
Waltham Forest
Warwickshire
West Sussex
Wigan
Wiltshire
Wirral
Wolverhampton

WALES

Rural Disadvantage

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what amounts of social policy expenditure have been allocated by his Department, and its agencies, to combat rural disadvantage.

Mr. Grist: Expenditure is not classified in the way implied by the hon. Gentleman's question. However, by

way of example, well over £3 million is being spent by the Welsh Development Agency each year to fund its various rural development measures including the allocation of £1 million a year for the next five years for the development of rural initiatives and venture enterprises—DRIVE. This is expected to generate a further £15 million to £20 million of private sector investment. Tai Cymru aims to allocate £25 million towards the provision of housing in rural areas in Wales in this financial year, which should generate around £7·5 million of private finance. In addition the gross budget for the Development Board for Rural Wales is £19·918 million for 1990-91. The formulae used for the allocation of resources to local authorities and to district health authorities both contain certain elements which recognise the particular needs of rural areas.

Departmental Research (Expenditure)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total identifiable expenditure on research by his Department in each year since 1979; what proportion was awarded on a customer-contractor basis; and what proportion of his total departmental budget was expended on research for each year.

Mr. David Hunt: All of the expenditure will have been based on the customer-contractor principle, and the information is shown in the table:

	Total departmental expenditure on R&D £ million	*Proportion of departmental budget per cent.*
1979-80	1·1	0·15
1980-81	1·1	0·13
1981-82	1·6	0·17
1982-83	1·6	0·14
1983-84	1·3	0·11
1984-85	1·6	0·13
1985-86	2·6	0·20
1986-87	3·5	0·24
1987-88	1·9	0·12
1988-89	2·0	0·12

Hospital Laundering

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what capital expenditure has been incurred by health boards on the purchase of new laundering and dry cleaning equipment over the past two years.

Mr. Grist: Capital expenditure incurred by health authorities on the purchase of laundry and dry cleaning equipment over the last two years for which information is currently available is as follows:

	£
1987-88	136,243
1988-89	701,796

Source: Health authorities annual accounts.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what capital expenditure has been incurred on the building of new national health service laundries and the renovation of existing laundry facilities over the last two years;

(2) what proportion of the capital expenditure incurred on the purchase of a new laundry and dry cleaning machine and on the construction of new, and renovation of existing, laundry facilities over the past two years was for the creation of additional laundry capacity.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Maternity Services

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many obstetric beds are available now in Wales, how many were available in each of the past five years; and what are the equivalent figures for each district health authority in Wales.

Mr. Grist: Details of obstetric beds in district health authorities in Wales for 1988-89, the latest available, and previous years are published in "Hospital Bed Use Statistics", copies of which are in the Library.

Mental Illness

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will make it his policy to allocate resources to support the role of voluntary organisations at a local and national level in Wales in the implementation of the all-Wales strategy for mental illness.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has already allocated resources to voluntary organisations at both national and local level for a variety of purposes connected with the mental illness strategy.

Departmental Publications

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all working papers, implementation documents, departmental circulars and other publications, whether in draft or final form, that have been issued by his Department to date arising from the National Health Service and Community Care Bill, "Working for Patients", "Caring for People" and associated Government initiatives.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the comprehensive reply I gave him on 14 March 1990. An updated list of Welsh Office and Department of Health material arising from the National Health Service and Community Care Bill and related White Papers will shortly be placed in the Vote Office and Libraries.

DHAs (Capital Assets)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give full details of the requirements he has placed on district health authorities in Wales in respect of drawing up a register of their capital assets.

Mr. Grist: District health authorities in Wales were asked to compile capital asset registers by 31 March 1990. The registers contain details of those assets managed or owned by each authority, including land and buildings, which individually have a value of £1,000 or above or in the case of groups of related assets with individual values of less than £1,000 exceed £250 and are collectively worth more than £1,000. The format of asset registers has not been prescribed but they should contain as a minimum:

1. Asset identification and description.
2. Asset location.
3. Date of acquisition.
4. Method of acquisition.
5. Initial capital expenditure.
6. Expected replacement cost.
7. Expected date of replacement (or end of life).

Authorities may, however, wish to include additional information for their own asset management purposes. A comprehensive asset register will enable managers to undertake effective management and utilisation of capital assets as well as providing the basis for capital charging.

No standard computerised recording system has been prescribed for maintaining and updating asset registers, but most authorities in Wales are using variants of the works information and management system—WIMS.

Market Research

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all market research surveys *(a)* commissioned by his Department or *(b)* paid for by his Department in the current financial year.

Mr. David Hunt: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Project 2000

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) for what purpose the resources originally earmarked for Project 2000 for nurse training in Wales, but which will not now be used for that purpose, will be redirected;

(2) what was the original total financial sum earmarked for the implementation of Project 2000 for nurse training in Wales; and what is the latest figure for this purpose.

Mr. Grist: The only provision which has been earmarked for the implementation costs of Project 2000 are the resources which have been made available for the current financial year which total £1,493,000. Funding requirements for future years will be subject to the decisions which my right hon. Friend will take on the distribution of his block allocation following this year's public expenditure review.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the original total number of nurses who would be trained each year in Wales under Project 2000; and what is the revised figure.

Mr. Grist: The estimated intake of nurses who would have trained in the first year of an all-Wales introduction of Project 2000 courses is as follows:

	Number
North Wales	240
West Wales	359
South-East Wales	590-630

The decision to phase implementation will stagger these numbers. Traditional nurse training courses will continue to be run to meet the manpower requirements of health authorities until Project 2000 is fully introduced in Wales.

PRIME MINISTER

Exchange Rates

Q6. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Prime Minister what recent representations she has received concerning exchange rate policy.

The Prime Minister: I have received a number of representations.

Human Rights

Q129. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a further statement on her policy regarding intervention in respect of abuses of human rights in Commonwealth countries.

The Prime Minister: Where Commonwealth countries' practice on human rights has given cause for concern, we have made representations as necessary.

Official Visits

Q145. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to make an official visit to Rugby or Kenilworth.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Q154. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make an official visit to Leith.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Q179. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next proposes to make an official visit to Disneyland, United States of America.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to visit California.

Q210. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next expects to pay an official visit to a skill centre.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

German Unification

Q156. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Prime Minister what recent discussions she has held with Chancellor Kohl and other heads of European Community states regarding the representation of Germany, following unification, in the European Parliament; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The implications for the EC of German unification were discussed at the European Council on 25 and 26 June. It is our aim to achieve integration into the EC of the territory of the former GDR without change to the structure of the Community's institutions.

Homelessness, London

Q184. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Prime Minister what plans she has to meet organisations representing the homeless in London.

The Prime Minister: I have no such plans. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and his ministerial colleagues have regular meetings with voluntary groups working with the homeless, and with local authorities in London and their associations.

European Court of Justice

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister when she plans to visit the European Court of Justice.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to visit the European Court of Justice.

Local Authorities

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Prime Minister (1) how many official visits she has paid to local authorities since May 1979;

(2) how many meetings she has had with the leaders of the local authority associations since May 1979;

(3) on how many occasions leaders of the local authority associations have been invited to official hospitality functions at No. 10 Downing street.

The Prime Minister: I have met numerous local authority representatives since May 1979, in the course of visiting their counties, towns and rural districts.

Litter

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Prime Minister when she intends to implement her policy to introduce a £1,000 fine for dropping litter.

The Prime Minister: The maximum fine for dropping and leaving litter will be raised from its present maximum of £400 to £1,000 later this year, two months after Royal Assent of the Environmental Protection Bill. At the same time local authorities will be empowered to introduce schemes involving fixed penalties of £10.

Legislation

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Prime Minister (1) whether there is any continuing review of existing legislation to determine whether the law in Scotland and in Northern Ireland should, as far as possible, be the same as in England and Wales *(a)* overall and *(b)* in relation to penalties for offences which are covered by different pieces of legislation in the different legal jurisdictions of the United Kingdom;

(2) whether any automatic review of changes in legislation made in respect of England and Wales is made in order to consider whether the law in Scotland and in Northern Ireland should adopt the England and Wales position.

The Prime Minister: When preparing any individual piece of legislation in Scotland or Northern Ireland, related legislation is taken into account.

Engagements

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 June.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 June.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 June.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 June.

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 June.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 June.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today, including one with the Governor of Hong Kong.

TRANSPORT

Coaches and Lorries

Mr. Snape: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what statistics are collected on tyre failures on coaches and heavy goods vehicles;

(2) what information his Department has on trends in the number of tyre failures on coaches and heavy goods vehicles on motorways and major roads.

Mr. Atkins: The vehicle inspectorate has statistics on those tyre failures on coaches and goods vehicles which it obtains from its own accident investigations and from police and other sources where a safety defect is suspected.

Since many tyre failures can occur without serious consequences or accident, these are not always brought to my Department's attention. Our statistics therefore are unable to reflect the actual field situation or failure trends. However, the statistics show that tyre failure was a contributory factor in less than one in every 250 accidents investigated.

Departmental Research (Expenditure)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total identifiable expenditure on research by his Department in each year since 1979; what proportion was awarded on a customer-contractor basis; and what proportion of his total departmental budget was expended on research for each year.

Mr. Atkins: The expenditure on research and development by the Department of Transport is set out in the table, together with the proportion this represents of the Department's total expenditure in the financial years 1979-80 to 1988-89. All research commissioned by the Department is based on the customer-contractor principle.

Outturn prices

Financial year	*R and D expenditure £ million*	*Percentage of total DTp expenditure*
1979-80	17·8	3·0
1980-81	21·1	3·0
1981-82	27·5	3·0
1982-83	25·9	2·4
1983-84	[1]27·8	2·8
1984-85	32·7	2·7
1985-86	[2]25·0	2·1
1986-87	24·6	1·9
1987-88	26·4	1·9
1988-89	27·0	1·9

[1] In July 1983, responsibility for air and marine transport was transferred to DTp.

[2] In 1985-86, BR and LRT assumed full responsibility for their own R and D expenditure. Government financial support continued to be provided through the general revenue grants to BR and LRT; but the research elements cannot be separately identified.

Stockport Bypass

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what technical problems remain to be overcome in the planning and design of the A6(M) Stockport north-south bypass.

Mr. Atkins: The design of junctions at Offerton road (A627) and Buxton road (A6), and extensive diversions of statutory undertakers' apparatus along the line of the route are among issues to be resolved.

British Rail (Freight)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from the Railfreight Users Group concerning the adequacy of preparations by British Rail for freight facilities.

Mr. Freeman: The recently formed Railfreight Users Group has been in touch with us and with British Rail. BR has offered the group an early meeting to discuss its concerns.

Birkham Wood

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he made of the environmental implications before deciding to route a bypass through Birkham wood; and if he will now re-examine the designated route so as to minimise further the environmental damage.

Mr. Atkins: The road proposals affecting Birkham wood (Harrogate-Knaresborough southern bypass) have been promoted by North Yorkshire county council. Public local inquiries were held in 1989 to consider the proposals and the inspector has reported to the Secretary of State. At these inquiries evidence on the environmental implications of the route of the bypass through the wood was presented by the Nature Conservancy Council and others. This evidence was summarised in the inspector's report together with the county council's response.

An interim decision letter was issued on behalf of the Secretary of State on 23 November 1989 which was concerned with a technical defect in the compulsory purchase order. Once this issue has been resolved the Secretary of State will come to a decision in respect of the orders.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Hague: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much public money is expected to be spent on road improvements connected with the construction of the channel tunnel, up to the end of 1993.

Mr. Atkins: The trunk road infrastructure to serve cross-channel traffic using either the ports or the channel tunnel, when built, has been put in place progressively over a good many years.

In addition to the network now in use, we have currently under construction or in preparation 31 schemes, valued at approximately £588 million at November 1987 prices, to complete or improve the major direct trunk routes concerned; of these, we expect that eight schemes to the value of approximately £268 million will have been provided by the end of 1993.

Kent county council has a special package of 10 channel tunnel-related local road schemes, valued at approximately £75 million, which my Department is committed to supporting with transport supplementary grant. I understand that all but one of these schemes are expected to be provided by the end of 1993.

MV Marine

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the action that he proposes to take following the publication of the report of the inquiry into the loss of the MV Marine by the Bahamian Government.

Mr. McLoughlin: We have received the report and it is being studied by members of my Department, and it would be inappropriate to comment on the matter at this time.

Railways (Noise)

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the names or grades of the members of his working party to study noise levels on railway routes with special reference to the channel tunnel high-speed link and other connecting routes.

Mr. Freeman: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my predecessor to my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate) on 23 March 1990 at column *777*, which gave both the terms of reference of the committee and its composition.

Street Works Legislation

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he intends to bring forward a Bill to reform present public utilities street works legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The Government accept that the arrangements for utility street works are in need of reform and intend to bring forward new legislation to implement the main recommendations of the Horne report "Roads and the Utilities". A Bill based on proposals contained in the consultation papers issued by the Department of Transport last year will be introduced as soon as a suitable opportunity can be found.

Radio Navigation System

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what information he has regarding the current attitude of the Danish authorities towards participation in a civil Loran C marine radio navigation system to cover north-west Europe and the north Atlantic and to the siting of a transmitter station in the Faroes;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 25 April, *Official Report*, column *195*, to the hon. Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price), what estimate his Department has made of the cost to the fishing industry in the United Kingdom of the proposed change from the Decca navigation system to the Loran C system; and what proposals he is considering to assist the industry to meet the costs of the changeover;

(3) with which countries his Department has discussed the proposal for an international civil Loran C system of marine radio navigation aid to cover north-west Europe and the north Atlantic; and what progress has been made in these discussions;

(4) what representations he has received from the fishing industry regarding his proposals on the length of transitional period required to convert from the existing Decca navigation system to the Loran C radio navigation system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Discussions on the proposed north-west European Loran C system have been undertaken with Canada, Denmark, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Iceland, Ireland, the Netherlands and Norway. Discussions are still proceeding, both on technical issues and on the draft of an international agreement. The Danish authorities have not yet reached a final decision on their participation. A Loran C

transmitter already exists in the Faroes. The United Kingdom's continued participation is dependent on a satisfactory agreement being reached within an acceptable time scale.

I have received no representations from the fishing industry about the transitional period since my right hon. Friend's announcement in April. This envisaged a period of over three years' joint operation of the Decca and Loran C systems before closure of the Decca service in 1997. The fishing industry had earlier urged the longest possible transition, ideally up to five years.

I accept there would be additional costs to users where it proved necessary to replace Decca receivers prematurely. No conclusive forecast can be made of such costs, which depend on a variety of individual circumstances, including the age of receivers and the operating environment. Since six years' notice would be given of the ending of the Decca service, a significant proportion of receivers would be replaced in this period in the normal course of events, whether through wear and tear or more attractive technology. I have no proposals for financial assistance to users to meet the costs of change.

Clyde Port Authority

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what evaluation he has undertaken of the trading or other performance of the Clyde port authority.

Mr. McLoughlin: None.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the current payments made to the *(a)* chairman, *(b)* deputy chairman, *(c)* board workers and *(d)* managing director of Clyde port authority.

Mr. McLoughlin: According to the authority's accounts for 1989, the annual remuneration received by the chairman was £10,000 and the other non-executive members received £3,500. The highest-paid executive on the board received £48,587 and the two other executive members received between £30,000 and £40,000.

Vehicle Emissions

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to reduce harmful emissions from road vehicles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: My Department has been active for many years in developing standards to tackle unacceptable vehicle fumes and noise and to secure a move from leaded to unleaded fuel. We have played a key role in securing agreement in the European Community to higher emissions and noise standards, and we have also taken the lead in making improved vehicle construction standards a priority so as to further improve safety.

I welcome the interest and co-operation of manufacturers in seeking to develop more environmentally friendly vehicles. However, if they are to continue to reach the standards built into their initial design, vehicles need to be properly maintained and properly tuned. Garages already offer this service to their customers. I have concluded there is a good case for adding a simple emissions check to the MOT test for all petrol-driven cars and light vans, starting next year. My Department is today issuing a consultation paper outlining what is proposed and seeking views. In future, the existing MOT test would include a tuning check. In the same way as the other items in the test, motorists would need to ensure their vehicle met the test requirements if it were to continue on the road.

It is estimated that this proposal should improve fuel consumption and hence carbon dioxide emissions by about 4 per cent. averaged over the 16·5 million cars and light vans in the MOT scheme, with substantially larger benefits to carbon monoxide and hydrocarbon emissions. The net extra cost to motorists should be modest, given compensating benefits through reduced fuel bills. Like everyone else, the motorist will also enjoy the non-financial benefits from lower levels of pollution.

We shall also be looking at ways of increasing checks and testing techniques for emissions from heavy goods vehicles and buses, and are working with European colleagues on effective standards for testing vehicles with catalytic converters.

Select Registration Scheme

Mr. Maples: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current timetable for the start of the select registration scheme.

Mr. Atkins: The select registration scheme will start on 1 October 1990 with the H letter. Buyers of new vehicles after that date will be able to purchase an entitlement to any registration mark from the numerical range 1 to 20, for almost all possible three-letter combinations. The sales scheme will be widely publicised and I have placed copies of the Department's information leaflet in the Library.

M1 (Lane Closure)

Sir Neil Macfarlane: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what information he has on the name of the haulage contractor and the goods that were being conveyed on 25 June which caused the closure of two lanes of the M1;

(2) if he will call for a report on whether the emergency services were affected by the closure of two lanes of the M1 on 25 June during the movement of the wide load vehicle; what prior notification they were given; and by whom;

(3) who took the decision to permit two lanes of the M1 to be closed on 25 June for a wide load vehicle; and on what date and time the broadcasting authorities were informed;

(4) if he will make it his policy not to permit the closure of two lanes, in daytime, on the motorways for wide load transportation; and if he will make a statement;

(5) which section within his Department handles the arrangements for the movement of wide load vehicles on motorways; upon what criteria decisions are based; and who co-ordinates the details;

(6) what discussions took place between his Department and the police authorities prior to the closure of two lanes of the M1 on 25 June for an abnormally wide load vehicle.

Mr. Atkins: The abnormal load in question was a large transformer being transported from Goole docks to Ratcliffe power station in Nottinghamshire. The move was urgent, being necessitated by an electrical breakdown at the power station. In order to reduce the length of the road journey, the transformer was moved from its storage place at Kingsnorth power station on the Thames, by sea to Goole, from where it had to complete its journey by road. The total weight of the transformer and trailer was 377

tonnes, its width was 5·6m and it height 5·25m. The haulier was Abnormal Load Engineering and the move was carried out on behalf of PowerGen.

The police were notified at least three days before the move took place and they escorted the vehicles throughout the journey. The local radio stations and the Automobile Association were informed prior to the move. The emergency services were not affected, so far as I am aware. Had they been, the police were on hand to render assistance. I do not consider it necessary to call for a special report in this instance.

Movements of this nature have to be authorised in advance by officials in my Department by delegated authority from the Secretary of State. Before authorisation is granted, the necessity for the move is determined and a suitable route is worked out between my officials, all the police forces and all the highway and bridge authorities concerned. This route is issued to the haulier and all the relevant authorities and must be followed in detail. When the route has been agreed and issued, the special order authorising the move is made and circulated. In this case the route had already been worked out, as is often the case for routes from port to power station, so it was necessary only to obtain confirmation from all concerned that it was still suitable. The order was then signed and issued on 22 June by the special order section in the vehicle standards and engineering division of my Department.

The actual timing of a move such as this is determined by the police. They have the local knowledge to decide the best timing for minimising danger to other road users. In general, they consider that it is less dangerous to encounter a large, slow-moving vehicle in daylight, but they do appreciate that congestion is likely to be worse in the daytime and I understand that they are currently reviewing this policy. I do not consider it appropriate to interfere in this matter.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

National Quality Award

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his answer of 30 April, *Official Report*, column *386*, on a national quality award, if he will outline his reasons for the reply given .

Mr. Douglas Hogg: To encourage firms to improve quality we provide support for consultancy under the enterprise initiative and advice under the "Managing into the '90s" programme. Other activities are undertaken by a variety of outside organisations, including the British Quality Association, which runs its own British quality awards scheme aimed at heightening awareness of the importance of quality. We do not believe that it is necessary for the Government to create an additional award scheme.

Foundries

Mr. Ted Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many United Kingdom foundries closed in 1989; and how many are still in production.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Business Statistics Office's figures for the number of foundries which were in production in 1989 will not be available until towards the end of this year. The comparable figure for 1988 was published in table 8 of the Central Statistical Office "Business Monitor" report on the census of production 1988—PA311.

Industry Act 1980

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last made use of his powers under section 3(2)(a) of the Industry Act 1980.

Mr. Ridley: As reported to Parliament, in the summer supplementary estimates on class V vote 1, on 14 July 1988 my predecessor used his powers under section 3(2)(a) of the Industry Act 1980 to purchase a security in Rover Group plc for £547 million, following the agreement reached with British Aerospace plc, and approved by the European Commission, for the sale of the Government shareholding in Rover Group plc.

Details of my predecessor's use of section 3 of the Industry Act 1980 are given in reports under section 3(4) of that Act which have been placed in the Library today. I regret that, due to an administrative error, the reports were not laid before the House earlier.

HEALTH

Voluntary Organisations

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will provide a breakdown of the awards given to voluntary organisations under section 64 procedures for the financial years 1988-89 and 1989-90 into *(a)* awards for project funding and *(b)* core funding grants.

Mr. Dorrell: Our general scheme of grants under section 64 provides core grants to national voluntary organisations to assist with their administration costs; project grants to support discrete projects which are experimental or innovative; and a small number of capital grants. A breakdown of grants awarded in 1988-89 and 1989-90 has been placed in the Library.

Mentally Ill Adolescents

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will visit the adolescent unit for the mentally ill in Nottingham district health authority.

Mr. Dorrell: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has no plans to do so.

Community Health Councils

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on procedures for funding community health councils.

Mr. Dorrell: Regional health authorities, RHAs, as establishing authorities for community health councils, CHCs, have a duty to pay CHCs' expenses which the RHAs consider the CHCs have reasonably incurred. How they go about doing so is for each RHA to decide.

NHS Doctors

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the percentage change in the number of doctors within the national health service per 100,000 of population since 1979.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The requested information is given in the table.

Hospital and community health service medical staff and general medical practitioners in England

	1979	1988
Doctors	61,554·0	70,995·0
Population	46,396·1	47,536·3
Doctors per 100,000	132·7	149·3
Percentage change 1979-88	—	12·6

Figures include permanent paid and honorary staff but exclude hospital practitioners and clinical assistants.

Disabled People (Legislation)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to implement sections 1, 2 and 3 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 without delay.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to implement the remaining sections of the Disabled Persons Act (Services, Consultation and Representation) 1986 within the next two years.

Mr. Dorrell: Decisions cannot be taken on the implementation of these sections of the Act until we have established their resource and service implications. We are still awaiting cost estimates from the local authority associations.

Stepping Hill Hospital, Stockport

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many staff, broken down into category, were employed at Stepping Hill hospital, Stockport on *(a)* 1 June 1979 and *(b)* 1 June 1989.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not held centrally. My hon. Friend may wish to contact the chairman of Stockport health authority for the details.

Maternity Services

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many obstetrics beds are available now in each regional health authority in England; and how many were available in each of the past five years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The latest information on numbers of beds available daily in maternity wards for each year from 1983 is contained in "Summary of bed availability, England 1988/89" a copy of which is in the Library. Information is no longer collected centrally on bed availability by clinical specialty.

Public Works

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action has been taken by his Department to advise regional or district health authorities of the requirements of EC public works directive 89/440/EEC.

Mr. Dorrell: A copy of the works directive which was adopted by the EC in July 1989 was sent to regional health authorities on 22 February 1990. Preliminary guidance indicating the main changes to the earlier works directive was issued to regional and district health authorities on 30 March. Detailed guidance was issued to regional and district health authorities under cover of an executive letter (EL(90)MB/114) on 6 June; copies are available in the Library.

Project 2000

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the original sum of money earmarked for the implementation of Project 2000 in England; and what is the latest estimated figure for his purpose.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The implementation of Project 2000 in England is to be phased in over a number of years. A total of £38 million has been earmarked and made available for 1989-90 and 1990-91. This will mean that between 1990 and April 1991 the number of Project 2000 places available will have doubled to 20,000—40 per cent. of all nurse training places. Additional funding will be made available in future years against the background of other competing needs.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how the European Community directive on nurse training, due to be implemented by October 1991, will be achieved in the light of delays in the target dates relating to Project 2000; and if he will make resources available to meet the 40 weeks of theory training required by the directive.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Implementation of EC directive 89/595/EEC amending EC directive 77/453/EEC is a matter for the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting, which is the competent authority of the nursing professions in the United Kingdom. We have never set a target date for full implementation of Project 2000 in England.

Health Authority Staff

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he will take to prevent a conflict of interest arising from district health authority staff preparing contracts with a self-governing trust which may subsequently employ them.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is for health authorities to ensure that conflicts of interest between the purchasing and providing roles do not occur and to determine any mechanisms to prevent this from happening.

Hearing Aids

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average waiting time for fitting hearing aids to national health service patients with hearing difficulties by the Hearing Aid Centre; and what was the waiting time five years ago.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not held centrally.

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is being done to reduce the waiting time for national health service patients needing a hearing aid fitted by the Hearing Aid Centre.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department is funding a pilot scheme, to start later this year, which is aimed at reducing waiting times for hearing aid services. Details of the scheme are contained in a consultation paper issued by the Department in April. A copy of the paper has been placed in the Library.

ENERGY

Government Publicity and Advertising

Mr. Arbuthnot: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether the Government conventions on publicity and advertising have been revised, in view of his new responsibilities for co-ordinating the development of the presentation of Government policies.

Mr. Wakeham: The conventions on Government publicity and advertising have been revised to reflect the changes in ministerial responsibility. There is no change in the substance of the conventions. I am arranging for a copy to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Departmental Research (Expenditure)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the total identifiable expenditure on research by his Department in each year since 1979; what proportion was awarded on a customer-contractor basis; and what proportion of his total departmental budget was expended on research for each year.

Mrs. Chalker: Identifiable expenditure on research in the diplomatic and aid wings of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is shown in the tables. The diplomatic wing's research expenditure accounts for up to 0·5 per cent. of its departmental running costs. Comparable figures for years prior to 1984-85 are not available. A small additional amount of research was commissioned outside the FCO. For the ODA, research expenditure now normally accounts for over 2·5 per cent. of total departmental expenditure. It is now ODA's policy to commission research on a customer-contractor basis with specified aims and objectives, as exemplified by the new renewable natural resources research strategy. For neither wing is information available on the proportion of research undertaken on a customer-contractor basis.

(I) Diplomatic wing: Expenditure on research 1984-85 to 1988-89

	£ million
1984-85	1·8
1985-86	2·0
1986-87	2·1
1987-88	2·3
1988-89	2·5

(ii) Aid wing: Expenditure on research 1979-89

Year	£'000	as percent of total ODA expenditure
1979	19,996	2·1
1980	22,001	2·3
1981	22,257	1·9
1982	23,042	2·1
1983	27,610	2·4
1984	26,057	2·0
1985	27,874	2·1
1986	31,143	2·5
1987	38,073	2·9
1988	49,482	3·0
[1]1989	45,995	2·6

[1] 1989 figures are provisional.

Aid Targets

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has anything to add to the oral reply given by the Minister for Overseas Development on 18 June, *Official Report*, column 680, on meeting gross national product, official development assistance targets.

Mrs. Chalker: I much regret that my reply to the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones) contained an inadvertent error. I meant to say
"we aim to meet those targets".
As hon. and right hon. Members may be already aware, whereas we have met the 1 per cent. of GNP target for total flows in six out of the last 10 years, we have not met the 0·15 per cent. of GNP target for official development assistance to the least-developed countries.

ENVIRONMENT

Global Warming

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps are being taken to investigate the use of the sea as a carbon sink to mitigate the effects upon global warming of carbon dioxide releases.

Mr. Trippier: Intensive research is being carried out both nationally and internationally to understand the role of the oceans in the carbon cycle. The United Kingdom is contributing to this through the Natural Environment Research Council's biogeochemical ocean flux programme which is currently investigating the uptake of carbon dioxide by plankton in the north Atlantic.

Climate Change

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what papers were presented by civil servants from his Department or consultants to his Department at the meeting of the United Nations intergovernmental panel on climate change on 18 to 20 May.

Mr. Trippier: We are not aware of any IPCC meeting on the dates specified.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans his Department has to allow teachers to pay the community charge on behalf of those from overseas countries with whom they are involved in exchange schemes.

Mr. Chope: It does not need any special permission to allow this to happen.

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether all those aged 18 years and over who are in full-time secondary education are wholly exempt from the community charge;

(2) whether those leaving full-time secondary education with conditional or unconditional offers of places at institutions of higher or further education are regarded *(a)* as students for the purposes of the community charge between their dates of leaving secondary education and their date of starting higher or further education, or *(b)* as adults eligible for community charge benefit during this period;

(3) whether the liability of those aged 18 years and over who were in full-time secondary education to pay the community charge commences from the date of their leaving their secondary schools.

Mr. Portillo: The majority of those who leave secondary education at the age of 18 will be covered by the exemption from the personal community charge for those in respect of whom child benefit is paid, or would be paid but for the fact the person is in care, and may continue to be exempt for some time after their courses have ended. Those aged under 20 years of age and who are undertaking a qualifying course of education, other than as a result of a post or employment held, are exempt until the end of the course or until they reach their 20th birthday, whichever is the earlier. Qualifying courses for the purposes of this exemption are defined by the Personal Community Charge (Qualifying Courses of Education) Regulations 1990—S.I. 1990/712—which exclude courses of higher education. Entitlement to the 20 per cent. payable by students starts when a person is enrolled on a full-time course of education, as defined for the purposes of the community charge, and has begun to attend it. In the intervening period a person will be registered for the full personal community charge but may be eligible for community charge benefit of up to 80 per cent. of the charge set.

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each district council in Kent, in respect of ward weighted density and the all ages social index, the values of indicators defined in annex A to the revenue support grant distribution report (England), and the amounts produced for each district council by applying the weights set out in paragraph 3.36(a) of that report, to those values.

Mr. Portillo: The values of the indicators and the amounts produced by applying the relevant weights are set out in the table.

	Ward weighted density		*All ages social index*	
	Indicator value	*Weight times indicator £ million*	*Indicator value*	*Weight times indicator £ million*
Kent				
Ashford	2·14351	1·057	−2·6277	−1·187
Canterbury	1·54525	1·071	−1·7101	−1·085
Dartford	2·21797	0·907	−1·8458	−0·691
Dover	1·96176	1·106	−1·2363	−0·638
Gillingham	4·26523	2·041	−1·0305	−0·451
Gravesham	3·12988	1·421	−0·5169	−0·215
Maidstone	2·14507	1·516	−1·8742	−1·212
Rochester upon Medway	3·42681	2·632	−0·4010	−0·282
Sevenoaks	0·94695	0·514	−3·2050	−1·592
Shepway	2·12467	0·976	−0·8121	−0·342
Swale	1·43987	0·857	−1·2630	−0·680
Thanet	3·20591	2·178	0·2060	0·128
Tonbridge and Malling	1·14540	0·607	−2·8119	−1·364
Tunbridge Wells	1·54320	0·802	−1·2322	−0·586

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to amend the Community Charges (Administration and Enforcement) Regulations 1989, regulation 62, so that the three-month period of grace dates from 1 April 1990 rather than from any earlier date.

Mr. Chris Patten: I am reviewing the operation of the standard charge. Many people whose property was empty and unfurnished before 1 April 1990 will have benefited from either not having to pay any rates at all or paying lower unoccupied property rates.

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will reconsider the standard spending assessment for Brighton and other holiday and conference resorts using the additional information which is becoming available on the extra burdens they face.

Mr. Chris Patten: I have made it clear that I am willing to consider any fresh evidence on SSAs with a view to making future changes if that should prove necessary. Any information provided by Brighton or any other local authority in this context will be given full consideration.

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the authorities which benefited in their standard spending assessment and revenue grant allocation from a consideration of the impact of daily population increases.

Mr. Chris Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave him to this same question on 4 April, *Official Report*, column *666*.

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the specific and supplementary grants to be paid to local authorities in 1990-91 showing in each case *(a)* the name of the grant, *(b)* the purpose of the grant, *(c)* the sponsoring Department, *(d)* the amount of grant, *(e)* the method of calculation of individual authorities' entitlements, including the percentage of expenditure grant-aided and any conditions attached to the grant, *(f)* when the principles and operation of the grant were last reviewed, and the conclusions of those reviews, *(g)* whether the grant is included within aggregate external finance and *(h)* whether the grant is for capital and/or revenue expenditure.

Mr. Chris Patten: I refer the hon. Gentleman to chapter 21 of "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1990/91 to 1992/93"—Cm 1021—tables 21.4.3, 21.4.4. and 21.4.5 which, respectively, list revenue grants within and without aggregate external finance, and capital grants. The various departmental chapters provide details on the principles and operation of individual grants. If he has particular concerns I am sure the Departments concerned will be pleased to help.

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what additional assistance was given in

calculating standard spending assessment and grant to Westminster city council on account of its daily population figure; and if he will set out the criteria used on arriving at that sum.

Mr. Chris Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave to him on 4 April of this year when he asked a very similar question.

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much was the total level of local government spending in each of the last five years including the current year.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 27 June 1990]:* The information is as follows. New definitions of local government spending were introduced in 1990-91 and comparable information for years prior to 1989-90 is not available. For years 1986-87 to 1989-90 (budgets) expenditure is defined as total expenditure gross of specific and supplementary grants and for 1989-90 (provisional outturn) and 1990-91 expenditure is defined as revenue expenditure, the measure equivalent to total standard spending.

Local government expenditure

	£ million
1986-87	26,629
1987-88	28,943
1988-89	31,334
1989-90[1,3]	34,317
1989-90[2,4]	32,100
1990-91[3]	36,600

[1] Including an adjustment for polytechnics (not in the local authority sector in 1989-90) to make the series up to and including 1989-90 comparable.
[2] After adjusting for system changes to make the 1989-90 provisional outturn estimates comparable to 1990-91 budgets.
[3] Budget.
[4] Provisional outturn.

Local Services (Tendering)

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on the response by local authorities to circular 7/90 regarding tender documents for public supply and works contracts.

Mr. Portillo: Circular 7/90 reminds local authorities in greater detail of their obligations under the treaty of Rome and the EC works and supplies contract directives, set out in DOE circulars 59/73 and 6/89, and imposes no new or added responsibilities or burdens.

The Department has had a small number of telephone inquiries from local authorities on the application of tender specifications to particular contracts.

Inland Revenue Office, Cumbernauld

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the cost to date of the refurbishment and new construction work currently being carried out at the Inland Revenue office in Cumbernauld.

Mr. Chope: The refurbishment work, which started in December 1988, has so far cost £2·5 million. There is no new construction.

Nature Conservancy Council

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the report, "Strategic Roll-Forward Submission 1991-92", prepared by PE International plc, concerning the Nature Conservancy Council.

Mr. Trippier: This report is a management document commissioned to assist the NCC in preparing its proposed forward plans. It is not suitable for publication. In line with past practice, the Nature Conservancy Council's corporate plan for 1990-91 will be published later this summer.

Local Authorities (Company Interests)

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the implementation of part V of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989: local authority interests in companies.

Mr. Portillo: In view of various points which have arisen on the drafts of the orders which we circulated for comment, we have concluded that it would be right to postpone the coming into force of those orders from 1 July 1990. I shall set a new date as soon as possible.

Bulk Materials (Transport)

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his current policy in respect of imposing conditions in planning permissions which restrict the dispatch of bulk materials to rail transport, in circumstances where the volume to be dispatched from the site may be large, the number of destinations is few and the environmental damage to communities affected by the road transport of the material is likely to be insignificant.

Mr. Michael Spicer *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The Government's policy on the imposition of conditions on the grant of planning permission is that they should be imposed only where they are necessary; relevant to planning; relevant to the development to be permitted; enforceable; precise; and reasonable in all other respects. A key test is whether planning permission would have to be refused if the condition were not to be imposed. A condition may be invalid if it is unduly restrictive. Whether it may be appropriate to impose a condition to restrict the mode of transport of bulk materials to and from a site will depend upon the particular circumstances of an individual case, and is a matter for the local planning authority in the first instance.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Costs

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Attorney-General if he will give details of the costs out of public funds ordered by the courts in each of the years from 1986 to 1990.

The Attorney-General: Courts may order costs out of public funds in two circumstances. In civil proceedings where one of the parties is legally aided, the court can award costs against the legal aid fund in favour of a successful non-legally aided party. In criminal proceedings

the court can order the costs of a defendant or a private prosecutor to be paid from central funds. The information requested is collected on a financial year basis and for the years in question is as follows:

£ million

	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
Costs of successful non-legally aided parties	0·280	0·227	0·446	0·524
Costs from Central Funds:				
Orders made in Magistrates Courts	11·050	3·082	3·825	[1]—
Orders made in Crown Court and higher courts	30·522	4·380	4·047	4·751
Total	41·852	7·689	8·318	5·275

[1] This information is not yet available.

Solicitors (Professional Negligence)

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Attorney-General what information he has as to in which European countries solicitors and barristers or their equivalent are liable to be sued for professional negligence.

The Attorney-General: The Government do not hold information about the liability for professional negligence of lawyers practising in other European countries.

Land Registry

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Attorney-General when Her Majesty's Land Registry is to be established as an executive agency.

The Attorney-General: Further to my answer to my hon. Friend on 5 April 1990 at column *725*, I am pleased to confirm that the Lord Chancellor will establish the Land Registry as an executive agency on Monday 2 July 1990. I have arranged for the Land Registry's framework document to be placed in the Library. Performance indicators for the Land Registry are set out in the framework document.

The Land Registry has made significant progress in recent times in improving its productivity and its quality of service, both in terms of speed and accuracy. The performance targets set for the registry will require it to continue this improvement. The key productivity target is to reduce unit costs in real terms by 6 per cent. over the three financial years from 1 April 1991. Over the same period, the average length of time to finalise post-completion applications, which in December 1988 stood at 15·5 weeks is to be reduced to five weeks. The handling of pre-completion applications, which are more time-sensitive as they are part of the conveyancing process, will also be expedited with the proportion of applications dealt with within four days being increased from 90 per cent. at present to 92 per cent. in 1994. Targets have also been set increasing the already high percentage of error-free handling of applications.

An open competition is currently being held for the selection of a person to be appointed as chief land registrar and chief executive of the agency to succeed the current chief land registrar, John Pryer CB, following his forthcoming retirement.

SCOTLAND

Foodstuffs (Toxic Chemicals)

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what tests are applied to ascertain residue levels of toxic chemicals in imported foodstuffs from *(a)* eastern Europe, *(b)* the European Common Market and *(c)* the rest of the world; how many tests were carried out in each of the past five years and on what types of foods; and what changes he intends to make in this system.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Imported foodstuffs are examined for a wide range of potentially toxic substances such as heavy metals, natural toxins and environmental contaminants. Information on the surveillance of food imports is included in reports of the Government's steering group on food surveillance, copies of which are available in the Library of the House. District and islands councils in Scotland undertake testing of imported food as enforcement authorities but related statistics are not held centrally.

Rural Solicitors

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consultations he has held with the Law Society of Scotland or representatives of faculties of solicitors on the future of rural practices since 12 June.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There have been a number of informal discussions with the Law Society of Scotland about the Government's conveyancing proposals.

Student Grants

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice he has given to Strathclyde regional council concerning the payment of grants to students undertaking courses provided by other education authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: None. My right hon. and learned Friend is responsible for providing financial support for students attending full-time degree and equivalent level courses. Financial support for students attending other full-time and all part-time courses is the responsibility of the education authorities under their bursaries arrangements. These bursaries are awarded to students at the discretion of the education authorities and I have no power to intervene.

Elderly People

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the amount an elderly couple needs to spend every week on food to maintain a healthy diet; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: None. Given variations in individuals' dietary requirements and the cost of food it is not feasible to make such an assessment.

Scottish Consumer Council

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the relationship of his Department to the Scottish Consumer Council; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Direct responsibility between the Government and the Scottish Consumer Council rests with the Department of Trade and Industry.

My colleagues and I do, however, meet the council from time to time to discuss matters of common interest, and welcome its comments on relevant aspects of Government policy.

Nursery Education

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the Government intend to make the provision of nursery education in Scotland compulsory; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The Government have no plans to impose a duty on education authorities to provide nursery education. Authorities are best placed to decide the extent of pre-school provision appropriate for their area having regard to local circumstances and competing priorities.

Local Government Finance

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will inform local authorities about the introduction of the method of compensating applicants who did not qualify for poll tax rebate in the year 1989-90 because they had capital between £8,000 and £16,000; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Detailed draft proposals were sent to the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities for comment on 14 June. I hope to receive the convention's response shortly so that regulations can be laid before the House.

Council Rents

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the average council rent level as a percentage of *(a)* average male earnings, *(b)* average female earnings and *(c)* the national insurance retirement pension for a single pensioner and a pensioner couple in each of the years since 1984 for which figures are available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The information requested is set out in the table.

Average council rent[1] expressed as a percentage of

	Average male earnings[2]	*Average female earnings[2]*	*Retirement pension for single person[3]*	*Retirement pension for married couple[3]*
1984-85	5·9	9·4	30·7	19·2
1985-86	6·1	9·7	32·3	20·3
1986-87	6·5	10·0	33·6	21·0
1987-88	6·8	10·4	36·9	23·1
1988-89	6·9	10·6	39·4	24·6
1989-90	7·5	11·1	43·1	26·9
1990-91	n/a	n/a	44·6	27·8

[1] Average standard unrebated local authority rent in Scotland.
[2] Average earnings of full-time employees in Scotland on adult rates whose pay was not affected by absence, as recorded in April of each year.
[3] Basic national insurance pension payable in April of each year.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Electronic Tagging

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to consult with the first individual to be electronically tagged on the efficacy of the scheme: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: As part of the evaluation of the trials of electronic monitoring a sample of those monitored have already been interviewed about their experiences and views. The results of the evaluation will be published, but the defendants interviewed will not be identified.

Prisoners (Suicides)

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the trend in the number of suicides among prisoners on remand over the last 10 years.

Mr. Mellor: The table gives the figures for the number of suicides by remand prisoners during the last 10 years:

	Number
1980	12
1981	7
1982	8
1983	9
1984	12
1985	14
1986	12
1987	27
1988	19
[1]1989	15
[1 2]1990	1

[1] Inquests have yet to be held on one other inmate on remand who died in 1989 and on nine inmates on remand who have died this year and whose deaths are thought to have been suicides.
[2] To 25 June 1990.

Suicides (Police Custody)

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the trend in the number of suicides in police custody over the last 10 years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The number of persons who committed suicide while in police custody has been published, since 1980, in the annual reports of Her Majesty's chief inspector of constabulary and the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis. The information is as follows:

	Number
1980	6
1981	4
1982	8
1983	5
1984	3
1985	2
1986	3
1987	2
1988	5
1989	5

Information prior to 1980 is not available.

Security, Palace of Westminster

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what plans exist to replace regular Metropolitan police officers employed in the House of Parliament by security officers;

(2) what are the educational qualifications demanded of Metropolitan police security officers employed in the Houses of Parliament;

(3) what is the average length of service of the Metropolitan police security officers employed in the Houses of Parliament;

(4) what is the level of pay of the Metropolitan police security officers employed in the Houses of Parliament, including starting salary and average earnings;

(5) what is the length of the training period of the Metropolitan police security officers employed in the Houses of Parliament;

(6) how many Metropolitan police security officers have been employed in the Houses of Parliament in each year since their introduction; and how many are presently employed;

(7) what plans exist to increase the numbers of Metropolitan police security officers employed in the Houses of Parliament.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: While my right hon. and learned Friend formally approves changes in the number of posts at the Palace of Westminster, security arrangements are primarily matters for the Palace authorities, who take their decisions on the basis of advice provided by the Metropolitan police.

I understand that an inspection of the security force at the Palace of Westminster was carried out by the Metropolitan police at the beginning of the year to assess the changes needed as a result of the opening of the Norman Shaw complex. They recommended changes, including civilianisation of seven police posts, which, if accepted, would increase the number of police officers by three and the number of security officers by 22. The proposals are being considered by the Joint Committee on Security.

The Metropolitan police took over responsibility for security officers at the Palace of Westminster in October 1977. The total number of security officers employed at the end of each calendar year since that date is as follows:

	Number
1977	93
1978	95
1979	105
1980	110
1981	113
1982	112
1983	104
1984	102
1985	114
1986	131
1987	129
1988	134
1989	[1]183

[1] Includes Norman Shaw building.

A total of 180 security officers are currently employed at the Palace of Westminster.

Information relating to the average length of service of Metropolitan police security officers could be supplied only at disproportionate cost.

Although there are no rigid requirements for educational qualifications, security officers employed at the Palace undergo a recruitment process which looks for good communication skills, reliability and common sense.

On joining, all security officers undergo a six-week intensive training course which covers first aid, basic law, powers of arrest, fire appliance training, House regulations and passes. New officers then work alongside experienced officers for a further six weeks. Additional courses covering explosives, car searches and respirator training are also arranged.

The starting salary of a security officer is £9,594 per annum. This is inclusive of shift allowance but exclusive of overtime and premium payments for work on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays. After six months a security officer becomes eligible for promotion and the starting salary for the higher grade is £11,381 per annum. Information about average earnings could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Criminal Offences, Basildon

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons were *(a)* charged and *(b)* convicted of (i) public order offences and (ii) offences against the person in the Basildon area for each of the last seven years.

Mr. John Patten: Information for the Basildon area is not available, but the table gives information for Billericay petty sessional division and Chelmsford Crown court for 1986, 1987 and 1988. Comparable data for earlier years could be provided only at disproportionate cost. The 1989 data will not be available until autumn 1990.

Persons proceeded against and found guilty of offences against the person (1) and public order offences

	Number of persons (2)		
	1986	1987	1988
Billericay PSD:			
Offences against the person Proceeded against[3]	181	240	296
Found guilty	68	84	129
Public order offences			
Proceeded against	35	56	135
Found guilty	23	33	77
Chelmsford Crown Court:			
Offences against the person			
For trial	371	478	523
Found guilty	290	370	416
Public order offences			
For trial	47	24	95
Found guilty	38	22	45

[1] Violence against the person, sexual offences and robbery.
[2] As shown by the records held centrally, which are approximate.
[3] Including those committed to the Crown Court for trial.

Chief Police Officers

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many serving police officers of Association of Chief Police Officers rank joined the service under the graduate entry scheme, or otherwise benefited from the special course at Bramshill; how many possess university degrees; how many achieved them through the Bramshill scholarship scheme; and how many hold other qualifications relevant to their responsibilities as chief officers.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The graduate entry scheme was introduced in 1968 to attract recruits with higher educational qualifications to the police service and give them the opportunity of accelerated promotion through the Bramshill special course. Most serving members of the Association of Chief Police Officers had joined the police service before this date, but two officers now of assistant chief constable rank were recruited to the service under this scheme. A further 80 officers of ACPO rank were selected for and attended the special course through the service's internal competition.

The information held centrally is not comprehensive, and I shall write to my hon. Friend once I have been able to review and update all senior officers' personal records. In the meantime, the information currently available shows that 103 of the 241 members of the Association of Chief Police Officers hold degrees. (Our records do not distinguish between degrees awarded by universities, polytechnics and other institutions). Of these 103 officers, 50 gained their degrees through the Bramshill scholarship scheme. Nineteen current members of ACPO are companions, members or fellows of the British Institute of Management. Nineteen hold other management qualifications (such as the diploma in management studies and certificate in personnel management) or have completed senior management courses such as the top management programme at the civil service college or the Royal College of Defence Studies course. There is some overlap between these groups.

Stone Roses Concert

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were injured at the Stone Roses concert at Spike island, Widnes, on 3 June; how many of the injured were treated in hospital; and how many were detained in hospital.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand that, in addition to those people (number unknown) who received minimal first aid treatment at the concert itself, two people, who sustained injuries when attempting to get into the event without tickets by climbing over a high fence, were taken to hospital, treated and discharged the same day.

Immigration

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what categories of non-United Kingdom spouses of United Kingdom citizens resident in Hong Kong will have their United Kingdom residential qualifications for naturalisation waived or modified under schedule 1, paragraph 4(d) of the British Nationality Act 1981.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Paragraph 4(d) of schedule 1 to the British Nationality Act 1981 enables the Secretary of State, if he thinks fit in the special circumstances of a particular case, to waive the three-year United Kingdom residence requirement for naturalisation in respect of the spouse of a British citizen serving abroad in Crown or designated service for which he was recruited in the United Kingdom.

In practice we would not normally expect to waive the United Kingdom residence requirement unless the marriage had subsisted for three years; the spouse was unable to meet the United Kingdom residence requirements for the foreseeable future; and the employing organisation was able to show that naturalising the spouse would be in the interests of the organisation and its service to United Kingdom interests.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when a decision is to be taken on the applications of Mrs. Aswat Jan and Atlas Khan to enter the United Kingdom, referred to him on 26 November last by our post in Islamabad Refs: K157032 and K147580; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The entry clearance officer in Islamabad has now been authorised to issue entry clearance to Mrs. Aswat Jan. Atlas Khan's application is being considered under the terms of the concession announced by my right hon. Friend the then Home Secretary on 14 June 1989 at columns *461-62*. A decision will be taken as soon as possible.

Homelessness

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has had any communication with representatives of the Metropolitan police force in connection with the number of homeless young persons being arrested and convicted under the Vagrancy Act 1824.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Decisions about the deployment of resources to tackle crime are an operational matter for the Commissioner. However, we are conducting a study together with the Metropolitan police to establish recent trends in arrests and how the police might be helped to identify accommodation and other services to which homeless people can be referred.

Channel 5

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his current estimate of the number of video recorders likely to require retuning to achieve Channel 5 output; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We estimate that something over 750,000 video cassette recorders will need to be retuned or modified in order to prevent interference between the VCR output and the Channel 5 broadcast signal. The Broadcasting Bill provides that the cost of this work should be met by the Channel 5 licensee.

Telecommunications Act 1984

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the total number of prosecutions under any section of the Telecommunications Act 1984.

Mr. John Patten: The information available centrally, which may be incomplete, indicates that there were 630 prosecutions in 1988 under the Telecommunications Act 1984.

The 1989 data will not be available until the autumn.

Forensic Science

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he has any plans to increase the level of funding of the Metropolitan police forensic science laboratory and for the Home Office laboratory at Aldermaston in the next financial year; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is the current level of staffing at the Metropolitan police forensic science laboratory; and what was the level *(a)* five and *(b)* 10 years ago;

(3) what has been the number of individual cases handled annually by the Metropolitan police forensic science laboratory for each of the past five years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Commissioner has told me that the number of cases handled by the Metropolitan police forensic science laboratory in each of the last five years was as follows:

	Number
1985	27,720
1986	32,406
1987	27,985
1988	19,040
1989	18,053

On 27 June 1990 the strength of the Metropolitan police forensic science laboratory was 288. On 31 December 1980 and 31 December 1985 the respective strengths were 271 and 251.

No decisions have yet been taken on the levels of funding for 1991-92 for either the Metropolitan police or the forensic science service.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Fish Processors

8. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assistance his Department has given to fish processors to meet new EEC hygiene regulations.

Mr. Curry: Financial assistance is, and will continue to be, available under relevant European Community schemes to help fish processors and others improve their facilities.

Common Agricultural Policy

12. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met his counterparts in the Council of Ministers to discuss reforming the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Gummer: I last met my Community colleagues in the Agriculture Council earlier this week, when a number of specific reforms to the CAP were discussed.

Information Guides

13. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what new guides giving farmers information on the help and advice available from his Department he has published in the last six months.

Mr. Curry: We have recently published a revised and updated version of "At the Farmer's Service". Copies of the booklet have been placed in the Libraries of the House.

Dairy Sector

15. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next intends to meet the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board to discuss the dairy sector.

Mr. Gummer: I have regular meetings with the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board and with other industry leaders to discuss the dairy sector.

Food (Health Dangers)

16. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list those foods which his Department has been advised to be a danger to health.

Mr. Maclean: I can think of no food that someone or other has not suggested is harmful. Nevertheless, my Department has not actually been advised that any type of foods is intrinsically a danger to health providing it has been properly handled and prepared. From time to time it is necessary for central Government or local government to issue warnings in relation to particular brands or batches of foodstuffs, and to take associated action. The chief medical officer has also given advice about the precautions to be taken when preparing and eating certain foods, and about the consumption of certain foods by particular vulnerable groups.

Food (Temperature Controls)

17. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to improve the temperature control standards of the British food industry.

Mr. Maclean: I understand my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health is intending shortly to lay before Parliament the Food Hygiene (Amendment) Regulation, which will introduce temperature control standards for certain foods throughout the food chain including manufacture, distribution and retail sale.

Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce

18. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who, under the terms of the framework agreement for the agricultural intervention board agency, will decide on the future location of the board's premises.

Mr. Curry: The future location of the agency will be decided by Agriculture Ministers after considering recommendations submitted to them by the board of the agency.

Food Safety

19. **Mr. Marland:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what weight he gives to scientific research in determining the development of his Department's approach towards food safety.

Mr. Maclean: All the Government's measures towards greater food safety are based on the best available expert scientific advice, as we made clear in the White Paper "Food Safety—Protecting the Consumer". In addition to professional advice available within my Ministry and other Government Departments, objective, independent advice is provided by a number of committees including the Food Advisory Committee, the Advisory Committee on Pesticides, the Veterinary Products Committee, the Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes, the Committee on the Toxicity of Chemicals in Food,

Consumer Products and the Environment and the steering group on food surveillance—which works through 10 working parties each of which carries out detailed work in specialist fields. We announced on 12 June that we shall be adding to these committees by creating a new advisory committee and a steering group on the microbiological safety of food, a development recommended by the Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food chaired by Sir Mark Richmond.

The full scope of the extensive research and development programme on food safety can be gauged from the "Food Sense" booklet on the Government's food surveillance programme, issued at the beginning of this year. There are now 28 food surveillance papers available and the most recent, on "Programmes to Monitor Radioactivity in Food", contains some 48 pages setting out the major programme in this one area alone. A further paper in this series is to be issued shortly. Besides the Government laboratories involved, industry, research associations, academic institutions, consultants and professional organisations all contribute to the work on food surveillance. In addition to its role in providing advice to the Government and the basis it provides for effective legislative control and the harmonisation of trade in food and food raw materials, the programme is also becoming increasingly recognised at an international level as an important source of information and advice.

National Farmers Union

20. **Sir Hal Miller:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the president of the National Farmers Union; and what was discussed.

Mr. Gummer: I meet the president of the National Farmers Union frequently to discuss a wide range of topics.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

21. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a further statement on BSE and British beef.

Mr. Gummer: I can do no better than quote the Department of Health's chief medical officer, who said that beef can be eaten safely by everyone. This view has been endorsed by Europe's top scientists.

25. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the Meat and Livestock Commission to discuss BSE.

40. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the Meat and Livestock Commission to discuss BSE.

51. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the Meat and Livestock Commission to discuss BSE.

Mr. Gummer: I met the chairman of the Meat and Livestock Commission on 8 June to discuss BSE.

30. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what evidence he has of the effect on exports from and imports into Britain of the BSE scare.

Mr. Gummer: As yet it is too early to draw any firm conclusions on the effect of the BSE scare on exports from and imports into the United Kingdom.

31. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about his discussions with European Community Agriculture Ministers about BSE.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to the statement I made to the House on 7 June.

37. **Mr. Donald Thompson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the incidence of BSE in other countries.

Mr. Gummer: BSE has been reported in the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland and Oman, where two animals previously exported from Britain were later confirmed as having the disease.

41. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he intends to take further action to control the spread of bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Gummer: The Government have already introduced comprehensive measures to deal with BSE. However, should scientific advice indicate that further action is called for, I will not hesitate to act.

44. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will report on progress concerning the incidence of BSE, its notification and elimination; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: It is not expected that there will be significant decline until 1993, after which numbers should fall until its subsequent disappearance.

54. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make a further statement on Government measures relating to bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Gummer: The Government have introduced comprehensive measures, based on the very best scientific advice, to tackle all aspects of BSE.

59. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received regarding BSE.

Mr. Gummer: I have received representations about BSE from consumer, producer and other interests.

68. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the damage to the industry resulting from the bovine spongiform encephalopathy scare.

Mr. Gummer: It is not possible to isolate the effects of BSE. Clean cattle marketings in England and Wales in the week ending 16 June were higher than those in the week before the import bans were imposed by France and other member states, and prices were also slightly up. Increased support buying of beef under the European Community intervention arrangements coupled with the lifting of the import bans imposed by certain member states should help to sustain the market.

72. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further representations he has received from the presidents of the farmers unions of Wales on BSE; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I have received representations about BSE from various quarters, including the National Farmers Union of Wales.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the implication of the Wilding committee's recommendation that basic research should be confined to specialist research institutions for the conducting of research into BSE at the central veterinary laboratory at Weybridge.

Mr. Maclean: I assume that the hon. Member's question relates to the report of the Wildy committee.

The Department funds strategic and applied R and D into animal diseases and I am satisfied that the central veterinary laboratory at Weybridge has the necessary specialist expertise to carry out such research into BSE. The Ministry will continue to commission research at the CVL in an effort to understand, control and eradicate this disease. Basic research is of course currently being funded by the Department of Education and Science at the AFRC's Institute of Animal Health.

Food Advisory Committee

22. **Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the chairman of the Food Advisory Committee; and what was discussed.

Mr. Maclean: I last met the committee's chairman on 7 December 1989 when matters of general interest were discussed.

The committee meets regularly every six weeks and is currently undertaking a major review of food labelling. As a result of recent committee advice I have introduced new regulations prohibiting the use of potassium bromate as a flour improver from 1 April this year; published and sought comments on the committee's report on old compositional orders and will consider the responses before reaching decisions; and I am currently preparing proposals for legislation on colours following my acceptance of the committee's recommendations for stricter controls.

The committee's agendas are published in advance of each meeting.

Radioactive Fallout

23. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about restrictions on sheep sales in the United Kingdom due to radioactive fallout.

Mr. Curry: Movement and slaughter restrictions continue to apply to sheep from those upland areas of Cumbria, north Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland most affected by radioactive fallout following the 1986 Chernobyl accident. A mark and release scheme is in operation under which every animal from the restricted area is live-monitored prior to marketing, thereby guaranteeing full protection to consumers in all circumstances. It is not possible to say how much longer restrictions will need to stay in force. They will be lifted as soon as it is possible to do so without compromising the safety of the food chain. All monitoring results are regularly published and copies are placed in the Library of the House.

Aujeszky's Disease

24. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the discussions held at the European Community Agriculture Council meeting on 25 and 26 June regarding Aujeszky's disease.

Mr. Curry: At the meeting of the Agriculture Council on 25 and 26 June, Aujeszky's disease was discussed in the context of a proposal for Community rules governing trade in porcine semen.

I made it clear that we would not accept provisions which would jeopardise our hard-won freedom from the disease and I am therefore pleased to report that the directive which was eventually adopted contains the necessary safeguards.

Consumer Panel

26. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when his consumer panel last met; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley).

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the consumer panel last met; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Maclean: The last meeting of the consumer panel took place on 2 May 1990. It discussed a wide range of issues including water quality, food labelling, BSE, hygiene training for food handlers and food irradiation. The minutes of this meeting are publicly available and have been placed in the Library of the House.

Milk Production

27. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was milk production in 1989 and in each of the two previous years.

Mr. Maclean: United Kingdom milk production was as follows:

Year	*Quantity (million litres)*
1989	14,477
1988	14,684
1987	15,039

Agricultural Development Advisory Service

28. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received recently about the future of the Agricultural Development Advisory Service.

Mr. Curry: Many of the representations I receive about ADAS express the view that the very valuable services which it provides to the industry should continue.

Food Inspection

29. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any proposals to change the present arrangements concerning food inspection which lie within his responsibilities.

Mr. Maclean: My hon. Friend the Minister of State stated in another place on 5 December 1989 that the powers in clause 5(4) of the Food Safety Bill to vary the division of responsibility for food law enforcement would be used to continue broadly the existing split of responsibilities in England and Wales.

Agriculture (Fixed Capital)

32. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total annual investment in fixed capital in agriculture during each of the last five years.

Mr. Curry: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the question from my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran) on 19 April at columns *973-74*.

Factory Farming

33. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has to further regulate factory farming.

Mr. Maclean: I have just laid before this House for approval regulations that will apply to all farm animals. These regulations will implement recommendations by the Farm Animal Welfare Council and include measures to improve compliance with the welfare codes, to make certain provisions in the codes mandatory, and to require ventilation systems in intensive units to have alarms and back-up systems in the event of a failure.

I am continuing to press in the European Community for harmonisation of welfare standards at the highest possible level for all farm livestock species.

Sea Defences

35. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to improve the financial arrangements for sea defences.

Mr. Curry: Under the Land Drainage Act 1976 drainage bodies (the National Rivers Authority, local authorities and internal drainage boards) have powers to carry out flood and sea defence works. Grants are available from my Department towards the cost of schemes which are technically sound, economically worth while and environmentally sympathetic. Basic rates range from 15 per cent. to 55 per cent., while sea and tidal defence schemes attract a supplement of 20 per cent.

Following the 1988 and 1989 public expenditure surveys, increased Government funding totalling £29·3 million was announced over the period 1989-90 to 1992-93. The greater part of this additional provision is being targeted towards urgent sea defence works on the east coast and elsewhere, and to works which will protect people and property.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent measures have been taken by his Department to help improve Britain's coastal defences.

Mr. Curry: My Department maintains a close liaison with the National Rivers Authority and local councils responsible for the promotion of coastal defence work to ensure that the state of the nation's defences is continually monitored. To assist with the promotion of such defence works, increased Government funding totalling £29·3 million was announced following the 1988 and 1989 public expenditure surveys over the period 1989-90 to 1992-93. This increased funding is being mainly targeted towards the improvement of defences on the coastline and for the protection of people and property.

Sheep Dips

36. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the continued use of organophosphorous sheep dips.

Mr. Maclean: All organophosphorous sheep dip products are subject to the licensing requirements of the Medicines Act 1968. A review of these products is currently under way as part of a wider review to ensure that all licensed veterinary medicines meet modern standards of safety, quality and efficacy. The review is expected to be completed early in 1992. My Department is also currently considering the guidance available on the disposal of sheep dips to see how this can be improved.

Farm Pollution

38. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the uptake in the last 12 months of schemes designed to deal with on-farm pollution.

Mr. Curry: In the 1989-90 financial year, 8,082 United Kingdom farmers notified the agriculture Departments of their intention to claim grant to help meet the cost of equipment to handle, treat and store farm waste under the farm and conservation grant scheme, and £20·41 million was paid for such grants under the scheme and its predecessor the agriculture improvement scheme.

Food Exports

39. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to improve the prospects for British food exports.

Mr. Maclean: The Government are firmly committed to improving the prospects for British food exports. Earlier this year my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food announced further funding of Food From Britain. More recently he announced the appointment of Mr. Paul Judge, a successful and highly respected food industry entrepreneur, as chairman of that organisation. I now look to the industry to make full use of the resources and expertise of Food From Britain.

Beef

42. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the prospects for the United Kingdom beef industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The European Community market support arrangements contain provision for special intervention measures which apply at times of particular market weakness. Under these arrangements, over 5,500 tonnes of beef have been accepted for purchase in the United Kingdom. This increased support buying coupled with the lifting of the import bans imposed by certain member states should help to sustain the beef market.

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether normal shipments of beef have now been resumed to European countries.

Mr. Gummer: Following the 6 June Council of Agriculture Ministers shipments of beef have been resumed to all European Community countries. Austria has imposed import restrictions which we and the Commission are attempting to have lifted as soon as possible.

Mr. Alison: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether his current scientific advice continues to show that beef is safe to eat.

Mr. Gummer: Yes.

Mr. Robert Hicks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he proposes to introduce any further measures to restore confidence in beef production and consumption; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Our action on BSE will continue to be based on the best scientific evidence available. As the chief medical officer has said, British beef can be eaten safely by everyone. The special intervention arrangements now operating in the United Kingdom together with the lifting of the import bans imposed by certain countries should help to sustain the market.

Agricultural Land

43. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to protect agricultural land.

Mr. Curry: I assume the hon. Member is referring to development involving agricultural land. Responsibility for day-to-day planning control, including the consideration and determination of applications for planning permission, rests with the appropriate planning authority in the first instance. The Government issue guidance to local authorities on development involving agricultural land, which is contained in Department of the Environment (Welsh Office) circular 16/87 (25/87) issued on 8 May 1987. Copies of the circular are available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will take steps to release more agricultural land for purposes other than agriculture.

Mr. Gummer: The use of land for most purposes other than agriculture is controlled by the town and country planning system. Responsibility for day-to-day planning matters, including proposals for development involving agricultural land, rests with local planning authorities in the first instance. Other non-agricultural uses of land are a matter for individual landowners' decision.

Beef Prices

45. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the Meat and Livestock Commission to discuss beef prices.

69. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the Meat and Livestock Commission to discuss beef prices.

Mr. Gummer: I am in regular contact with the chairman of the Meat and Livestock Commission about matters relating to the livestock and livestock products industries, including beef prices. I last met the chairman on 8 June following the special Agriculture Council on 6-7 June.

Consumer Protection

46. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the Consumers Association to discuss the protection of consumers.

53. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the Consumers Association to discuss food safety.

Mr. Maclean: On 3 April 1990 representatives of the Consumers Association attended the first of the periodic meetings set up by my right hon. Friend with representatives of consumer organisations; a further meeting is planned for 12 July.

Meat and Livestock Commission

47. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the Meat and Livestock Commission; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Maclean: I last met the chairman of the Meat and Livestock Commission on 8 June, following the special Agriculture Council on 6 and 7 June, to discuss the implementation of the new certification arrangements for exports of beef.

14. **Mr. John P. Smith:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the Meat and Livestock Commission to discuss exports of meat.

Mr. Curry: My right hon. Friend met the chairman of the Meat and Livestock Commission on 8 June to discuss the new certification arrangements for exports of beef.

Farm Animal Welfare Council

48. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what reports he is awaiting from the Farm Animal Welfare Council.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) on 19 April 1990 at column 1543.

61. **Mr. Jack Thompson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he intends to abolish the Farm Animal Welfare Council.

Mr. Maclean: No.

Fishing Industry

49. **Mr. John D. Taylor:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the fishing industry in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Curry: As I said in my reply to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) on 17 May landings of all species by United Kingdom vessels in the United Kingdom for 1989 were worth some £389 million

compared with £396 million in 1988. While fishing opportunities and earnings for North sea cod and haddock in 1990 have been reduced, the estimated value of landings so far this year based on the latest available information is at least similar to that at the same time last year.

54. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met representatives of the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations to discuss catches.

Mr. Curry: I last met my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) together with representatives of the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations, on 14 June, when a number of issues including catches were discussed.

Research

56. **Mr. Wolfson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the latest developments in horticultural research.

64. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what contribution his Department is currently making towards agricultural research.

Mr. Curry: My Department continues to make a substantial contribution towards research of relevance to agriculture, horticulture and protection of the rural environment. This year (1990-91) alone we plan to spend some £80 million, out of a total R and D budget of some £121 million. Details of my Department's activities, including a full list of MAFF-funded research projects in agriculture and food, were made available at the MAFF conference, "Effective R and D: a partnership for the 1990s", on 4 June. I am placing copies of these publications in the Library of the House.

In addition, my Department maintains close links with the other agricultural Departments, research councils and associations and other bodies on the development of research programmes in this country.

57. **Mrs. Roe:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on recent developments in the structure of horticultural research.

Mr. Curry: I am delighted at the recent launch of the British Society for Horticultural Research. We now have a single, unified organisation capable of taking horticultural R and D well into the next century.

Advisory Services

58. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which advisory and other services provided to farmers and fishermen are charged for in England.

Mr. Curry: My Department provides the following chargeable services to farmers and fishermen:

Advisory work undertaken by the Agricultural Development Advisory Service (with the exception of advice on animal welfare, conservation and rural diversification which continues to be free of charge).
Milk and dairies inspections.
Licensing premises for the keeping of mink for fur-bearing purposes.
Testing, registration and approval of laboratories under the Poultry Flocks, Hatcheries and Protein Processing (Fees) Order 1990.
Testing cattle for foot and mouth disease prior to export to the United States of America.
Export inspection of poultry and hatching eggs.
Artificial insemination licences and approvals.
Waste food licensing.
Pig health scheme.
Poultry health scheme.
Sheep and goat health scheme.
Cattle health scheme.
Deer health scheme.
Approval of markets, assembly plants, pre-export private quarantine and isolation premises.
Export of birds, poultry and hatching eggs—inspection by whole-time veterinary officers.
Seed potatoes classification scheme. Plant health propagation scheme.
Plant health export certification and export nursery approval scheme.
Plant health import licences. Certain statistical data on the fishing industry. Shellfish export certificates.
Analytical, consultancy, training and R and D services provided by the fish technology laboratory.

Food (Consumer Spending)

60. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he intends to commission research into the factors which influence consumer spending on food.

Mr. Maclean: My Department monitors consumer (household) expenditure on food through the national food survey. The results are published in the reports of the National Food Survey Committee and analyses are made into the variation in expenditure by type and size and income of household, by age of housewife, housing tenure and by region. The coverage and scale of the survey is being expanded.

Set-aside Scheme

65. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the future of the set-aside scheme.

Mr. Curry: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague).

Consumers and Farmers (Meetings)

66. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many times since 1 January he has met *(a)* farmers' representatives and *(b)* consumers' representatives.

Mr. Gummer: Since 1 January 1990, I have met representatives of farming unions seven times and representatives of consumers three times. The three meetings with consumers' representatives included one, at my request, at which 15 consumer organisations were represented. My hon. Friends the Parliamentary Secretaries have met with representatives of consumer and farming organisations on a further 15 occasions.

Policy Decisions

70. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to ensure that policy decisions are based on sound scientific knowledge and advice.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the new arrangements for research funded by his Department.

Mr. Gummer: New procedures for the commissioning and assessment of research and development by the Ministry were formally introduced with effect from 1 April 1990. These will ensure that policy requirements are brought to bear more directly on the research that MAFF funds and, equally, that the research funded by MAFF has a direct impact on policy formation, as well as securing the best value for money in terms of both scientific quality and relevance to the Ministry's aims.

Cereals

71. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the largest green pound discrepancy for cereals in the periods 1974 to 1979 and 1980 to 1989; and what was the largest devaluation achieved.

Mr. Curry: The largest green pound discrepancies for the cereals sector in the periods referred to by my hon. Friend, as measured by the percentage monetary compensatory amount (MCA), were 45·0 per cent. in November 1976 and 32·8 per cent. in February 1987.

The largest devaluation of the green pound for cereals was 9·75 per cent. in August 1979.

Agricultural Subsidies

Mr. Allen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has made of the cost per head of the subsidies given to British farmers as against the prices which would prevail in a free market in world agricultural produce.

Mr. Maclean: The estimate requested would be possible only by making a large number of assumptions about the extent of support policy adjustment worldwide, the impact of this on production, consumption and exchange rates and the extent to which these factors would influence world prices. No such estimates are available for the United Kingdom. The Government fully support the agreed long-term objectives of the GATT Uruguay round negotiation, namely substantial, progressive reductions in agricultural support and protection: this would reduce the cost of agricultural support borne by consumers and taxpayers.

Live Exports

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to ensure that after 1992 calves exported live will not be housed subsequently in veal crates.

Mr. Maclean: Discussions are continuing in the European Community on Commission proposals for welfare standards for calves. I am pressing for the Community to adopt the present United Kingdom requirement for veal calf pen widths and for the EC legislation to be implemened at the earliest possible date.

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what procedures he is proposing to ensure that current minimum standards in the care of live animals for export will be maintained after 1992.

Mr. Maclean: We will be pressing for measures which fully safeguard animal welfare in negotiations on the Commission proposals for a Council regulation on the protection of animals during transport.

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what procedures he is proposing to ensure that live animals, exported after 1992, are killed in slaughterhouses which match current United Kingdom standards.

Mr. Maclean: The EC Commission is preparing proposals for new rules on the welfare of animals at the time of slaughter. I shall be seeking to ensure that the standards which we consider to be necessary are applied thoughout the Community.

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what efforts he is making to establish protection for live animals after 1992.

Mr. Maclean: Negotiations have been proceeding on Commission proposals for the protection of pigs and calves and at the Agriculture Council on 25 and 26 June I pressed for the earliest possible introduction of this legislation. I am also pressing for further comprehensive welfare safeguards to be introduced on a Community basis.

Caseous Lymphadentitis

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for South Shields of 21 June, *Official Report*, column 652, whether the goats imported from Germany that were found to have caseous lymphadentitis were inspected by veterinarians for diseases other than foot and mouth, during their period of post-import quarantine; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Animals in post-import quarantine are examined by official veterinarians on a number of occasions, including within 72 hours of the end of the quarantine period, for signs of notifiable disease. If, during the course of quarantine signs of other diseases are noted, a report must be made to the state veterinary service, and the owner of the quarantine premises can arrange for veterinary treatment as appropriate.

Animal Feed (Ingredients)

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to introduce regulations under the Agriculture Act 1970 to require the declaration of the ingredients of animal feedstuffs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The United Kingdom is in fact a prime mover in the work that is going forward to produce regulations for the whole of the EC on ingredient listing. I have very recently pressed the Agriculture Commissioner for rapid progress on this.

Zoo Animals

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for South Shields of 25 June, *Official Report*, column 28, how many animals in zoos have died of

spongiform encephalopathies; if he will list the species involved, the zoos concerned and the date detected in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Spongiform encephalopathies have been confirmed in five antelope in British zoos:

— a nyala, died June 1986
— a gemsbok, died June 1987
— an Arabian oryx, died March 1989
— a greater kudu, died August 1989
— an eland, died December 1989

A scientific paper published in 1980 reported the occurrence between 1974 and 1979 of chronic wasting disease, a transmissible spongiform encephalopathy, in 63 mule deer, one black-tailed deer and one mule deer crossed white-tailed deer in two wildlife parks in the United States of America. A paper published in 1982 reported the occurrence of the disease in six Rocky mountain elk in the same two wildlife parks.

A spongiform encephalopathy was confirmed in four white tigers which died or were killed in Bristol zoo between 1970 and 1977. Experimental inoculations of brain material from the tigers gave no indication that the disease is transmissible.

Surplus Food

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the invitation to organisations to participate in the 1990 surplus food scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: I announced to the House on 19 March that the surplus food scheme would be continued for a further year. Following that announcement, the press coverage that attended it and the individual invitations issued by my Department, we have been able to designate 420 organisations to distribute approximately 3,800 tonnes of butter and 3,000 tonnes of beef to the most needy citizens of the United Kingdom.

I have deliberately designated more organisations than in previous years in order to meet the criticism that there was "patchiness" in the availability of food across the country. But as the quantities are limited, it must be understood that the assistance must, necessarily, be spread more thinly as a result.

The charitable and voluntary organisations wishing to participate asked for far more than is available under the scheme. I have therefore had to share the butter and beef as fairly as possible between them, by allocating to each organisation an amount proportional to the number of needy people it will reach. I have given special priority in allocating this food to organisations providing prepared meals and to those serving the homeless and destitute.

I am placing a list of all the organisations I have designated to participate in this year's scheme in the Library of the House and my officials will now be writing to all organisations that applied.

Fisheries Council

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the Fisheries Council held in Luxembourg on 27 June.

Mr. Curry: I represented the United Kingdom at the Council of Fisheries Ministers in Luxembourg on 27 June 1990 together with my noble Friend the Minister of State, Scottish Office.

There was a substantial discussion of the EC technical conservation arrangements. The Council agreed on the urgent need for action in the North sea. I stressed particularly the need to improve the selectivity of gear so that catches of immature North sea haddock and cod are reduced. As agreed at last December's Council, the Commission is to make proposals by the end of July; and the Council agreed to take decisions on these at the earliest possible opportunity.

We also secured some valuable new fishing opportunities. The EC has gained increased west Greenland cod; and the Council agreed that this should be allocated according to the principle of relative stability, bringing our fleet 1,410 tonnes. In addition, in the light of scientific evidence, the Council agreed to increase the Irish sea sole TAC, bringing us an extra 170 tonnes, including a swap with the Netherlands.

In response to strong Irish concerns, the Council agreed to adjust the staging of the EC catch of western horse mackerel. We safeguarded the position of our fishermen by ensuring that the tonnage put aside for the last four months of the year is more than the catch in the same period last year.

EMPLOYMENT

Health and Safety Commission

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the Health and Safety Commission's financial bid for the financial year 1990-91; and how much it received.

Mr. Nicholls: The Government met the Health and Safety Commission's bid for 1990-91 in full and the financial provision is set out in the supply estimates published in March 1990.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the grant in aid given to the Health and Safety Executive for each financial year since 1979.

Mr. Nicholls: Grant in aid provided for the Health and Safety Commission is as follows:

Financial year	*Grant in aid £000s*
1979-80	55,757
1980-81	70,970
1981-82	80,816
1982-83	81,335
1983-84	87,993
1984-85	90,298
1985-86	93,283
1986-87	94,334
1987-88	94,235
1988-89	97,390
1989-90	102,974
1990-91	116,557

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the dates of his last three meetings with the members of the Health and Safety Commission; and what was the purpose of each meeting.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. and learned Friend has had two meetings with members of the Health and Safety Commission since becoming Secretary of State. He met the

chairman of the commission on 31 January for a wide-ranging discussion on the work of the Health and Safety Commission and the Health and Safety Executive. He also met the chairman with five members of the commission on 31 May when they discussed the commission's plan of work for 1990-91 and beyond.

Training

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) for each standard region and for Great Britain as a whole, how much expenditure, excluding administration costs, at cash and constant prices, was spent in each year since 1979 on *(a)* employment training, and the earlier programmes it replaced, *(b)* the youth training scheme, earlier youth opportunities programme, and *(c)* the enterprise allowance scheme;

(2) for each Training Agency, formerly MSC, area and for Great Britain as a whole, how much expenditure, excluding administration costs, at cash and constant prices, was spent in each year since 1979 on *(a)* employment training, and the earlier programmes it replaced, *(b)* the youth training scheme, earlier youth opportunities programme, and *(c)* the enterprise allowance scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: The following table shows expenditure for Great Britain at cash and constant 1989-90 prices, excluding administration costs, in each year since 1983-84, on *(a)* employment training, *(b)* youth training scheme and *(c)* enterprise allowance scheme.

It is not possible separately to identify administration costs in earlier years. A breakdown at levels lower than Great Britain is not available. Constant prices were calculated by use of the GDP deflator index from the Chancellor's "Financial Statement and Budget Report" published March 1990.

£ million

	Employment training		*Youth training scheme*		*Enterprise allowance scheme*	
	Cash	*Constant*	*Cash*	*Constant*	*Cash*	*Constant*
1983-84	618·2	850·6	720·6	991·5	23·2	31·9
1984-85	749·1	981·3	796·5	1,043·4	76·8	100·6
1985-86	867·2	1,077·7	818·2	1,016·8	103·9	129·1
1986-87	1,255·1	1,510·4	875·1	1,053·1	143·4	172·6
1987-88	1,328·0	1,517·5	1,007·3	1,151·0	195·9	223·9
1988-89	1,290·0	1,373·5	993·2	1,057·8	196·7	209·5
1989-90	1,120·8	1,120·8	976·0	976·0	170·9	170·9

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give for each region, and for Great Britain, for each month since July 1989, the number of employment training special group starts, separately for skill shortage recruits, labour market returners and single parents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Safety Procedures (Departmental Guidance)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what guidance is offered by his Department to industrial companies wishing to implement safety procedures set out in the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive has committed substantial resources to ensuring industry's awareness and understanding of the requirements of the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations. Over 4½ million free information leaflets have been distributed and detailed national guidance has been published including six approved codes of practice, a guide to assessment for employers and an open learning course.

In addition, HSE inspectors have contributed to discussions, lectures, seminars and conferences on the regulations and offered guidance during the course of their visits to employers' premises. HSE has been working closely with industry organisations and employers to develop guidance for their members. There has also been a national publicity campaign and extensive use of local TV, radio and the press.

New Businesses

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many new businesses have registered for value added tax in *(a)* Derbyshire and *(b)* the east midlands in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Nicholls: The latest available information is for 1988 and is given in the table. Early indications for 1989 from data collected by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise are that in the United Kingdom as a whole, there was a net increase of 1,500 a week on average, compared with 1,200 a week in 1988.

	Derbyshire	*East Midlands*
Registrations	3,100	15,200
Deregistrations	2,400	11,100
Net Change (per cent.)	3·3	4·0

Wages Councils

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which classes of retail employers are covered by wages councils.

Mr. Nicholls: Employers engaged in the retail sale of items listed in schedule 2 to the Retail Trades Wages Council (Non-Food) (Abolition and Establishment) Order 1979 (Statutory Instrument No. 863 1979) and the Retail Trades Wages Council (Food and Allied Trades) (Abolition and Establishment) Order 1979 (Statutory Instrument No. 862 1979) are covered by the retail non-food and retail food wages councils respectively. Copies of the statutory instruments have been placed in the Library.

Disablement Advisory Service

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to modify or alter the services offered by the Disablement Advisory Service within the next two years.

Mr. Nicholls: The service offered by the Disablement Advisory Service has been considered in the review of services for people with disabilities which my Department has just undertaken. We shall be publishing the consultative document giving the results of the review in the next few days.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list for each of the disablement advisory offices covering the district of West Yorkshire *(a)* the current action case load, *(b)* the case load for the preceding two years and *(c)* the current annual budget.

Mr. Nicholls: The Employment Service became an executive agency on 2 April 1990. Mr. Mike Fogden, the Employment Service Agency's chief executive, will be replying in writing to the hon. Lady.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Bus Privatisation

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has any plans to privatise Ulster Bus and City Bus.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No.

Homelessness

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give an estimate of the current number of homeless in Northern Ireland; and, of those, how many suffer from *(a)* alcoholism or drug dependency, *(b)* AIDS and *(c)* mental illness.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* No.

Cerebral Palsy

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the long-term plans for dealing with educational, medical and social needs of children who suffer from cerebral palsy.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 26 June 1990]:* The Government will continue to provide a wide range of services and facilities for children with cerebral palsy and other motor disorders. In addition, the United Kingdom is negotiating access to a planned new international institute for conductive education in Hungary and the role of that technique in complementing existing services in Northern Ireland will be considered when those negotiations are concluded.

Anaesthetist, Downpatrick

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when a decision will be taken about the appointment of a third anaesthetist to the Down group of hospitals in Downpatrick.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 26 June 1990]:* The Eastern health and social services board has yet to decide whether the third anaesthetist post at the Down group of hospitals should be filled on a permanent basis. The matter will be considered by the board's policy and care review committee on 5 July 1990.

Summer School, Dungannon

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will meet the officers of the Buddy Bear committee to discuss requirements for the summer school to be held in Dungannon.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 26 June 1990]:* The Buddy Bear Trust has already provided me with details of its proposed summer school but, given the Government's overall policy on the introduction of conductive education into this country and the continuing need for evaluation of the technique, I have concluded that it would not be appropriate to provide financial assistance for this from public funds.

I understand that the trust is also developing detailed proposals for a permanent institute for conductive education in Northern Ireland and I will carefully consider those proposals when they are made available.

Dental Services

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what measures have been taken or are planned with the introduction of a capitation scheme within the Government dental services to take account of the particular dental care needs of children in Northern Ireland with regard to levels of dental disease, deprivation factors and age profile of population.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 27 June 1990]:* It is not intended to introduce any specific measures particular to Northern Ireland. Additional payments to dentists, in the form of a one-off entry payment and an increase in the capitation fee, are made for children with excessive dental decay.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give for each year from 1978 the energy consumption, broken down by fuel, of the buildings occupied by his Department, expressing the figures in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* 1978-79 money terms and *(c)* units of consumption for electricity in kilowatt hours, gas in therms, liquid fuel in litres and solid fuel in tonnes.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The information requested for the years prior to 1983-84 is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. From 1983-84 onwards the energy consumption and costs for the Northern Ireland Government Office estate, broken down by fuel, are as follows:

	Electricity	*Oil*	*Gas*
1983-84			
Consumption	25·5m KWh	4·25m L	72K th
Cash prices	£1,140,000	£680,000	£58,000
1978-79 prices	£619,691	£286,181	£26,342
1984-85			
Consumption	27·2m KWh	4·65m L	79K th

	Electricity	Oil	Gas
Cash prices	£1,065,000	£684,000	£58,000
1978-79 prices	£567,279	£267,630	£25,784
1985-86			
Consumption	29·2m KWh	4·8m L	53K th
Cash prices	£1,423,000	£861,000	£44,000
1978-79 prices	£728,940	£339,070	£18,996
1986-87			
Consumption	34·1m KWh	5·19 L	27K th
Cash prices	£1,496,000	£532,000	£27,000
1978-79 prices	£766,335	£261,884	£11,541
1987-88			
Consumption	33·3m KWh	5·14m L	37K th
Cash prices	£1,540,000	£437,000	£26,000
1978-79 prices	£788,874	£231,000	£11,637
1988-89			
Consumption	33·3m KWh	5·11m L	—
Cash prices	£1,594,000	£359,000	—
1978-79 prices	£751,875	£185,413	—
1989-90			
Consumption	32·75m KWh	4·98m L	—
Cash prices	£1,601,000	£449,000	—
1978-79 prices	£708,835	£202,660	—

Note: Cash prices have been converted to 1978-79 prices by reference to the rates of the elements of the retail prices index applicable to the respective fuels.

DEFENCE

Astra (Ammunition Supplies)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the dates when, and persons with whom, his Department was in communication concerning the possible granting of contracts for the supply of ammunition to Her Majesty's forces by the Astra company; and what representations he has received since then from Astra concerning assurances allegedly given at that time.

Mr. Alan Clark: As part of their normal duties, many persons employed in my Department have been involved on numerous occasions in discussion with Astra regarding the supply of ammunition. My Department has no record of representations about alleged assurances.

Security

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has had any discussions with his American counterpart concerning the development of the security posture called "special operations and low-intensity conflict" for western Europe and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's northern flank.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

Research

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total identifiable expenditure on research by his Department in each year since 1979; what proportion was awarded on a customer-contractor basis; and what proportion of his total departmental budget was expended on research for each year.

Mr. Neubert: Research expenditure by the Ministry of Defence, net and inclusive of VAT, was as follows:

Year	£ million	Percentage of defence budget
1982-83	305	2·2
1983-84	358	2·2
1984-85	393	2·3
1985-86	399	2·2
1986-87	408	2·2
1987-88	396	2·1
1988-89	386	2·0

Comparable figures are not available for years before 1982-83. Customer/supplier arrangements apply throughout MOD-funded research.

Christmas Island

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), *Official Report*, 13 June, column *243*, he will set out the total financial compensation paid to the United Kingdom by the United States of America for the clean-up of the Christmas Island test site following the 1962 Operation Dominic tests to which he refers.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Operation Dominic tests were all high air bursts off Christmas Island, and did not result in significant contamination of the island; no special clean-up operations by the United Kingdom were, therefore, necessary as a result of these tests.

RAF Stanmore Park (Explosion)

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make an urgent statement on the explosion which occurred at RAF Stanmore Park on Thursday 21 June at 9.35 am.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: At approximately 8.15 am on 21 June a sports holdall was found by a civilian worker on the ground inside the perimeter fence at RAF Stanmore Park adjacent to a civilian workshop. The area was immediately cordoned off and evacuated.

A bomb disposal team had begun clearance operations with the civil police when the holdall exploded at approximately 9.30 am. There were no injuries, but a nearby workshop was damaged.

The police investigation is continuing.

Airbus

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if any unsolicited proposal has been received from Airbus Industrie, or either of its partners, for adaptation of airbus civil aircraft for maritime reconnaissance or other weapons-carrying role.

Mr. Alan Clark: No.

Boeing AWACS

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department intends to purchase Boeing 707 aircraft to provide on-going training for aircrew of Royal Air Force Boeing AWACS aircraft.

Mr. Alan Clark: No.

Low Flying

Mr. Jack Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the ratio of low-altitude military flights as part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation exercises in the United Kingdom to those in the Federal Republic of Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, Canada, the United States of America, Belgium and Turkey in 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Neubert: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Mr. Jack Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to limit the speed of aircraft involved in low-flying military exercises to 420 knots maximum.

Mr. Neubert: No.

Mr. Jack Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to ban low-altitude military flights over nuclear plants, hospitals, schools, places of worship, public buildings or factories.

Mr. Neubert: Standing instructions already prohibit military aircraft from overflying nuclear installations at low level. Other cases where protection is sought from overflights by military aircraft at low level are considered on their individual merits and there are no plans to change this position.

International Military Services

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether International Military Services has an office in Iran.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement on 12 January 1988 at column *199*. The position remains the same.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether International Military Services has had any communication with the Libyan Government at any time in the last 10 years.

Mr. Alan Clark: I am assured by the company that it has not communicated with the Libyan Government at any time in the last 10 years.

Options for Change

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply of 25 June, if he will state the exact number of staff within the Ministry of Defence who have been involved at various times in certain aspects of the options for change work in addition to their normal duties.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The number has varied considerably as more staff have been drawn into the work and consulted on particular aspects of it and as the level of activity has fluctuated. It is not, therefore, possible to give a precise figure.

Iran

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether Rolls-Royce has sold Olympus and Proteus engines to the Iranian navy at any time in the last 10 years;

(2) whether spare parts for Chieftain tanks have been supplied to the Iranian Government at any time in the last 10 years;

(3) whether Plessey has sold the Iranian Government air defence radars at any time in the past 10 years.

Mr. Alan Clark: It has been the policy of successive Administrations not to give details of defence equipment sales to specific countries. In respect of Iran, however, the guidelines on defence exports to that country announced by my right hon. and learned Friend, the then Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary on 29 October 1985, *Official Report*, column *450*, have been rigorously applied since the date of their promulgation in December 1984.

Libya

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions in the last 10 years contracts have been agreed for the supply of non-lethal military equipment to Libya.

Mr. Alan Clark: It has been the policy of successive Administrations not to give details of defence equipment exports to specific countries. The United Kingdom has, however, had an embargo on all new defence sales to Libya since May 1984.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any Libyan military officers have received any training in this country, at any time in the last 10 years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A number of Libyan junior naval officers attended basic training courses between 1980 and 1984 but all such training ceased after diplomatic relations were broken off in 1984.

Soviet Union

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current assessment of the nature of the military threat from the Soviet Union; and what assessment of the potential military threat from that country has taken place as a result of the study of options for change.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We welcome the major political changes in the Soviet Union and the shift in emphasis of Soviet military doctrine to defensive objectives. None-the-less, even after the implementation of a CFE agreement, the Soviet Union will remain the largest single military power in Europe. The changing circumstances in Europe are, of course, central to our examinations of options for change.

Radar

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the cost of the independent environmental impact assessment being undertaken by W. S. Atkins in connection with the proposed radar installation on St. David's airfield, Pembrokeshire.

Mr. Alan Clark: The cost of the independent environmental impact assessment for St. David's airfield is commercial-in-confidence. It is not the policy of my Department to disclose such information.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Retirement Pension

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in the light of the recent decision by the House of Lords in the case of James *v.* Eastleigh borough council, what changes he intends to propose in existing legislation to ensure equality of treatment between men and women in respect of the state retirement pension.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The James case was concerned with concessions to people by reference to their age. It has no effect on the law on social security, and therefore there is no need to amend that law in the light of this judgment.

Computer Facilities

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what initiatives his Department is taking to develop its computer facilities in the north-west.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Department continues to develop and improve its computer facilities in the north-west to ensure the effective and efficient implementation of our major programme for the computerisation of the social security benefits system. This includes an initiative to develop computer facilities for the new benefits for disabled people which are described in "The Way Ahead" (Cm 917).

Disabled People

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he is taking to improve the benefit structure for disabled people with costs other than those relating to mobility and attendance.

Mr. Scott: The existing benefits structure already recognises that disabled people have extra costs. The OPCS surveys found that attendance allowance and mobility allowance are well directed towards the most common of the more costly disabilities. Equally important, these benefits provide help to people with other disabilities which are frequently combined with locomotion or self-care disabilities. The new disability allowance will build on that framework by offering a relatively simple and readily understood benefit to both severely and moderately disabled people.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he is taking to improve the structure of benefits for disabled people and their carers.

Mr. Scott: Our proposals to improve the balance and structure of social security benefits for disabled people and their carers are set out in "The Way Ahead: Benefits for Disabled People" (Cm 917), laid before the House on 10 January. In 1993-94 the changes will add some £300 million to the £8·3 billion we are already spending on benefits for long-term sick and disabled people and their carers.

Departmental Research (Expenditure)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total identifiable expenditure on research by his Department in each year since 1979; what proportion was awarded on a customer-contractor basis; and what proportion of his total departmental budget was expended on research for each year.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Social Security became a separate Department in 1988. Research and development by DSS, all of which is managed on the customer-contractor principle, is financed through the social security research budget. For 1989-90, the total expenditure on research and development was £937,000. Information on the overall DSS budget for 1989-90 is not yet available. For 1988-89, the total research and development expenditure was £636,000, forming 0·0013 per cent. of the overall DSS budget.

Information for earlier years has been published in the "Annual Review of Government Funded Research and Development", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Income Support

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the extra cost at 1990-91 benefit rates of increasing the personal allowance for couples dependent on income support to twice the rate for a single person over the age of 25.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The estimated cost for all income-related benefits would be £1,200 million.

Source: Modelled using data drawn from the 1985-86-87 Family Expenditure Surveys and the 1988 Annual Statistical Enquiry of Income Support recipients.

Nuclear Test Veterans

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to the reply, *Official Report* 13 June, column *215*, to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South, if he will categorise the 248 claims for war pensions made by nuclear test veterans or their widows according to the medical condition which caused death or disablement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I regret that the information is not immediately available, but it is being obtained. I will write to the right hon. Member in due course.

Personal Pension Plans

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether bodies representing consumers' interests have been included in the interested bodies which have been asked for their views on the existing regulations on the disclosure of information to members of occupational and pension schemes referred to in his reply to the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling on 14 June, *Official Report*, column *331*; and if he will list the interested bodies that have been asked for their views.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The bodies, including those representing consumers' interests, which have been asked for their views on the current regulations on disclosure of information are:

Occupational Pensions Board
Association of Consulting Actuaries
Institute of Actuaries
Faculty of Actuaries
Nationalised Industries Pension Group
Society of Pension Consultants
Confederation of British Industry
Trades Union Congress
Association of British Insurers
National Association of Pension Funds
Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales
Institute of Chartered Accountants in Scotland
Occupational Pensions Advisory Service
Association of Pension Lawyers

Fraud

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Poole (Mr. Ward) of 21 June, column *709*, if he will send the hon. Member for Oldham, West a copy of the report "Working Together."

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Pursuant to the reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Poole (Mr. Ward) on 21 June, a copy of the report "Working Together" was placed in the Library on that date. I am sending a copy to the hon. Member separately.

Local Office, Cumbernauld

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the current number of staff vacancies, identifying the number in each grade, at the DSS office in Cumbernauld.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Planning for future resource requirements is progressive and at 26 June 1990 there was only 0·5 local officer 1 vacancy to be filled. Arrangements have been made to fill this on 1 August 1990.

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the current staff establishment, identifying the number in each grade, at the DSS office in Cumbernauld.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: On 26 June 1990, the staff in post at Cumbernauld integrated local office was:

	Number
Senior executive officer	1
Higher executive officer	6
Local officer 1	30
Local officer 2	53
Administrative assistant	16
Telephonist	1
Typist	3
Messenger	1
Total	111

In addition, eight casual administrative assistants are in post.

Social Fund

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many persons who have received loans from the social fund are making repayments at *(a)* above 15 per cent., *(b)* 15 per cent., *(c)* above 10 per cent. but less than 15 per cent., *(d)* 10 per cent., *(e)* above 5 per cent. but less than 10 per cent., *(f)* 5 per cent. and *(g)* less than 5 per cent. of the income support applicable amount.

Mr. Scott: At 30 April 1990, the latest date for which data are available, 103,055 social fund loans were being recovered. A detailed breakdown of the percentage rates at which loans are being refunded by individual applicants is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Community Charge

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what will be the effect of a community charge levied at *(a)* £350 and *(b)* £450 on the replacement ratios, expressed as out-of-work spending power divided by in-work spending power, of unemployed people under 25 years, living with their parents, and offered jobs at *(a)* £80 a week, *(b)* £100 a week and *(c)* £120 a week, assuming work expenses averaging £10 a week.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 5 June 1990]:* The information is listed in the table. It should be noted that the results in the table remain arbitrary. They cannot reflect, except by chance, the actual circumstances of particular people and cannot claim to be representative of the population at large.

	Replacement ratios	
Gross earnings per week £	*Community charge £350 per cent.*	*Community charge £450 per cent.*
80	43	43
100	36	36
120	30	31

Notes:—

1. The methods and assumptions are those used in the published Tax/Benefit Model Tables but in this example it has been assumed that no rent is payable.
2. Rounded to the nearest per cent.

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what will be the effect of a community charge levied at *(a)* £350 and *(b)* £450 on the replacement ratios expressed as out-of-work spending power divided by in-work spending power, of a teenage, single mother with one child under five years, living with her parents, and offered a job at *(a)* £60 a week, *(b)* £80 a week, and *(c)* £100 a week, assuming fares to work and child-care costs totalling £50 a week.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 5 June 1990]:* The information is listed in the table. It should be noted that the results in the table remain arbitrary. They cannot reflect, except by chance, the actual circumstances of particular people and cannot claim to be representative of the population at large.

	Replacement ratios	
Gross earnings per week £	*Community charge £350 per cent.*	*Community charge £450 per cent.*
60	56	56
80	54	54
100	51	52

Notes:

1. The methods and assumptions are those used in the published Tax/Benefit Model Tables but in this example it has been assumed that no rent is payable.
2. Rounded to the nearest per cent.

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what will be the effect of a community charge levied at *(a)* £350 and *(b)* £450 on the replacement ratios, expressed as out-of-work spending power divided by in-work spending power, of an unemployed man with non-earning wife and two children under five years, a mortgage of £40,000 and work expenses averaging £10 a week, assuming offer wages of £120, £140, £160, £180, £200, £220, £240, £260, £280 and £300 a week.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 5 June 1990]:* The information is listed in the table. It should be noted that the results in the table remain arbitrary. They cannot

reflect, except by chance, the actual circumstances of particular people and cannot claim to be representative of the population at large.

Gross earnings per week £	Replacement ratios: Community charge £350 per cent.	Community charge £450 per cent.
120	264	268
140	240	243
160	221	223
180	177	178
200	144	145
220	119	123
240	102	105
260	89	91
280	78	80
300	70	72

Notes:
1. The methods and assumptions are those used in the published Tax/Benefit Model Tables but in this example mortgage interest payments were calculated assuming payment over 25 years and an interest rate of 15·4 per cent.
2. Rounded to the nearest per cent.

Pensions and Benefits

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what were the November 1979 and April 1990 rates of benefit in cash, giving couple and single rates separately where appropriate, and showing the percentage change in real terms, using the RPI and Rossi indexes for *(a)* November 1979 to April 1990 and *(b)* November 1979 to September 1989 for (i) retirement pension, (ii) non-contributory retirement pension, (iii) unemployment benefit, (iv) sickness benefit, (v) maternity allowance, (vi) child benefit, (vii) one-parent benefit, (viii) industrial disablement benefit, (ix) industrial death benefit, (x) war disablement pension, (xi) war widow's pension, (xii) attendance allowance, higher and lower rate, (xiii) invalid care allowance, (xiv) severe disablement allowance, (xv) mobility allowance and (xvi) supplementary benefit and income support personal allowance for (1) those aged 16 and 17 years, (2) those aged 18 to 24 years and (3) persons aged over 25 years;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the *(a)* November 1979 and *(b)* April 1990 rates of benefit in cash, giving couple and single rates separately where appropriate, and showing (1) the percentage change in real terms, using the retail prices index and Rossi indexes as appropriate for the period November 1979 to September 1989, (2) the percentage change in real terms, using the retail prices index and Rossi indexes as appropriate for the period November 1979 to April 1990, (3) the percentage change in relation to the increase in male average earnings in the period November 1979 to September 1989, and (4) the percentage change in relation to the increase in male average earnings in the period November 1979 to April 1990 for (i) retirement pension, (ii) non-contributory retirement pension, (iii) unemployment benefit, (iv) sickness benefit, (v) maternity allowance, (vi) child benefit, (vii) one-parent benefit, (viii) industrial disablement benefit, (ix) industrial death benefit, (x) war disablement pension, (xi) war widow's pension, (xii) attendance allowance, higher and lower rate, (xiii) invalid care allowance, (xiv) severe disablement allowance, (xv) mobility allowance and (xvi) supplementary benefit/income support personal allowance for *(a)* 16 to 17 years old, *(b)* 18 to 24 years old and *(c)* persons aged 25 years plus.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 15 June 1990]:* I regret that it is not possible, on the basis of the information contained in the question, to provide the information requested in relation to the supplementary benefit and income support schemes. Nor, since September 1989 was not an uprating date, would it be appropriate to provide an analysis related to that date of the change in the value of the benefits listed.

The table therefore provides figures on the same basis as in the answer to a comparable question from the hon. Member which I gave on 20 December 1989, updated to April 1990. As I pointed out at that time, comparisons over the period in question are complicated by the change in 1983 from uprating partly based on forecasts of future inflation to upratings based on known movements in the retail prices index to the latest available date. Moreover, in November 1979 long-term benefit rates were increased by 2 per cent. more than forecast inflation to make up for the fact that the forecast underlying the 1978 uprating had proved 2 per cent. lower than the actual growth in earnings of 13·3 per cent. between November 1977 and November 1978. The table gives the figures requested in relation to both 1978 and 1979. The retail prices index has been used as this is the appropriate index for those benefits listed in the table. It also shows the change in the average real value of benefit between the uprating years November 1978 to November 1979, and April 1989 to April 1990.

Table: Comparison of benefit rates

	November 1978 rates in cash	November 1979 rates in cash	November 1978 rates in April 1990 prices	November 1979 rates in April 1990 prices	April 1990 rates in cash	Ratio of[1] benefit to gross earnings November 1978 (per cent.)	Ratio of benefit to gross earnings November 1979 (per cent.)	Ratio of benefit to gross earnings April 1989 (per cent.)	Percentage change November 1978 to April 1990	Percentage change November 1979 to April 1990	Percentage[2] change between uprating periods November 1978-79 to April 1989-90
Retirement pension											
Single person	19·50	23·30	47·52	48·38	46·90	26·9	27·0	20·5	−1·3	−3·1	5·4
Married couple	31·20	37·30	76·04	77·44	75·10	43·1	43·3	32·7	−1·2	−3·0	5·4
Unemployment benefit											
Single person	15·75	18·50	38·38	38·41	37·35	21·8	21·5	16·3	−2·7	−2·8	3·8
Married couple	25·50	29·95	62·15	62·18	60·40	35·2	34·7	26·3	−2·8	−2·9	3·7
Sickness benefit											
Single person	15·75	18·50	38·38	38·41	37·70	21·8	21·5	15·6	−7·0	−7·1	−0·7
Married couple	25·50	29·95	62·15	62·18	57·80	35·2	34·7	25·2	−7·0	−7·0	−0·7
Industrial disablement benefit	31·90	38·00	77·74	78·90	76·60	44·1	44·1	33·4	−1·5	−2·9	5·2
Industrial death benefit	20·05	23·85	48·86	49·52	46·90	27·7	27·7	20·5	−4·0	−5·3	2·5

	November 1978 rates in cash	November 1979 rates in cash	November 1978 rates in April 1990 prices	November 1979 rates in April 1990 prices	April 1990 rates in cash	Ratio of[4] benefit to gross earnings November 1978 (per cent.)	Ratio of benefit to gross earnings November 1979 (per cent.)	Ratio of benefit to gross earnings April 1989 (per cent.)	Percentage change November 1978 to April 1990	Percentage change November 1979 to April 1990	Percentage[4] change between uprating periods November 1978-79 to April 1989-90
Maternity allowance											
Single person	15·75	18·50	38·38	38·41	35·70	21·8	21·5	15·6	−7·0	−7·1	−0·7
Married couple	25·50	29·95	62·15	62·18	57·80	35·2	34·7	25·2	−7·0	−7·0	−0·7
Non-contributory retirement pension											
Single person	11·70	14·00	28·51	29·07	28·20	16·2	16·2	12·3	−1·1	−3·0	5·5
Married couple	18·75	22·40	45·70	46·51	45·05	25·9	26·0	19·6	−1·4	−3·1	5·2
War disablement pension	31·90	38·00	77·74	78·90	76·60	44·1	44·1	33·4	−1·5	−2·9	5·2
War widows pension	25·55	30·45	62·67	63·22	60·95	35·3	35·3	26·7	−2·7	−3·6	5·5
Attendance allowance											
Higher rate	15·60	18·60	38·02	38·62	37·55	21·5	21·6	16·4	−1·2	−2·8	5·4
Lower rate	10·40	12·40	25·35	25·75	25·05	14·4	14·4	10·9	−1·2	−2·7	5·6
Invalid care allowance											
Single person	11·70	14·00	28·51	29·07	28·20	16·2	16·2	12·3	−1·1	−3·0	5·5
Married person	18·75	22·40	45·70	46·51	45·05	25·9	26·0	19·6	−1·4	−3·1	5·2
Severe disablement allowance											
Single person	11·70	14·00	28·51	29·07	28·20	16·20	16·2	12·3	−1·1	−3·0	5·5
Married couple	18·75	22·40	45·70	46·51	45·05	25·90	26·0	19·6	−1·4	−3·1	5·2
Mobility allowance[1]	10·00	12·00	24·91	24·91	26·25	13·8	13·9	11·4	5·4	5·4	12·3
Child benefit[2]	3·00	4·00	7·31	8·30	7·25	4·1	4·6	3·4	−0·8	−12·7	−4·1
One parent benefit	2·00	2·50	4·87	5·19	5·60	2·8	2·9	2·4	15·0	7·9	22·3

[1] For mobility allowance, the initial uprating period is July 1979 to November 1979.
[2] For child benefit, the initial uprating period is April 1979 to November 1979.
[3] Average gross weekly earnings, all full-time workers on adult rates (*Source:* New Earnings Survey 1989—the latest available information). Interpolated by the seasonally adjusted monthly index of average earnings, all employees in industries and services (published by DE).
[4] The percentage change between uprating periods is calculated as the percentage change in the average real value of benefits during the uprating period April 1989 to April 1990, as compared to the period November 1978 to November 1979.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to provide a substantive reply to the question regarding the value of benefits in 1979 and 1990 tabled for answer on 15 June.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have replied to the hon. Member's question today.

Family Credit

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many Department of Social Security employees are in receipt of family credit.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The number of employees in receipt of family credit is 570, including those cases where the family credit is received by the partner of an employee.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 29 June 1990

EMPLOYMENT

Port of London Authority

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the legal costs to date incurred by the Port of London Authority in resisting the industrial tribunal case brought by dismissed Tilbury dock workers.

Mr. Nicholls: We do not hold such information. The cost of any legal representation at an industrial tribunal is a matter for the parties concerned.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has discussed with the Port of London Authority its refusal to recognise or bargain collectively with any trade union in respect of its employees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. and learned Friend has not discussed these matters with the Port of London Authority. The Government believe that the question of trade union recognition is best left to the parties concerned.

Disabled People

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he expects to complete his Department's review of services for people with disabilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The review of the Employment Department's employment and training services for people with disabilities has now been completed, and we have today published a consultative document, "Employment and Training for People with Disabilities".

The 1980s saw new approaches to promoting good practice to employers, to developing assessment, counselling, training and rehabilitation for people with disabilities, and to help for people with severe disabilities. In the document we examine how the resources available can be used to full effect in the 1990s, taking account of the major research report "Employment and Handicap" which is also published today and provides a better picture of the position of people with disabilities in the labour market.

In the document plans are announced:

— To make more effective the help offered to clients with disabilities in our non-specialist programmes and to improve the management and training of our specialist services;

— To improve the effectiveness of our assessment and rehabilitation services;

— To strengthen the promotion of good practice to employers.

Comments are invited on:

— What contributions to delivering services the voluntary sector and private sector organisations might make;

— Proposals to rebalance help to people with severe disabilities, over time, towards placements with employers;

— The current quota scheme, and other possible forms of legislation;

— The shape of advisory machinery to my Department.

I will reach decisions after careful consideration of the responses received during the consultative period, which ends on 31 December.

National Dock Labour Board

Mr. Stevens: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement about the future of the National Dock Labour Board.

Mr. Howard: The National Dock Labour Board having wound up its affairs, and in conformity with my powers under section 2(5) of the Dock Work Act 1989, the board will be dissolved on 30 June 1990.

Skill Centres

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if contracts have been completed with the Lakin consortium regarding the transfer of skill centres.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The sale of the four training businesses to the consortium headed by Mr. Lakin were completed on Friday 11 May 1990.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Parental Choice

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to extend parental choice in the allocation of school places.

Mr. Alan Howarth: As a result of the Education Act 1980, the great majority of parents already get the school they want for their child. The more open enrolment provisions of the Education Reform Act will further increase parental choice by securing that schools must admit pupils on demand up to the limit of their physical capacity. These provisions take effect in secondary schools in September this year. No decision has yet been taken on when more open enrolment should be extended to primary schools; the issue is currently under consideration in the Department.

Teachers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has on how many qualified teachers in England and Wales are not currently working within the profession.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The total number of out-of-service teachers was 404,000 on 31 March 1986.

The table summarises the main information.

The distribution of qualified "Out of Service" teachers by age, sex, training and last teaching sector on 31 March 1986

Thousands

	Men	*Women*	*Men and women*
Age			
16 to 24	1	3	4
25 to 29	8	27	34

	Men	Women	Men and women
30 to 34	18	68	85
35 to 39	23	75	97
40 to 44	17	48	66
45 to 59	32	85	117
Training			
Trained (in United Kingdom)	72	264	337
Untrained	26	41	67
Sector of last service			
Nursery and primary	9	106	116
Secondary—maintained	49	108	157
—non-maintained	7	15	22
Further education	5	4	9
Other (including special schools)	3	15	19
Not recorded	6	15	21
Total with previous service	79	264	343
No previous service	19	41	61
TOTAL	99	305	404

The table shows the number and characteristics of qualified school teachers aged under 60 who had previously taught or been trained in England and Wales, but were not in full-time service in the maintained sector there on 31 March 1986. This group includes those who were in service outside the maintained sector, or in part-time service within this sector.

School Building Grants

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the closing dates for submission by *(a)* local education authorities in respect of county and voluntary aided and controlled schools and *(b)* grant-maintained schools, of bids for capital allocations for grants for school buildings; and on what dates he expects to make his announcements on these bids.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Local education authorities in England have been asked to submit their capital expenditure plans for county, voluntary controlled and voluntary aided schools to the Department no later than 15 September 1990. My right hon. Friend expects to be able to announce annual capital guidelines and allocations for capital expenditure on education in 1991-92 to local education authorities, by governors of voluntary aided and special agreement schools in December.

The Department will write to grant-maintained schools inviting bids for capital work in 1991-92 later in the summer, giving a closing date a couple of months later. The intention is to announce allocations around the new year.

Haberdashers' Aske's Schools, Deptford

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1), pursuant to his answer of 21 June, *Official Report*, column *627*, whether that part of the current value of the Haberdashers' Aske's schools in Deptford attributable to past public investment in the premises for which he has previously decided no repayment to public funds shall be required under section 14 of the Education Act 1944 will be deducted in determining the amount of private sponsorship for the proposed Haberdashers' Aske's city technology college represented by those premises or any proposed lease of them for the city technology college;

(2) what part of the current value of the sites and premises of the Haberdashers' Aske's Schools in Deptford is attributable to past public capital investment in those schools; and what information he has as to the valuation made by the Inner London education authority of that amount.

Mrs. Rumbold: ILEA expenditure on capital works for the Haberdashers' Aske's Hatcham boys' and girls' schools was assessed by them as £5·645 million at 1989-90 prices. The value of the sites of the schools is independent of expenditure on premises; no precise estimate can be made of the proportion of the value of the premises attributed to past building work. The trustees of the Robert Aske's Foundation own the sites and premises of the schools and may transfer a leasehold interest to the Haberdashers' Aske's city technology college trust. The value of the lease, with any other sums, will be deemed to be the trust's share of initial capital expenditure on the city technology college.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Reservoirs

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will consider the construction of another reservoir in the south-eastern section of Northern Ireland to deal with increasing demand.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 26 June 1990]:* Yes.

TRANSPORT

Vehicle Fires

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if the Transport and Road Research Laboratory has undertaken research into the possible relationship between vehicles fitted with fuel injection systems and post-accident fires; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what information he has received from chief constables of police on the incidence of post-accident fires in motor vehicles fitted with fuel injection systems; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The Transport and Road Research Laboratory is currently conducting research into rear impacts and the associated fire risk of disruption to the fuel system. The research also covers electrically sourced fires which have previously been identified as one of the major causes of vehicle fires.

Further research is being considered to establish other causes of vehicle fires, of which fuel injection would be one of many factors to be taken into account.

Following discussions with my Department, the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders has already recommended to its members to fit devices to isolate high-pressure fuel injuection pumps in the event of a collision, so as to reduce the fire risk from this source. It is also investigating the causes of under-bonnet fires.

PRIME MINISTER

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Prime Minister what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on seeking the total removal of land-based short-range nuclear weapons from Europe at the forthcoming arms negotiations dealing with these weapons.

The Prime Minister: Arms control remains an integral part of alliance security policy; NATO has therefore made it clear that it endorses the United States intention to begin negotiations with the Soviet Union on short-range nuclear forces after the conclusion of a treaty limiting conventional forces in Europe, and we fully support NATO's position.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Prime Minister whether Her Majesty's Government have established any conditions for their support for the deployment of tactical air-to-surface nuclear missiles in the United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister: We have always made clear our support for the continued presence of modern and effective American nuclear forces in Europe. The specific question of deployment of United States tactical air-to-surface missiles in the United Kingdom, and the terms which might apply, has not yet arisen.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Entry Clearance

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the number of applicants, in each category, awaiting entry clearance at each British post on the Indian sub-continent at the latest available date and for each quarter since 1 January 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 26 June 1990]:* The information requested is given in the table.

Persons in the Indian sub-continent awaiting a decision on their application for entry clearance to the United Kingdom

	1988				1989				1990
Category	*31 March*	*30 June*	*30 September*	*31 December*	*31 March*	*30 June*	*30 September*	*31 December*	*31 March*
Islamabad									
Wives, children, other dependent relatives[1]	4,600	4,700	4,700	4,500	4,400	4,100	4,100	4,100	3,800
Husbands, male fiances	3,500	3,800	3,900	3,700	3,600	3,200	3,000	2,500	1,700
Female fiancees	1,000	1,000	1,000	930	890	860	860	820	290
Visitors, students, others	2,200	2,000	1,800	1,700	1,600	700	710	1,100	2,000
Karachi									
Wives, children, other dependent relatives[1]	150	140	150	140	160	110	80	70	110
Husbands, male fiances	160	110	120	100	70	50	30	40	60
Female fiancees	40	30	40	30	20	20	20	20	20
Visitors, students, others	710	1,000	980	770	680	830	320	340	380
Dhaka									
Wives, children, other dependent relatives[1]	7,600	7,300	7,000	6,500	5,600	4,800	4,400	4,000	2,900
Husbands, male fiances	340	360	380	380	350	330	320	310	290
Female fiancees	20	20	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
Visitors, students, others	880	210	380	530	690	800	980	1,000	1,100
New Delhi									
Wives, children, other dependent relatives[1]	480	530	490	470	520	560	490	440	420
Husbands, male fiances	500	470	430	390	350	330	310	270	260
Female fiancees	250	210	200	180	170	180	180	150	130
Visitors, students, others[2]	860	3,100	3,000	2,000	2,200	2,500	3,800	3,400	3,100
Bombay									
Wives, children, other dependent relatives[1]	780	680	600	500	620	720	570	700	820
Husbands, male fiances	600	540	500	390	390	400	370	420	320
Female fiancees	260	260	220	170	200	210	220	180	160
Visitors, students, others	1,100	1,400	1,500	1,400	1,200	1,400	1,700	910	810
Calcutta									
Wives, children, other dependent relatives[1]	60	40	30	40	30	20	10	20	10
Husbands, male fiances	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	10	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
Female fiancees	—	[3]—	[3]—	—	—	[3]—	[3]—	—	—
Visitors, students, others	30	20	10	10	[3]—	30	40	50	60
Madras									
Wives, children, other dependent relatives[1]	60	50	60	70	70	60	40	60	70
Husbands, male fiances	20	20	20	30	20	20	20	20	20
Femal fiancees	—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
Visitors, students, others	40	50	40	40	50	40	30	40	40

[1] Including other persons applying for entry clearance for immediate settlement.
[2] Including persons seeking political asylum.
[3] Five or fewer.

ENVIRONMENT

Enterprise Zones

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the loss to the Exchequer in each year from 1984-85 to 1989-90 arising from the provisions of section 179 and schedule 32 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980.

Mr. Moynihan: Annual figures for the estimated net cost to the Exchequer up to March 1988 of capital allowances in enterprise zones in Great Britain (designated under schedule 32) are given in table 13 of "Enterprise Zone Information 1987-1988". Copies of the report are available in the Library.

Bedfordshire Pilgrims Housing Association

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what conditions have been set for the transfer of housing stock to the Bedfordshire Pilgrims housing association; and, specifically, what percentage has been earmarked for the repayment of debt.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I am sending to my hon. Friend a copy of the letter of consent issued to North Bedfordshire borough council and placing a copy in the Library.

In line with our general policy on the use of receipts from large-scale voluntary transfers of council housing, the council was directed to set aside for debt redemption the greater of: 75 per cent. of the receipt or an amount equivalent to the outstanding debt on the housing transferred.

Homelessness

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what extra funding he will make available to enable Stoke on Trent city council, housing associations and voluntary organisations to meet the housing needs of homeless people within the city.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Housing resources for Stoke city council will be allocated in the usual way following consultation on the 1991-92 housing investment programme. Detailed decisions on the funding of housing associations are for the Housing Corporation, but overall spending by the corporation is scheduled to rise from around £1·1 billion this year to nearly £1·7 billion in 1992-93. Funding under section 73 of the Housing Act 1985 for voluntary organisations working with the homeless has increased from £680,000 in 1989-90 to £2 million this year. No applications for funding were received from organisations in the Stoke area in respect of the current year, but it is open to interested bodies to submit applications, by October, for funding in 1991-92.

Drinking Water

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the presence of cryptosporidium in drinking water supplies.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I understand that the group of experts chaired by Sir John Badenoch is drawing to a conclusion its report on cryptosporidium in water supplies. When the report is submitted jointly to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health, it will be published and copies will be placed in the Library of the House.

Acid Rain

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide his estimate of the levels of emission of carbon dioxide and of other chemical substances contributing to acid rain from Britain *(a)* during the last two months and *(b)* the comparable figure for the same period in 1989.

Mr. Trippier: Data on emissions of selected gases into the atmosphere are published annually in the Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics, the latest of which (No. 12) contains figures for 1978-88 and has been placed in the Library of the House. Monthly figures are not available. Emissions of carbon dioxide and of the main contributors to acid rain, sulphur dioxide and oxides of nitrogen for 1987-88 are as follows:

United Kingdom Estimated Emissions	*1987*	*1988*
Carbon dioxide[1] (million tonnes)	159	158
Sulphur dioxide (thousand tonnes)	3,863	3,664
Nitrogen oxides[2] (thousand tonnes)	2,429	2,480

[1] Expressed in terms of weight of carbon emitted
[2] Expressed as nitrogen dioxide equivalent

Oil Spillages

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what specific contribution was made by his Department to the development of the international convention on the prevention of maritime pollution from oil spillages, developed by the International Maritime Organisation.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 26 June 1990]:* The draft convention on international co-operation on oil pollution preparedness and response being developed by the International Maritime Organisation is concerned primarily with mutual assistance and international co-operation between administrations to prepare for, and respond to, oil pollution incidents.

These are matters which fall within the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. My Department is being kept in touch with progress in view of its co-ordinating interest in maritime environment issues.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Crown Estates

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next proposes to meet the First Crown Estates Commissioner to discuss revenues from the Crown Estates.

Mr. Major: I shall be meeting the First Crown Estates Commissioner on 3 July.

Economic and Monetary Union

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many letters he has received from the general public on his proposals for economic and monetary developments in the European Economic Community.

Mr. Lilley: A number.

Income Tax

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the increase in the standard rate of income tax necessary to raise an extra £21·5 billion per year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: At 1990-91 income levels an increase of about 12 pence would be required, raising the basic rate of income tax from 25 pence to 37 pence. This estimate does not allow for any behavioural effects that might result from such an increase.

HEALTH

NHS Reform

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many copies of "Working for Patients" working paper 11, "Framework for Information", and invitations to take part in the consultation on it, were sent to *(a)* health authorities, *(b)* family practitioner committees, *(c)* community health councils, *(d)* professional organisations, *(e)* academic departments and research units, *(f)* voluntary organisations, *(g)* trade unions, *(h)* management and computer consultants, *(i)* suppliers of goods and equipment, *(j)* other private companies and *(k)* other organisations.

Mr. Dorrell: A total of 3,400 copies of working paper 11 were distributed; this included copies to all Members of Parliament for England.

Working paper 11 was part of a set of consultative documents. The set was sent to:

	Number
District health authorities	190
Special health authorities	8
Regional health authorities	14
Family practitioner committees	90
Community health councils	0
Professional organisations	59
Academic organisations and research units	29
Voluntary organisations	8
Trade unions	7
Management and computer consultants	32
Suppliers of goods and equipment	32
Other private companies	31
Other organisations	21

Additional copies of the consultative documents were available from the health publications unit. Although the unit does not keep a record of the organisations to which it sends copies, approximately 3,800 copies of both the main texts of the consultative documents for information and IT were distributed.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many replies he has received from his consultation on working paper 11, broken down into *(a)* health authorities, family practitioner committees and community health councils, *(b)* management and computer consultants, *(c)* suppliers of goods and equipment, *(d)* academic departments and research units, *(e)* professional organisations and *(f)* other organisations.

Mr. Dorrell: A total of 222 written replies were received. Several organisations sent more than one response. Some regions sent a response which reflected the views of their districts. The breakdown of the organisations sending at least one response was:

	Number
Health authorities, units, FPCs and CHCs	124
Management and computer consultants	3
Suppliers of goods and services	11
Academic departments and research units	8
Professional organisations	20
Other organisations	14
Total	180

A list of the organisations responding to the consultative exercise is given in appendix 1 of the document, published this week, entitled "Framework for Information Systems: The Next Steps". Aimed primarily at information systems specialists, the document presents the conclusions of the consultation exercise. Copies have been placed in the Library.

London Hospitals (Patients)

Miss Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the numbers of patients treated during the last full year before closure of *(a)* the South London hospital for women, *(b)* Lambeth hospital and *(c)* St. George's hospital, Balham; and what is the total number of patients currently being treated at Charing Cross hospital.

Mr. Dorrell: The information is given in the table. St. George's hospital in Tooting is fully operational, but details are given for St. James's which has closed. There were 25,080 in-patient cases treated at Charing Cross hospital in the year ending March 1989, the latest for which information is held centrally.

Numbers of patients treated in last full year before closure

Hospital	*Last full year of activity*	*In-patients treated*
South London hospital (women)	1983	5,353
Lambeth hospital	1975	8,836
St. James's, Balham	1986	12,678

Transplant Operations

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many transplant operations have been carried out in the United Kingdom and how many in the other European Community countries.

Mr. Dorrell: According to information provided by the European Dialysis and Transplant Association the number of kidney transplants carried out in 1988 in European Community countries was as follows:

	Number of kidney transplants
Belgium	401
Denmark	145
Fed. Rep. Germany	1,791
France	1,808
Greece	39
Ireland	78
Italy	476
Luxembourg	6
Netherlands	416
Portugal	104
Spain	1,018
United Kingdom	1,735

Note: Figures include transplants of kidneys from cadavers and living donors.

We do not have accurate information on transplants of other organs in European Community countries.

Pregnancy Tests

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many pregnancy tests were carried out at hospitals following referral from a general practitioner in 1989 and at what cost; if he will list his reply by region; and if he will make a statement about pregnancy test charges in the future.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested is not available centrally. Where health authorities offer general practitioners direct access to pathology services it is for the general practitioner concerned to judge whether a hospital test is warranted or whether an alternative method of confirming pregnancy is appropriate. Tests provided under the national health service will continue to be free of charge.

Breast and Cervical Cancer

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the incidence of breast cancer in women aged *(a)* 50 to 64 years and *(b)* 65 years and over in each year since 1984 for which figures are available.

Mr. Dorrell: The information is shown in the table; 1985 is the latest available data year.

Registrations of newly diagnosed cases of malignant neoplasm of female breast[1], and rates per 100,000 population, ages 50-64, 65 and over, England and Wales, 1985[2].

Age-Group	*Number*	*Rate[3]*
50-64	6,977	166
65+	10,538	228

[1] Assigned to the International Classification of Diseases 9th revision code 174.
[2] Provisional.
[3] Rate per 100,000 population.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the incidence of cervical cancer in women aged *(a)* 50 to 64 years and *(b)* 65 years and over in each year since 1984 for which figures are available.

Mr. Dorrell: The information is shown in the table; 1985 is the latest available data year.

Registrations of newly diagnosed cases of malignant neoplasm of cervix uteri[1] and rates per 100,000 population, ages 50-64, 65 and over, England and Wales, 1985[2]

Age-Group	*Number*	*Rate[3]*
50-64	1,075	26
65+	1,086	24

[1] Assisigned to the International Classification of Diseases 9th revision code 180.
[2] Provisional
[3] Rate per 100,000 population.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to extend the routine invitation of women for breast and cervical cancer screening to women over the age of 65 years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Women aged over 65 are not excluded from either screening programme. We have asked health authorities to provide breast cancer screening to women in this age group every three years on request. Guidance on cervical screening issued by the Department of Health to health authorities, family practitioner committees and general practitioners stated that "women aged 65 and over who have not had two consecutive negative smears in the last ten years should also be screened". Our most recent figures show that women aged over 65 years already consult their doctors more than six times a year on average. Under the GPs' new contract much greater emphasis is being placed on health promotion and prevention of ill health. This will mean that GPs will have even more opportunities to advise women patients over 65 of the wisdom of accepting these preventive measures.

Water Quality

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the health implications to consumers of tap water from the presence of blue-green algae in water sources.

Mr. Dorrell: I am advised that, despite medical and scientific interest over at least 50 years, there is no convincing evidence that algal toxins in drinking water have ever caused illness in humans.

Several published reports from other countries refer to outbreaks of gastrointestinal illness and hepatitis occurring during a period of heavy algal growth in the source of the drinking water. In these incidents, the source water often smelt and tasted unpleasant and the water treatment was inadequate to remove the taste and odour which therefore remained in the drinking water. However, as noted in a review published in 1984 by the World Health Organisation, there is no evidence of the causal involvement of algal toxins in these episodes. There have been no such published reports from the United Kingdom.

Scanners

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on his Department's policy on the provision and allocation of capital resources to provide scanners in national health service hospitals.

Mr. Dorrell: It is for health authorities to decide, in the light of local circumstances and needs, how capital moneys are to be allocated.

Medical Laboratory and Scientific Officers

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the duties and responsibilities of medical laboratory and scientific officers in each of the bands of salaries from £7,897 to £20,244.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The duties and responsibilities of each grade are for employing authorities to determine within the guidance agreed by the Whitley council.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the number of medical laboratory and scientific officers in each band of salaries from £7,897 to £20,244 a year.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information is shown in the table.

Qualified medical laboratory and scientific officers on each pay scale[1]
England—30 September 1989

Grade	*Pay scale*[2] *£*	*Whole time equivalents*[2] [3]
MLSO 1	7,897 to 12,158	4,940
MLSO 2	11,241 to 16,639	2,810
MLSO 3	15,383 to 19,465	1,650
MLSO 4	17,996 to 22,771	540
Total		9,940
Grading unknown[4]		1,480
Grand total		11,420

[1] The scales quoted are basic rates of pay.
[2] Pay scales include the three additional points by which scales may be advanced to recognise special skills and additional responsibilities. Approximately 23 per cent. of medical laboratory and scientific officers are on advanced scale positions.
[3] All figures rounded to nearest ten whole time equivalents.
[4] Medical laboratory and scientific officers who, at the time figures were collected, had not been assigned to a grade in the new structure, which was introduced in 1988-89.

Health Visiting, Greenwich

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what actions his Department has undertaken following the discussions about health visiting in Greenwich which were held on 26 April between the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State and a delegation led by the hon. Member for Woolwich.

Mr. Dorrell: A nursing officer from the Department has visited Greenwich health authority and we have received information from a limited comparative study of Greenwich and some other London health districts. Greenwich health authority had set up a working party to consider the health visiting service, and the Department has this week received a copy of its report.

Residential Care Allowances

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total budgeted figure to be transferred from the residential care allowances budget to local authorities in 1990 by departmental region; and for what purposes.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No transfer will be made this year. The amount to be transferred from the Department of Social Security to local authorities in 1991-92 to enable them to discharge new responsibilities arising from the White Paper "Caring for People" (Cm 849) has not yet finally been determined.

Cadaver Kidney Transplants

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the total number of cadaver kidney transplants carried out in the latest year for which figures are available at each of the health districts of Riverside, Bloomsbury, Hampstead, City and Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Lewisham and Southwark, Camberwell, West Lambeth and the Hammersmith special health authority.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 26 June 1990]:* According to information provided by the United Kingdom Transplant Service, the number of cadaveric kidney transplants carried out in 1989 in the district health authorities specified was as follows:

Health Authority	*Number*
Riverside	25
Bloomsbury	23
Hampstead	33
City and Hackney	48
Tower Hamlets	54
Lewisham and North Southwark	70
Camberwell	32
West Lambeth	22
Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's special health authority	35

We are pleased to announce that the number of cadaveric kidney transplants carried out in the United Kingdom in 1989 was a record. The total of 1,732 transplants represents a 10 per cent. increase on the achievement of the previous year.

Drug Safety

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the Medicines Commission on the Committee on Safety of Medicines carries out independent checking of manufacturers' data on drug safety.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 27 June 1990]:* The Medicines Commission and the Committee on Safety of Medicines are themselves independent advisory bodies set up under the Medicines Act 1968. It is not their practice to commission separate independent checking of manufacturers' data.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been *(a)* the expenditure in real terms on evaluating the safety of pharmaceutical drugs and *(b)* the number of specialised staff working on drug safety in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 27 June 1990]:* Evaluation of safety is one integral component of the process of licensing medicinal products and monitoring them after marketing. This evaluation is carried out by expert toxicologists, pharmacists and physicians within the Medicines Control Agency (MCA) who are further advised by a number of expert committees. Separate costings are not available in the form requested. The MCA has recently been reorganised into a number of specialised businesses. The pharmacovigilance unit has responsibility for monitoring adverse reactions to drugs and there are currently 27 staff employed on this work.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what data the Medicines Commission and the Committee on Safety of Medicines rely for their assessment of a drug's safety before recommending a product licence.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 27 June 1990]:* Every product licence application is considered individually and must satisfy the licensing authority as to safety, quality and efficacy before a licence can be granted. The EC publication "The Rules Governing Medicinal Products in the EC" volumes I-V and the Department of Health's publication, "Guidance Notes on Applications for Product Licences" (Revised MAL 2) provide comprehensive guidance on requirements for safety data. Copies will be placed in the Library shortly.

WALES

Andrew Jones

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what were the extra costs of keeping Andrew Jones in Whitchurch hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Arrangements for the care of Mr. Jones are a matter for South Glamorgan health authority. However, I am told that some £33,000 a year has been allocated to the ward on which Mr. Jones is accommodated to improve the overall level of care of patients, including Mr. Jones.

Civil Servants (Workplaces)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessments under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations have been undertaken at workplaces used by civil servants in his Department.

Mr. David Hunt: Each division of the Welsh Office has assessed the risk to the health of staff arising from hazardous substances in the workplace and the action needed to comply with the regulations. Similar information has also been obtained from contractors using buildings occupied by the Department's staff.

Perinatal and Paediatric Pathologists

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which of the regional health authorities in Wales have appointed a perinatal or paediatric pathologist.

Mr. Grist: There is one consultant paediatrician in South Glamorgan health authority who has an interest in pathology.

Mental Illness

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total cost to his Department of the recent study undertaken by the university of Manchester on matters relating to the development of the all-Wales strategy for mental illness.

Mr. Ian Grist: It was £24,108·45.

NHS Reform

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all working papers, implementation documents, departmental circulars and other publications, whether in draft or final form, that have been issued to date by organisations other than his own Department, which have application in Wales in whole or in part arising from the National Health Service and Community Care Bill, "Working for Patients", "Caring for People" and associated Government initiatives.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave him on 28 June 1990.

DHAs (Capital Assets)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of any income realised by the sale of any capital assets it is currently his policy to allow any district health authority in Wales to use in respect of revenue expenditure *(a)* in the financial year in which the sale occurs and *(b)* in any subsequent financial year.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave him on 18 April which set out the virement limits applying to transfers of funds by health authorities between their revenue and capital cash limits. In the event that an authority wishes to exceed its virement limits, it must seek Welsh Office approval and agreement is subject to the authority's excess requirements being contained within the all-Wales virement limits. Receipts from the sale of capital assets form part of an authority's capital allocation and authorities may therefore vire such receipts to revenue in accordance with these arrangements.

Authorities also have a degree of flexibility to carry forward revenue and capital funds into a subsequent financial year. Each may carry forward 1 per cent. of its final net revenue cash limit and up to 10 per cent. of its final capital cash limit. In planning to carry forward funds, an authority may also seek the help of other authorities by entering into brokerage arrangements. In such cases the authority will lend the funds it wishes to carry forward, on the understanding that the loan will be repaid in the next or a subsequent financial year.

Singleton Hospital

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if the review of the operation of the minor casualty unit at Singleton hospital has been completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Officials are currently considering additional information recently provided by West Glamorgan health authority and Swansea and Lliw Valley community health council. I will announce the results of the review as soon as all the relevant factors have been examined.

Algae

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the location of blue-green algae reported on four public supply reservoirs in Wales; what is the scientific description of such algae; and what assessment he has made of its potential effect if ingested by humans.

Mr. Grist: The four public supply reservoirs where blue-green algae have been detected are:

Reservoir	*Type of algae*
Dolwen, Clwyd	Microcystis
Plas Uchaf, Clwyd	Anabaena, Microcystis
Cefni, Anglesey, Gwynedd	Anabaena
Llandegfedd, Gwent	Aphanizomenon, Anabaena

Algae have also been found at four locations not used for public supply: Llyn Coron reservoir on Anglesey (anabaena detected), Henson hospital lake in Mid Glamorgan (anabaena, microcystis and aphanizomenon), Talley lake in Dyfed (gleostrichia and microcystis) and Eglwys Nunydd, West Glamorgan (aphanizomenon).

Blue-green algae (Myxophyta or Cynanophyta) are a large and diverse group of micro-organisms. Their basic structure and genetic organisation are bacterial in nature, but like green plants, they are able to produce carbohydrates by photosynthesis. The coloration is derived from the blue and green pigments used in photosynthesis. Unlike most plants, many blue-green algae do not need nitrogenous nutrients, having the ability to fix atmospheric nitrogen. Some, but by no means all, blue-green algae are toxic; several species which commonly occur in the aquatic environment can produce toxins.

Toxic algae can result in illnesses, including skin rashes, eye irritation, vomiting, diarrhoea, fever and pains in muscles and joints, in some recreational users of water who swallow or swim through the algal scums. There have been no reports of long-term effects or deaths in humans, but in some cases the illnesses were severe.

There is no evidence of illness resulting from drinking treated water supplied from the reservoirs affected by blue-green algae. In the four public supply reservoirs listed above where the algae have been detected, the algal scums have been limited to small areas on the water surface and have not adversely affected the water abstracted from deeper in the reservoirs for the purpose of water supply.

Furthermore, the normal processes of water treatment used are effective in removing algae from abstracted water or any organic compounds associated with the algal blooms.

SCOTLAND

National Health Service Reform

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the hospitals that have expressed an interest in obtaining self-governing status.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Expressions of interest have been received in respect of hospitals at Forfar, the Royal Scottish national hospital at Larbert, the unit at the Foresterhill site in Aberdeen comprising the royal infirmary, maternity hospital and children's hospital, and the South Ayrshire unit comprising the hospitals at Ayr and Ballochmyle.

General Practitioner Budgets

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of general practitioner practices eligible for budget holding, the number which have applied, the health boards in which they are situated and the names of each practice.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) on 20 June, *Official Report*, column 622.

Scottish Constituencies

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current average number of voters in a Scottish constituency; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The average number of voters in a constituency in Scotland on publication of the 1990 electoral registers in February was 54,677.

National Stadium

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made towards the construction of a national stadium for Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 28 June 1990]:* It is for Scottish sports bodies, rather than the Government, to decide what action is required to provide better sports facilities.

Nurses

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take steps to ensure that no newly qualified nurse in Scotland is unable to find a job.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 28 June 1990]:* While most newly qualified nurses find employment on completion of their training, it is impossible to guarantee the employment of all such nurses and students are made aware of this when they enrol. The number of nurses qualifying each year will seldom, if ever, match the number of posts immediately available in the national health service, but it should be noted that the number of qualified nurses employed in the national health service in Scotland has increased by 34·5 per cent. between 1979 and 1989. In addition, there are a growing number of employment opportunities for nurses elsewhere in both the public and private sectors.

SOCIAL SECURITY

National Insurance

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people would be affected by the removal of the upper earnings limit for national insurance contributions.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: If the upper earnings limit for employees' national insurance contributions were removed, it is currently estimated that about 3·3 million people would pay more contributions. If the corresponding upper profits limit for self-employed people were also removed, it is estimated that about another 0·5 million people would pay more contributions.

Industrial Deafness

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the number of people affected by regulation 25, industrial deafness, ruled ultra vires by the Court of Appeal.

Mr. Scott: Since October 1974 when occupational deafness was added to the list of prescribed diseases, we

estimate that about 25,000 claims for disablement benefit have failed to satisfy the requirements of regulation 25 of the Industrial Injuries (Prescribed Diseases) Regulation 1985 or similar preceding provisions. They were not therefore referred for audiometric testing to establish whether they satisfied the necessary level of hearing loss.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on his Department's estimate of the cost of implementing the Court of Appeal ruling on October 1989 regarding regulation 25—industrial deafness prescribed diseases.

Mr. Scott: As a result of the Court of Appeal judgment of 26 October 1989 in the case of McKiernon, the law on occupational deafness reflects neither this Government's intentions nor those of any previous Government. The original proposals for a scheme for paying disablement benefit for occupational deafness were made by the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council (IIAC) in 1973. Claims were first invited in October 1974 and awards were made from February 1975. The provisions included a rule that a claim had to be made within one year of leaving the relevant occupation. The IIAC considered this to be a pre-requisite of a provision for those made occupationally deaf. Subsequently, in 1983, this restriction was eased so that a claim could be made within five years of leaving a relevant occupation. (Regulation 25 of the Industrial Injuries Prescribed Diseases Regulations 1985). The court's judgment means that this regulation and regulations 6(2) (c) and 36 of the same regulations and preceding provisions are considered to be ultra vires because they do not specifically modify section 165(A) of the 1975 Social Security Act which deals with time limits for claiming social security benefits generally. If we did not seek to validate these provisions to correct this technical legal defect and restore the policy intention of successive Governments, past claims decided under these rules would need to be reviewed, and future claims decided on the basis of the Court of Appeal judgment. The benefit costs could exceed £100 million and there would be substantial administrative costs in reviewing past cases.

DEFENCE

Electronic Cockpit Displays

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what research has been carried out by his Department on the effects of the introduction of high technology electronic cockpit displays on RAF aircrew standards of visual lookout in combat aircraft.

Mr. Neubert: Before any new electronic displays are introduced into RAF combat aircraft, an extensive and rigorous research and development programme is undertaken at the Royal Aerospace Establishment and in British industry. The primary objectives are to present information to the pilot in a clear and unambiguous manner to meet the requirements of the mission, and to reduce pilot workload. Particular emphasis has been placed on developing new cockpit technologies that aid the pilot's lookout.

Before an aircraft is accepted into RAF service, the cockpit layout and its displays are formally assessed by test aircrew for suitability for the mission, and compatibility with the visual flying task.

Military Aircraft (Jamming Equipment)

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the regulations governing the operation of radar or radio jamming equipment by military aircraft while operating inside civil airport control zones.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Military aircraft are prohibited from using radio or radar jamming techniques while operating inside civil airport control zones.

Hydrazine Vapour

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the maximum safe exposure limits to hydrazine vapour for Royal Air Force personnel, expressed in parts per million.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Were the RAF to use hydrazine, which at present it does not, it would follow Health and Safety Executive recommendations; currently the executive recommends that a limit of 0·1 parts per million is used as a guidance for the control of exposure to inhalation of hydrazine vapour.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what training in the hazards of hydrazine, the cleaning up of hydrazine spills and the treatment of personnel exposed to hydrazine vapour is given to fire service and rescue personnel (1) at military emergency diversion aerodromes in the United Kingdom and (2) at other military airfields in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Neubert: Hydrazine is not used within the RAF and there are no United States aircraft currently based in the United Kingdom in which it is employed. However, instructions for the handling of hydrazine, and responding to accidents in which it is present, are set out in standing Air Force department fire service regulations and in engineering safety instructions issued to all operational RAF airfields. Basic training courses include instruction in hazardous substances, including hydrazine, and regular training is carried out at RAF airfields where NATO aircraft which use hydrazine may visit.

Galloway Training Area

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many training man-days were carried out in the Galloway training area in 1989; and if he will list the dates on which the training area was in use.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In 1989, personnel from Regular and Territorial Army units conducted 6,828 man-days of training in the Galloway forest area. Military use took place on the following dates:

27 and 29 January
25 and 26 February
21 March to 2 April
8 April
20 and 21 May
23 to 25 June
7 to 9 July
3 to 5 August
11 to 24 September
9 to 15 October
20 to 23 October
4 and 5 November

Foreign War Medals

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the countries which have issued foreign war medals to British service men or ex-service men.

Mr. Neubert: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces will write to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make representations to the Governments in Greece, Norway, Holland and France on the issue of war medals to British service men and ex-service men.

Mr. Neubert: It would not be appropriate to make representations to the Governments of Greece, Norway, Holland and France for the issue of war medals to British service men and ex-service men.

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action he has taken to obtain the issue of Soviet war medals to British service men and ex-service men.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: During his visit to the Soviet Union earlier this year, my right hon. Friend discussed with the Soviet Defence Minister the possibility of a further issue by the Soviets of the medal struck by them in 1985 to mark the 40th anniversary of the end of the war. As a result of these discussions, the Soviet authorities have agreed to make a further 400 medals available.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the oral reply to the hon. Member for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce), 15 May, *Official Report*, column 733, which other nations are trying to develop nuclear capability; and what verification problems there are outstanding in threshold nuclear weapons states.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) on 8 June 1990, *Official Report*, column *738*.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is NATO's policy on seeking full or partial reductions in the number of land-based, short-range nuclear weapons in the forthcoming arms negotiations on those weapons.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Arms control remains an integral part of alliance security policy; NATO has therefore made clear that it endorses the United States intention to begin negotiations with the Soviet Union on short-range nuclear forces after the conclusion of a treaty limiting conventional forces in Europe.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's latest assessment as to when NATO's existing short-range, land-based nuclear weapons will become unserviceable and obsolete.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: On current estimates it is believed that the Lance missile will be unsustainable much beyond the mid-1990s. Our dual capable artillery guns will be modernised with the introduction of the AS90 self-propelled 155 mm howitzer. However, the serviceability of the United States-owned nuclear warheads and shells for use with these systems is a matter for the United States Government.

Main Battle Tank

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether the submissions for the M1 Abrams main battle tank fully satisfy the requirements, as defined in the draft memorandum of understanding between the United Kingdom and United States Governments, in so far as existing and proposed projectiles for its main armament are concerned;

(2) what steps have been taken to ensure that the submissions relating to the M1 Abrams main battle tank fully satisfy its requirements for structural armour.

Mr Alan Clark: The information sought on armour and main armament ammunition is sufficiently comprehensive fully to satisfy our requirements for a proper evaluation of the M1 Abrams MBT against the staff requirement for Chieftain replacement.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps have been taken to ensure that the information made available to his Department, in respect of the reliability of the M1A2 Abrams, Leclerc and Leopard 2 main battle tanks, is entirely comparable with that which has been required from Vickers Defence Systems in respect of Challenger 2.

Mr. Alan Clark: I am satisfied that the information being made available to my Department in respect of the reliability of the overseas contenders for Chieftain Replacement will be entirely comparable with that which has been required from Vickers Defence Systems in respect of Challenger 2.

Defence Equipment Holdings

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is his Department's policy towards the annual provision of figures for United Kingdom defence equipment holdings, along the lines of those published in "Conventional Forces in Europe: The Facts";

(2) whether his Department will publish the latest figures, pursuant to those published in 1988 in "Conventional Forces in Europe: The Facts" for United Kingdom defence equipment holdings.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) on 15 March, at column *328*. There are no plans to publish updated figures for other categories covered in "The Facts", beyond the information already provided in the "Annual Statement on the Defence Estimates".

Missiles

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether the United States Government have agreed to assign any sea-launched cruise missiles to NATO *(a)* in peacetime and *(b)* in time of crisis;

(2) whether NATO has any plans to integrate United States sea-launched cruise missiles into its targeting plans;

(3) whether NATO has approved a memorandum of agreement implementing the planning process for the Tomahawk land-attack missile/nuclear in support of the NATO alliance.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave on 22 June at column *723*.

Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's assessment as to the efficacy of the non-proliferation treaty since it came into effect.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The non-proliferation treaty is the world's most widely adhered-to arms control treaty, to which three out of the five declared nuclear weapon states are parties. Since 1968, when the treaty was open to signature, no new country has declared itself a nuclear weapon state, and the treaty has helped to ensure that proliferation has not gained respectability.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on pursuing the extension of the non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United Kingdom attaches great importance to the widest possible adherence to the non-proliferation treaty, and regularly raises the question of accession to the NPT with non-parties at various levels.

Forces in Europe

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is his Department's latest assessment of the balance of total ground forces in the central area of Europe; and how many of the Warsaw pact ground forces are those of the Soviet Union;

(2) how many NATO ground forces are currently stationed in the central area of Europe apart from those belonging to the United States of America.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Taking the "central area" as that covered by the limits on United States and Soviet stationed manpower, as shown in figure 1 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1990", we estimate the current balance of ground forces in the central area to be approximately 1·3:1 in favour of the Warsaw pact. Soviet ground forces in this area are currently some 500,000 strong out of a Warsaw pact total of just over 1 million. NATO forces in the same area, apart from the United States, total some 600,000.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to figure 1, page 8, of "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1990", what is his Department's assessment of the balance of manpower between NATO and the Warsaw pact in the central area in the aftermath of the limits imposed by the conventional forces in Europe treaty.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It has been agreed that United States and Soviet stationed forces in the central area should not in future exceed 195,000 each. It is not yet possible to estimate what the implications for force levels may be of equipment reductions which may be required by a CFE treaty or other national plans.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to figure 1, page 8, of "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1990", how many of the 4 million total armed forces of the Warsaw pact belong to countries other than the Soviet Union.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Just a quarter (1,080,000) of the 4 million Warsaw pact armed forces in the Atlantic to the Urals zone belong to non-Soviet Warsaw pact countries.

Soviet Ballistic Missiles

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what implications the deployment of additional Soviet ballistic missile defences, beyond those permitted under the terms of the anti-ballistic missile treaty, would have for the effectiveness of the United Kingdom's strategic nuclear deterrent.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Such a question covers a whole range of possibilities. However, we remain confident that our Polaris force and its successor, Trident, will provide an effective deterrent for the foreseeable future.

Trident

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the statement in paragraph 124, page 14, of "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1990", relating to Trident, what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on reductions in either the number of Trident missiles or the number of Trident warheads within the context of multilateral arms negotiations.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The position remains as set out in the paragraph referred to.

United States Strategic Defences

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's latest assessment of the United States commitment to deploy strategic defences when they are ready.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Government fully support the United States strategic defence initiative (SDI) research programme, which is permitted under the anti-ballistic missile treaty. As the Prime Minister and President Reagan agreed at Camp David in December 1984, SDI-related deployment would, in view of treaty obligations, have to be a matter for negotiation. This remains the position.

Explosion (Deal)

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he now proposes to make available the conclusions of the inquiry into the explosion at Deal on 22 September 1989; and what is the reason for the delay.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As I stated in my reply to the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) on 23 April 1990 (column 76), a summary of the principal findings of the board of inquiry will be made available to the House of Commons Defence Select Committee when my right hon. Friend has completed his deliberations on these.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

C. J. How

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry for what periods from January 1982 onwards his Department had direct responsibility for the investment business of the company C. J. How, and any related company.

Mr. Redwood: Under the Prevention of Fraud (Investments) Act 1958, which was repealed on 29 April

1988, the Department was responsible for issuing licences to dealers in securities except where they were members of a recognised association of dealers. The Department did not issue a licence to either C. J. How or C. J. How International.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry for what periods from January 1982 onwards responsibility for the investment business of the company C. J. How or any related company was vested in *(a)* the National Association of Security Dealers and Investment Managers, *(b)* the Securities and Investments Board and *(c)* the Financial Intermediaries, Managers and Brokers Regulatory Organisation.

Mr. Redwood: C. J. How was a member of NASDIM, which on 9 July 1986 became FIMBRA, from 1982 until his membership was terminated in January 1988. Under the Financial Services Act 1986, the main provisions of which came into force on 29 April 1988, any firm wishing to carry on investment business has to be authorised to do so: the Securities and Investments Board is responsible for investigating and, if appropriate, dealing with cases of unauthorised business.

Credit (Availability)

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will take steps to protect people on low incomes from the problems associated with easily available credit.

Mr. Forth: Major safeguards are already provided for borrowers by existing legislation under which consumers must be informed about the terms of credit agreements before they enter into them. However, the Government have made known their concern about some marketing practices, which suggest among other things that credit is more readily available than it is. We are keeping the situation under review and hope that these problems will be addressed in the code of practice being prepared by the banks and building societies following the report of the committee on banking services law and practice.

Ozone-depleting Chemicals

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has on the number of tonnes of ozone-depleting chemicals produced in each of the last five years.

Mr. Forth: My Department receives data from the European Commission on the production within the Community of various of the substances controlled under the Montreal protocol. The two United Kingdom manufacturers of these substances copy the data they supply to the Commission to my Department and the Department of the Environment on a commercially confidential basis.

My officials have recently received industry data showing that total production of methyl chloroform (1, 1, 1-Trichloroethane) in the main industrialised regions (Western Europe, United States of America, and Japan) for the years 1985-89 was (in '000 tonnes):

	Thousand tonnes
1985	588
1986	609
1987	627
1988	678
1989	718

My Department has no data on the production of HCFCs, or any other ozone-depleting substances.

Recycling

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on grants and loans available for small businesses to invest in plant and machinery for the compaction of metal cans for recycling.

Mr. Forth: Under the enterprise initiative, the Department currently offers a number of schemes which are available to small businesses, including those engaged in recycling. In particular, regional enterprise grants are available in the development areas to help small firms invest and innovate.

Limited Liability Status

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he proposes to review the grounds on which limited liability status can be granted.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 19 June 1990]:* My right hon. Friend has no present plans to do so.

Cayzer Family

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received about the implications for investor protection legislation of a redemption reserve held by British and Commonwealth to provide for payments to the Cayzer family.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* None.

Companies Act Investigations

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in which cases Spicer and Oppenheim have supplied inspectors in investigations called for by his Department under the Companies Act.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 27 June 1990]:* None.

Hamilton House Associates

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on what date, and through which channel, his Department first became aware of problems with the financial services from Hamilton House Associates.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 27 June 1990]:* An allegation was received by the Department in May 1987 about the conduct of one of the directors of Hamilton House Associates Ltd., in the context of a separate business not authorised under the Prevention of Fraud (Investments) Act 1958. The Department concluded that there were no grounds for action under the Act. FIMBRA was also notified.

ENERGY

Hinkley Point C

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will ensure that the views of the House are taken into account before any decisions are made on the issues raised in the report of the Hinkley Point C public inquiry.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 27 June.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects the inspector's report into the Hinkley Point C pressurised water reactor proposal to be completed.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to the hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) on 14 June 1990 at column *287*.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the cost to date incurred by his Department for submitting evidence to the Hinkley Point C public inquiry.

Mr. Baldry: The expenses incurred by the official witnesses and their supporting teams of civil servants in attending the inquiry were about £5,300.

Electricity Generating Capacity

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will call for a report on the proposed mothballing of 1,000 MW of electricity generating capacity by National Power at Pembroke and West Thurrock power stations.

Mr. Baldry: This is a commercial matter for National Power.

Energy Conservation

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if, further to his reply of 22 June, *Official Report*, column *719*, to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan, he will list all measures taken so far by the Energy Efficiency Office for the promotion of improvements in energy conservation.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Since the Energy Efficiency Office was established in 1983, it has offered a substantial range of programmes and initiatives to encourage consumers to improve their energy efficiency.

Initially, the EEO aimed to develop general awareness of the value of energy efficiency through extensive publicity campaigns, particularly during energy efficiency year (1986), and through several specific programmes, among which were:

—the energy efficiency survey scheme for grants towards the cost of independent energy survey;

—the energy efficiency research development and demonstration programmes to help develop and disseminate new energy efficient technology;

—the monitoring and targeting programme to develop energy management systems for 40 sectors of industry;

—support for the energy management movement throughout the United Kingdom.

The EEO's current main programmes are as follows:

—the best practice programme to give independent and authoritative information and advice backed by thorough technical research;

—an enhanced regional programme, stimulating the development and application of energy management skills and techniques;

—a campaign in the public sector with an objective of realising annual energy savings of 15 per cent. within five years;

—proposals (included in the Social Security Bill) for the home energy efficiency scheme to provide grants for basic insulation measures in low income households; this scheme will replace and augment the existing community insulation programme;

—the promotion of combined heat and power.

Among other initiatives, the EEO encourages the development of energy studies in schools, commercially based energy labelling schemes for homes, and standards for energy-consuming appliances. The EEO also publishes an extensive range of technical and non-technical information and guidance.

Elections

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list in descending order information available to him on the percentage of the popular vote received by the main governing party on the latest free elections held in each of the NATO and Warsaw pact countries.

Mr. Waldegrave: The figures are as follows:

	Per cent.
NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANISATION (NATO)	
United States (1988)	
President Bush as Republican presidential candidate	53
Portugal (1987)	
Social Democrats	50·15
Greece (1990)	
New Democracy Party	46·91
Federal Republic of Germany (1987)	
CDU/CSU	44·3
Canada (1988)	
Progressive Conservative Party	43
United Kingdom (1987)	
Conservative Party	42·3
Spain (1989)	
Socialist Party	39·50
France (1988)	
Socialist Party (National Assembly elections)	37·5
Turkey (1987)	
Motherland Party (ANAP)	36·3
Netherlands (1989)	
Governing coalition:	
Christian Democratic Alliance	35·3
Labour Party	31·9
Italy (1987)	
Christian Democrats (largest party in coalition)	34·3
Luxembourg (1989)	
Governing coalition:	
Christian Social Party	32·67
Socialists	26·47
Belgium (1987)	
Governing coalition (with a third smaller party)	
Christian Social Party	27·5
Socialist Party	30·6

	Per cent.
Norway (1989)	
Conservative Party (minority coalition)	22·2
Denmark (1988)	
Conservative People's Party (minority coalition)	19·3
Iceland (1987)	
Progressive Party (leading party in coalition)	18·9
WARSAW PACT	
Romania	
National Salvation Front	66
Poland	
Solidarity (Senate elections)	65
Bulgaria	
Bulgarian Socialist Party	53
Czechoslovakia	
Czech governing party—Civic Forum	
Slovak governing party—Public Against Violence	51 33
German Democratic Republic	
Christian Democratic Union	41
Hungary	
Democratic Forum (first round)[1]	25

[1] No percentage of the popular vote is available for the second round, in which the Democratic Forum obtained 43 per cent. of the seats allocated in that round.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the holding of a special conference of states party to the chemical weapons convention at the end of the eighth year after the convention's entry into force.

Mr. Waldegrave: We support the holding of review conferences after a chemical weapons convention has entered into force. Such review meetings of states parties are provided for in the current draft of the convention. We should have no objection to such a meeting taking place at the end of the eighth year. The procedural details for review conferences have yet to be elaborated.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what effect the amendments to the chemical weapons convention draft treaty, proposed in the bilateral chemical weapons agreement by the USSR and United States of America, would have on the existing unreserved commitment of any signatory not to retain any chemical weapons.

Mr. Waldegrave: As currently drafted, the chemical weapons convention provides for a transition period of 10 years during which all chemical weapon stocks possessed by states parties will be destroyed. The proposals contained in the US-Soviet joint statement also envisage destruction of all chemical weapon stockpiles in this time frame, provided final destruction is agreed at a review conference at the end of the eighth year after the treaty's entry into force.

Defence Equipment Holdings

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to page 3 of the FCO/NATO publication "Conventional Forces in Europe: The Facts", whether Her Majesty's Government will provide figures for United Kingdom defence equipment holdings on a regular basis in the future.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my answer in the House of 8 January. The information that the United Kingdom will provide on a regular basis under a CFE treaty will be made available to Parliament. Additional information may be found in the annual Defence White Paper.

Mr. Garry Maher

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Spanish authorities to ensure that the public prosecutor on Tenerife holds the criminal investigation proceedings into the death on 24 February 1985 of Mr. Garry Maher without further delay.

Mr. Sainsbury: This is a tragic case, but it would be inappropriate for us to try to influence Spanish judicial procedures. It is for the Spanish authorities alone to decide when they are ready to hold criminal investigation proceedings.

Burma

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received on the status of Aung San Suu Kyi, the detained leader of the National League for Democracy in Burma; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: It has been alleged that Aung San Suu Kyi owes allegiance to a foreign power. In fact, she is a citizen of Burma and has not acquired British citizenship. She is therefore not entitled to the rights and privileges of a British citizen, nor does her marriage to a British citizen of itself confer such rights and privileges on her. She is neither a Commonwealth citizen nor a citizen of a member state of the European Community. As with other aliens in her category under United Kingdom law, she is under a number of disabilities by comparison with British citizens. Most importantly:

(a) she is not entitled to vote in parliamentary or local elections;
(b) she has no right of abode in the United Kingdom and, accordingly, requires leave to enter the United Kingdom and is liable to deportation from the United Kingdom;
(c) she is not eligible for a British passport or for British diplomatic or consular protection overseas;
(d) she is subject to restrictions in certain fields, for example, employment under the Crown.

Aung San Suu Kyi may now apply for British citizenship, on account of her marriage, only by naturalisation under section 6(2) of the British Nationality Act 1981, which is a matter within the discretion of the Home Secretary. She has no right to British citizenship by virtue of her marriage to Dr. Aris, and cannot therefore be said to be entitled to the rights and privileges of a British citizen in the sense of possessing a right to citizenship.

Aung San Suu Kyi's marriage to a British citizen does not in itself entitle her to any social security benefits.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Animal Feed

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food under what circumstances waste products originating from a particular species may be fed back to that species; under what circumstances waste products may be used as feed for species other than that from which the waste originates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Untreated slaughterhouse waste is not fed to animals. Renderers who process animal protein for use in animal feedingstuffs are subject to the requirements of the Processed Animal Protein Order 1989 which requires registration with my Department and microbiological testing. Waste food of animal origin or waste food that has been in contact with material of animal origin must be processed in accordance with the Diseases of Animals (Waste Food) Order 1973 (as amended) before it can be fed to animals. The Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (No. 2) Order 1989 prohibits feeding to ruminant animals of protein material derived from ruminants.

Veterinary Product Licensing

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he intends to review the system of veterinary product licensing in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean: I have no plans to do so.

Live Animal Exports

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the animal welfare implications of the trade in live exports.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Minister gave to the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) on 28 June, *Official Report*, column *479*.

North-east Drift Net Fishery

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the reasons for the delay in completion by his scientists of their analysis of the data which have been collected for the review of the north-east drift net fishery.

Mr. Maclean: I refer my right hon. Friend to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Scottish Office on 18 June, *Official Report*, column *454*. Scientists from both the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland and my Department have had a great deal of data to collate and analyse on salmon fishing in the areas of England and Scotland covered by this review. The Salmon Act 1986 requires Ministers to report to Parliament as soon as practicable after November of last year. We shall do so.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 2 July 1990

HOME DEPARTMENT

Football Licensing Authority

86. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the recruitment procedure to be followed for the chief executive and other staff of the Football Licensing Authority.

Mr Waddington: This will be a matter for the Football Licensing Authority but we expect that the chief executive and other executive staff will be seconded from the civil service, and that other staff will be recruited by the authority locally or by competition as appropriate.

Women Prisoners

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many women currently held at Her Majesty's pleasure are allowed to keep their children with them during their detention.

Mr. Mellor: There are no women detained during Her Majesty's pleasure, under section 53(1) of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933, or serving life sentences, who currently have their children with them in prison. If the mother of a baby receives a custodial sentence of any length, she may apply to be admitted with her child to a prison mother and baby unit. Approval of such an application depends upon there being an available place and upon the mother's admission being considered to be in the best interests of the child. A child is not normally allowed to remain with its mother in prison beyond the age of 18 months.

Blundeston Prison, Suffolk

Mr David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about staffing levels and industrial relations at Blundeston prison, Suffolk in the light of the present dispute in the prison service.

Mr. Mellor: At present there are 240·5 staff in post at Her Majesty's prison Blundeston. Of these, 149 are officers, including principal and senior officers, compared with the target officer in post figure set for 31 March 1991 of 148.

The Prison Officers Association has not declared a dispute at the prison.

Prison officers voted in June to take national industrial action. A majority of POA members at Blundeston voted in favour of national industrial action.

West Yorkshire Police

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of West Yorkshire on the full cost of the police operation at Millfield quarry lagoon, Hurbury, Wakefield on Sunday 17 June.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the chief constable of West Yorkshire police that the full additional cost of the police operation at Hurbury was £10,073.

Correspondence

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to reply to the letter dated 24 May from the hon. Member for South Hams concerning the transfer to Dartmoor prison for Mr. Willcox, currently a prison officer at Ford open prison, west Sussex.

Mr. Mellor: I have written to my hon. Friend today.

Offences

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any proposals to introduce legislation to make any class of person responsible in law for an offence of which he had no prior knowledge.

Mr. Waddington: The criminal law contains a range of provisions establishing liability, from knowing of and intending to commit an offence, to offences of strict liability not requiring conscious knowledge, for instance those involving motor vehicle defects. If the hon. Gentleman has a particular legislative proposal in mind perhaps he would let me know of his precise concern.

TVS Entertainment Ltd.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to whether he intends to investigate allegations of forged documents relating to TVS Entertainment Ltd.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis this matter is now the subject of a police investigation.

Football Match Tickets (Sales)

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when his Department intends to implement the recommendation contained in Lord Justice Taylor's final report into the Hillsborough disaster that it should be made an offence to sell tickets on the day of a football match without authority from the home club to do so; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We hope to reach a conclusion shortly on whether to create such an offence.

Documents

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what criteria he uses when deciding which documents to pass on to the Public Record Office.

Mr. Waddington: The Department complies with the guidelines issued by the Public Record Office on the

selection of documents for permanent preservation. Decisions on which documents are transferred to the Public Record Office for this purpose are taken in consultation with Public Record Office inspecting officers.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what system he employs to classify, log and otherwise record each document generated by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: Documents originating from the Home Office are recorded on official files which are indexed according to standard subject headings.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of, and how many documents in 1989 he estimates were *(a)* passed on to the Public Record Office intact, *(b)* passed on to the Public Record Office in censored form, *(c)* retained by his Department in full, *(d)* retained by his Department in part, *(e)* destroyed, *(f)* otherwise disposed of and *(g)* otherwise unaccounted for.

Mr. Waddington: No document falls due for selection and transfer to the Public Record Office until it is at least 30 years old. A document's suitability for permanent preservation under the terms of the Public Records Act 1958 will be reviewed during that period. The Act does not require statistics to be kept in the form requested and to do so would inevitably incur disproportionate cost. However, in order to comply with its duties under the Act, the Department ensures that all documentary records are properly preserved with a view to possible transfer to the Public Record Office and eventual release to the public. The general criteria under which the Department may retain documents over 30 years old are set out in section 3(4) of the Public Records Act.

Trafalgar Square (Incidents)

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department pursuant to his answer of 25 June, *Official Report*, column *35*, if he is able to provide the details of age, sex, offence, last known address and prison or place of confinement of those people who were remanded and are still remaining in custody following the incidents in Trafalgar square on 31 March.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Birmingham Six

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many officers of the Devon and Cornwall police are working on the inquiry into the Birmingham pub-bombing cases.

Mr. Waddington: I understand from the chief constable of the Devon and Cornwall Constabulary that 45 police officers from that force are currently engaged in carrying out inquiries into various matters which have been raised about the safety of the convictions of the Birmingham Six.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the trial Judge, Lord Bridge, has been consulted either by his Department or by any of the various inquiries since 1986 into the safety of the Birmingham pub-bombing convictions.

Mr. Waddington: No.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the terms of reference of the inquiry by the Devon and Cornwall police into the Birmingham pub-bombing convictions; and if they have been amended since the inquiry was first commissioned.

Mr. Waddington: In March 1990, I asked the chief constable of the West Midlands police for a report on a number of matters arising out of representations made by the solicitor acting on behalf of the Birmingham Six. Since then, I have asked the chief constable for a report on a number of further matters which have been raised with him about the safety of the convictions of the Birmingham Six. The chief constable has asked the Devon and Cornwall constabulary to undertake inquiries on my behalf.

Animal Experiments

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what steps the Home Office has taken to satisfy itself that the named day-to-day care person, with a statutory responsibility under the Animal (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, within the National Institute for Medical Research, carried out his or her duties to the full, relating to Professor Feldberg's experiments;

(2) what steps the Home Office has taken to satisfy itself that the named veterinarian, with a statutory responsibility under the Animal (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, within the National Institute for Medical Research, carried out his or her duties to the full relating to Professor Feldberg's experiments.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It would not be right to make any comment on matters such as these while the Medical Research Council is conducting an inquiry into the circumstances which gave rise to the allegations about the work carried out by Professor Feldberg.

Homosexuals

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on Government policy on the treatment of lesbians and gay men under the law.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) on 1 February 1990 at columns *304-6*, and to my letter to him of 1 June 1990, a copy of which is in the Library.

"The Sentence of the Court"

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he proposes to publish a new edition of the handbook, "The Sentence of the Court".

Mr. Waddington: I am glad to say that a new edition is published today and is being distributed to all judges and magistrates. I am arranging for copies to be placed in the Library.

Animal Procedures Committee

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he intends to announce any further appointments to the Animal Procedures Committee.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I am pleased to be able to announce the appointment to the Animal Procedures Committee of Professor Margaret Brazier, of the department of law, university of Manchester and Professor Onora O'Neill, of the department of philosophy, university of Essex. I am grateful to Professor Brazier and Professor O'Neill for agreeing to serve on this committee.

Immigration

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many outstanding applications for *(a)* registration and *(b)* naturalisation are awaiting decision at the latest available date and at each quarter since 31 December 1987; what is the average time taken from receipt of application to taking a decision on each application; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 26 June 1990]:* The available information about outstanding cases relates to applications in the nationality division caseworking groups and is in the table. In addition, on 31 December 1987, there were an estimated 210,000 applications in Lunar house that had not reached caseworking groups, and these were transferred to the nationality division over the course of the next 18 months.

Citizenship applications outstanding in caseworking groups

	Registration	*Naturalisation*	*Total*
December 1987	n/a	n/a	55,374
March 1988	45,723	28,674	74,397
June 1988	n/a	n/a	79,143
September 1988	n/a	n/a	95,971
December 1988	n/a	n/a	119,276
March 1989	84,438	41,154	125,592
June 1989	86,452	52,318	138,770
September 1989	70,858	63,877	134,735
December 1989	55,239	64,930	120,169
March 1990	38,832	65,050	103,882
May 1990	33,755	64,273	98,028

n/a = not available

The average processing times for cases completed in May 1990 was 24 months for registrations and 29 months for naturalisations. We aim to reduce these waiting times as soon as practicable.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Taxpayers

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people have been taken out of tax over the past 11 years; if he has any plans to take more people out of tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: If the 1978-79 income tax regime were reintroduced after indexation of thresholds to 1990-91 levels, the number of individual taxpayers would increase by a little under 2 million. Tax thresholds have been increased by almost 25 per cent. in real terms under this Government. We shall continue to review their levels in the future.

Taxation (Performers)

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) on what authority the Inland Revenue has decided to distinguish between established performers/artists who are being taxed under schedule D and new performers/artists who are to be taxed under schedule E;

(2) with whom the Inland Revenue has agreed a gradual transition to the schedule E treatment of performers.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 5 June 1990]:* The Inland Revenue has a duty to implement tax law. The change in the tax treatment of certain performers/artists is based on decisions made in the courts. The arrangements to put their tax treatment on to the correct basis over a transitional period were made by the Inland Revenue, with the approval of Treasury Ministers, under its powers for the general "care and management of the income tax in the Taxes Management Act 1970.

These arrangements have been discussed, over an extended period, with representatives of all sides of the theatre industry and take into account their concern that an abrupt change to schedule E for all those involved could be disruptive to the industry, and, in some cases, cause hardship.

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what relative consideration the Inland Revenue has given to the cases of Fall *v.* Hitchen and Davies *v.* Braithwaite, in deciding whether schedule E was the correct schedule of charge for income tax for performers and artists undertaking theatrical engagements;

(2) on what legal authority the Inland Revenue based its claim that generally performers and artists undertaking theatrical engagements under standard contracts are, in law, employees.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 5 June 1990]:* I understand that the Inland Revenue's view on the taxation position of theatrical performers working under standard contracts is based on legal advice they have received relating to the 1972 Fall *v* Hitchen High Court case, which indicated that a typical standard contract of engagement, based on terms agreed between Equity and theatre managements, was a contract of employment, and a number of subsequent Court decisions on the general issue of whether people are employees or self-employed. The Revenue has explained its views on these issues to the theatre industry on several occasions in the past.

In Fall *v* Hitchen the High Court considered, and distinguished, the earlier judgment in Davis *v* Braithwaite. I understand that the Revenue took both cases, and other relevant cases, fully into account in forming their views on the correct tax treatment of theatrical performers.

Manufacturing Investment

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what factors led to the revision of the figures for manufacturing investment in the north-east for the years 1979 to 1987 between the answer of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South of 6 June 1989, *Official Report*, column *70*, and his answer of 25 June 1990.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 28 June 1990]:* The figures have not been revised. As stated in these replies the information provided on 6 June 1989 was based on constant 1985 prices while that provided on 25 June was based on current prices. The earlier constant price figures used price indices which are applicable to manufacturing investment for the United Kingdom as a whole. The Central Statistical Office, which now has responsibility for the figures, considers these may be inappropriate for individual regions because of the different mix of industries and the possibility of differing prices and price movements in each. There are no regional price indices.

Natural Beauty Products, Bridgend

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his statement of 18 June, *Official Report*, columns *777-80*, if he will indicate by weight and volume the loaded capacity of the vehicles which arrived at the Natural Beauty Products in Bridgend on 2 February, and the assessment the value added tax official then made of the weight, and value, actual and auction, volume, of the finished goods, raw materials, factory equipment and office equipment which he intended to remove from the factory.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 28 June 1990]:* Customs and Excise had no responsibility for any vehicle that arrived at Natural Beauty Products in Bridgend on 24 February.

On 1 February, Customs instructed the bailiff to commence removal of the finished goods subject to distraint. Although a Ford Transit van and Ford Cargo 60 cwt. pantechnicon called to the premises, only the latter was used to remove the goods. On 2 February a Ford Cargo lorry and a furniture removal van arrived at the pemises but no goods were removed because of the prior appointment of an administrative receiver. On both these dates the provision of the transport was arranged by the bailiff.

Customs and Excise made no assessment of the weight of the goods subject to the levy. The total volume was estimated to require four 60 cwt. pantechnicons to complete the removal of all items subject to distraint.

The administrative receiver's estimate of the book value of the finished goods, raw materials, factory equipment and office equipment was £228,875. No deduction was made for possible tax liability and no account was taken of any other expenses or charges that may accrue on their disposal. The estimated auction value was £29,200.

HEALTH

Community Care

84. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consultation he has had regarding funding for care in the community in future years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have discussed all aspects of community care, including funding, with a wide range of interested organisations.

Wheelchairs

85. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans his Department has to consider how best to fund a scheme to look at the design and provision of wheelchairs for use on public transport services.

Mr. Dorrell: We have no plans to fund such a scheme. The accommodation of wheelchairs on public transport is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

National Assistance Act

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what representations he has received advocating the replacement of section 47 of the National Assistance Act 1948;

(2) what plans he has to reform section 47 of the National Assistance Act 1948.

Mr. Dorrell: Representations were received in the form of amendments to the National Health Service and Community Care Bill, and correspondence from Age Concern, (England).

We have no plans to reform section 47 but we shall be keeping the operation of these provisions under review as our new community care arrangements take effect.

HIV

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the total number of people who have been infected with HIV.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The latest estimate of the total number of people who have been infected with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) in England and Wales was published by the Public Health Laboratory Service in January 1990 as a supplement to the communicable disease report. In this report, "Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome in England and Wales to end 1993" (the Day report), it was estimated that there were between 12,250 and 26,400 HIV-infected people in England and Wales at the end of 1988.

A separate group is currently preparing new estimates of short-term predictions of HIV incidence and prevalence estimates of the numbers of AIDS cases in Scotland as a revision of the earlier report of national working party on health service implications of HIV infection (the Tayler report). Copies of both the Day and Tayler reports are available in the Library.

Reported incidence in Northern Ireland is too low to make accurate estimates of the likely spread of HIV infection.

Results from the HIV prevalence monitoring programme using the unlinked anonymous technique will help to reduce uncertainty in these estimates.

Dental Laboratories

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the proportion of the total fees paid to dentists under the national health service which is

attributable to dental laboratory costs; and what arrangements exist to ensure that such proportion is duly paid to the laboratories.

Mr. Dorrell: In the current scale of fees for national health service dental treatment which came into effect on 1 October 1989, approximately 18 per cent. of the total fees to be paid to dentists is attributable to dental laboratory costs. The price which individual dentists pay for laboratory-made dental appliances is, however, entirely a private arrangement between the dentist and the laboratory concerned.

GPs (Home Visits)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to introduce a charge for general practitioner home visits.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No.

Child Migrants Trust

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assistance his Department gives to the Child Migrants Trust; and if he will make a statement regarding future developments.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave him on 27 June at column *249*.

Family Practitioner Committees

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which officials at national, regional or local level are responsible for drawing up rules for family practitioner committees on the appointment of their chief executive.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave him on 25 June at column *88*.

Cigarette Advertisements

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he intends to implement the recommendation of the third report of the Committee for Monitoring Agreements on Tobacco Advertising and Sponsorship that all cigarette advertisements should carry a health warning; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: This was not a formal recommendation of the committee as a whole, but the view of the chairman expressed in his foreword. The Government fully accept the chairman's concerns, and is currently negotiating with the tobacco industry on this matter. We hope to make an announcement shortly.

NHS Trusts

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish any written evidence given by the national health service trusts unit to district health authorities, regional health authorities, project managers or trust sponsors on the preparation or revision of draft business plans for units seeking self-governing status; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We intend to publish a compendium on national health service trusts in the autumn, which will update and bring together advice on the establishment and operation of NHS trusts which has been provided by the Department.

Social Work

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his policy on general social work practice within local authorities.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department promotes effective and efficient social work by working constructively with local authorities, and representatives of the professions concerned, to promote the development of services which will provide quality of care combined with value for money for clients.

Community Care

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if his Department has made any estimate of the possible cash savings arising as a result of the assessment and case management procedure contained in the Government's community care proposals.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We expect local authorities to make more cost effective use of resources as they develop their ability to offer a more individual response to clients' needs through improved procedures for assessment and case management. The extent to which this will be achieved will depend on the decisions of individual authorities.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what external evaluation of his Department's draft guidance on the implementation of the Government's proposals on community care took place between the deliberations of the guidance working parties and their despatch to interested organisations.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Representatives from external organisations contributed to the community care development project groups whose reports helped to inform the draft guidance. The Department has recently sent this draft guidance for formal consultation to a wide range of external bodies involved in community care services. These include the local authority associations, the Association of Directors of Social Services, national health service regional general managers, the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, representative organisations of the medical and nursing professions and other representative organisations.

TRANSPORT

Dial-a-Ride

82. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from dial-a-ride, regarding transport arrangements for the disabled; and what measures he intends to introduce.

Mr. Freeman: There are many dial-a-ride and similar services for people with disabilities in operation all over the country. Outside London their funding and development is a matter for local authorities. London Transport has responsibility for administering the scheme in London.

Disabled People (Transport Access)

83. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next plans to hold discussions with United Kingdom passenger transport authorities on improvements in access by disabled citizens to fixed and mobile facilities.

Mr. Freeman: My Department is in regular contact, both direct and through the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee, with transport authorities and operators throughout the country to promote ways of improving access for people with disabilities both to vehicles and systems.

London Underground

Miss Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State how many times in the last month the fire brigade has been called to be in attendance at a London underground station.

Mr. Freeman: London Underground tells me that its record consists of four-week periods rather than calendar months. Figures are not yet available for the whole of the four-week period ending 23 June 1990, but from 27 May to 21 June the fire brigade was called to be in attendance at a London underground station on 474 occasions. I also refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) on 8 May, *Official Report*, column 7.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he intends to visit the north-west to discuss with interested parties the maximisation of benefit from the channel tunnel to the region.

Mr. Freeman: I look forward to several visits to the north-west and would be happy to meet my hon. Friend.

Transport Infrastructure, Essex

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received on the adequacy of the transport infrastructure in Essex.

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend's report entitled "South Essex Transport—A Preliminary Report" is the only representation I have received on this matter. It is being considered by my officials and a full reply will be sent shortly.

Beaches

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the statutory provisions relating to vehicular access to public beaches.

Mr. Atkins: No public general Act contains any provision relating expressly to such access.

Vehicle Emissions

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce a requirement that vehicles satisfy a maximum exhaust carbon emission test as part of the MOT test.

Mr. Atkins: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) on 28 June, *Official Report*, column *305*.

Concessionary Fares

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport in light of the recent decision by the House of Lords in the case of James *v.* Eastleigh borough council, what advice he is now offering to transport undertakings, in respect of concessionary fares for elderly people.

Mr. Freeman: This decision has no relevance for local authority concessionary fares schemes for people of pensionable age, which are based on statutory provision unaffected by the Sex Discrimination Act 1975.

Railways

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the total financial subvention from public funds for running the railways in each of the EC countries; and how many miles of track each country has.

Mr. Freeman: The most recent comprehensive information available to my Department on the public subsidy levels of the European Community's railway systems is contained in the 10th Commission report on the transposed annual accounts of railway undertakings for 1986 [COM (89) 364 final]. These have been converted to sterling on purchasing power parity, together with figures for route mileage; track mileage figures are not available.

Country	*Support (£ million sterling)*	*Route mileage*
Belgium	454	2,221
Denmark	158	1,547
France	1,845	21,602
Greece	123	1,549
Ireland	92	1,215
Italy	4,403	10,009
Luxembourg	83	170
Netherlands	319	1,766
Portugal	161	2,255
United Kingdom	815	10,374
West Germany	2,138	17,052

Notes:

1. COM (89) 364 does not include details in respect of Spain, which was not a member of the EC in 1986. The figure for route mileage in Spain is 7,844.
2. The subsidy figure for the United Kingdom includes support for the British Railways Board (£810 million) and for the Northern Ireland Railway Company (£5 million).

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his response to proposals for an integrated high speed rail network to service United Kingdom industry and commerce from the year 2000 onwards.

Mr. Freeman: I will be glad to look at any proposals put to me by British Rail for high-speed passenger services.

Wrentham Bypass

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the status, programming, funding and timetabling of the proposed by-pass of Wrentham, on the A12 in Suffolk.

Mr. Atkins: Wrentham by-pass forms part of my Department's proposals for the A12, Saxmundham by-pass to the Lowestoft widening scheme, which was included in the report "Trunk Roads, England: Into the

1990s" published earlier this year. The design commission for part of the scheme including a by-pass of Wrentham, has been awarded by the Department to Suffolk county council. Council staff will carry out preliminary investigation of the options for a dual carriageway by-pass before the public are consulted next year. Announcement of a preferred route will follow. Timing of construction will be dependent on the completion of the remaining statutory procedures and the availability of funds.

Documents

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what system he employs to classify, log and otherwise record each document generated by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Most individual documents are not separately registered. Documents are lodged on registered files which are part of a structured filing system which is regulated by the Department's chief registrar.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what criteria he uses when deciding which documents to pass on to the Public Record Office.

Mr. Atkins: The Department complies with the guidelines issued by the Public Record Office on the selection of documents for permanent preservation. Decisions on which documents are transferred to the Public Record Office for this purpose are taken in consultation with PRO inspecting officers.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of, and how many documents in 1989 he estimates were *(a)* passed on to the Public Record Office intact, *(b)* passed on to the Public Record Office in censored form, *(c)* retained by his Department in full, *(d)* retained by his Department in part, *(e)* destroyed, *(f)* otherwise disposed of and *(g)* otherwise unaccounted for.

Mr. Atkins: No document falls due for selection and transfer to the Public Record Office until it is at least 30 years old. A document's suitability for permanent preservation under the terms of the Public Records Act 1958 will be reviewed during that period. The Act does not require statistics to be kept in the form requested and to do so would inevitably incur disproportionate cost. However, in order to comply with duties under the Act, the Department is obliged to ensure that all documentary records are properly preserved with a view to possible transfer to the Public Record Office and eventual release to the public. The general criteria under which the Department may retain documents over 30 years old are set out in section 3(4) of the Public Records Act.

A40 (Improvement)

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 26 June to the hon. Member for Uxbridge, what were the reasons for the increase in the estimated cost of the A40 Western avenue improvement at the junction with Long lane, Hillingdon from £18·2 million between November 1987 at 1986 prices to £34·1 million at 1987 prices.

Mr. Atkins: The most significant element in the increase in the estimated cost of constructing the scheme was that the cost of piling and structural work in London has exceeded the rate of inflation. In addition, there were increases in the cost of London Underground's scheme to reconstruct Hillingdon station to higher, more up to date standards.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Greece

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action the United Kingdom has taken within the Council of Ministers of the European Community to urge Greece to release the 250 conscientious objectors detained in Avlona military prison.

Mr. Maude: None. Under Greece's military service provisions, conscientious objectors can opt for unarmed military service of double the annual period. But it is an offence to refuse to do military service altogether.

NATO Summit

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what matters were discussed during the recent NATO Foreign Ministers meeting at Turnberry.

Mr. Waldegrave: The meeting usefully prepared the ground for discussion at this week's NATO summit, on how NATO should adapt to changing times. We also discussed the external aspects of German unification; the future of CSCE; and current arms control issues. A copy of the communiqué has been placed in the Library of the House.

Immigration

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the average time taken to issue explanatory statements by entry clearance offices following receipt of an appeal or request to provide one.

Mr. Sainsbury: The majority of posts are able to meet our targets of despatching settlement appeals to the appellate authorities within three months of the date of receipt and visit appeals within one month. Staffing levels are being increased at the few posts which, because of growing demand for visas, have been unable to meet these targets during the past year.

Documents

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what percentage of, and how many documents in 1989 he estimates were *(a)* passed on to the Public Record Office intact, *(b)* passed on to the Public Record Office in censored form, *(c)* retained by his Department in full, *(d)* retained by his Department in part, *(e)* destroyed, *(f)* otherwise disposed of and *(g)* otherwise unaccounted for.

Mr. Sainsbury: No document falls due for selection and transfer to the Public Record Office until it is at least 30 years old. A document's suitability for permanent preservation under the terms of the Public Records Act 1958 will be reviewed during that period. The Act does not require statistics to be kept in the form requested and to do

so would inevitably incur disproportionate cost. However, in order to comply with their duties under the Act, Departments are obliged to ensure that all documentary records are properly preserved with a view to possible transfer to the Public Record Office and eventual release to the public. The general criteria under which the Department may retain documents over 30 years old are set out in section 3(4) of the Public Records Act.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what system he employs to classify, log and otherwise record each document generated by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Documents in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office are normally placed on departmental files and processed in accordance with departmental instructions and registry practices.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what criteria he uses when deciding which documents to pass on to the Public Record Office.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Department complies with the guidelines issued by the Public Record Office on the selection of documents for permanent preservation. Decisions on which documents are transferred to the Public Record Office for this purpose are taken in consultation with PRO inspecting officers.

Natural History Museum

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his letter of 25 June to the hon. Member for Linlithgow, whether he has received any representations from institutions in other European countries about the recent changes in the natural history museum.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has not received any such representations. We understand that the museum will continue to meet its statutory national and international obligations.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Danny McNamee

Mr. Terry Field: To ask the Attorney-General why the appeal on behalf of Danny McNamee currently imprisoned in Parkhurst prison was cancelled for July and put back to November; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The listing of cases in the Court of Appeal criminal division is entirely a matter for the Court. I understand that Mr. McNamee's application for leave to appeal against conviction was originally listed to be heard by the court on 16 July but was relisted for 12 November, with the agreement of the parties, to enable the court to deal with another case on 16 July.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

GCSE Results

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list, by county education authority in England, in rank order, the percentage of all pupils gaining a higher grade GCSE pass A to C in *(a)* a modern European language, *(b)* mathematics and *(c)* English, in 1989.

Mrs. Rumbold: Information for 1989 is not yet available. The table gives information for school leavers, for county and metropolitan local education authorities, aggregated over the three years 1986-88 to reduce sampling error.

Maintained school leavers in England
Aggregated over 1986, 1987, 1988

Local education authority	*Percentage of all leavers with grades A-C at GCSE/'O' level/CSE*					
	Modern foreign language	*Rank*	*Mathematics*	*Rank*	*English*	*Rank*
Barking	6·0	(95)	17·9	(92)	24·0	(95)
Barnet	28·0	(1)	46·5	(1)	51·9	(2)
Bexley	15·2	(32)	33·0	(15)	40·7	(26)
Brent	12·9	(53)	24·4	(70)	33·7	(69)
Bromley	19·3	(12)	35·0	(10)	44·1	(12)
Croydon	14·8	(35)	28·6	(48)	40·1	(32)
Ealing	9·6	(84)	24·4	(72)	30·4	(79)
Enfield	16·5	(22)	31·2	(27)	38·7	(41)
Haringey	11·5	(68)	19·5	(89)	32·1	(75)
Harrow	18·2	(15)	43·9	(2)	53·5	(1)
Havering	11·7	(65)	30·0	(38)	38·6	(42)
Hillingdon	9·8	(81)	30·1	(35)	35·0	(60)
Hounslow	12·8	(55)	28·2	(50)	35·4	(57)
Kingston upon Thames	20·7	(6)	32·9	(16)	51·2	(4)
Merton	16·5	(21)	28·7	(47)	36·9	(49)
Newham	7·7	(93)	18·8	(91)	28·5	(87)
Redbridge	14·5	(38)	30·0	(37)	37·6	(47)
Richmond upon Thames	20·4	(7)	32·8	(17)	42·8	(18)
Sutton	25·8	(2)	40·0	(3)	46·2	(7)
Waltham Forest	9·0	(87)	15·9	(94)	24·5	(94)
Birmingham	11·2	(70)	20·8	(80)	32·2	(74)
Coventry	11·6	(66)	22·3	(76)	34·3	(63)
Dudley	14·2	(39)	27·2	(58)	33·9	(68)
Sandwell	8·0	(91)	15·4	(96)	24·6	(93)
Solihull	20·0	(8)	34·0	(13)	45·6	(8)
Walsall	12·8	(56)	21·9	(78)	32·8	(73)

Local education authority	Percentage of all leavers with grades A-C at GCSE/'O' level/CSE					
	Modern foreign language	Rank	Mathematics	Rank	English	Rank
Wolverhampton	10·9	(72)	19·8	(85)	29·7	(84)
Knowsley	3·7	(96)	15·8	(95)	20·5	(96)
Liverpool	10·5	(76)	20·1	(83)	30·0	(82)
St. Helens	14·0	(40)	29·5	(41)	33·2	(71)
Sefton	14·5	(36)	27·9	(52)	42·6	(19)
Wirral	15·3	(30)	28·8	(45)	39·8	(34)
Bolton	15·5	(28)	30·6	(30)	40·7	(28)
Bury	13·1	(50)	35·9	(7)	42·8	(17)
Manchester	9·3	(86)	19·7	(88)	27·1	(91)
Oldham	10·9	(73)	20·7	(81)	25·7	(92)
Rochdale	10·0	(80)	23·6	(74)	35·5	(56)
Salford	11·2	(71)	25·3	(67)	34·6	(62)
Stockport	13·7	(45)	31·2	(25)	44·4	(11)
Tameside	13·0	(51)	29·6	(40)	39·6	(36)
Trafford	24·2	(3)	36·4	(6)	45·5	(9)
Wigan	18·1	(16)	34·2	(12)	42·0	(22)
Barnsley	8·1	(90)	19·9	(84)	28·4	(88)
Doncaster	9·7	(82)	25·6	(65)	29·5	(86)
Rotherham	12·7	(58)	23·8	(73)	30·7	(77)
Sheffield	12·6	(61)	25·2	(68)	35·4	(58)
Bradford	11·8	(64)	19·8	(86)	29·6	(85)
Calderdale	12·2	(62)	22·0	(77)	33·9	(67)
Kirklees	16·3	(25)	27·3	(56)	36·1	(52)
Leeds	13·4	(49)	25·8	(64)	34·1	(65)
Wakefield	10·5	(77)	24·4	(71)	29·8	(83)
Gateshead	8·3	(89)	21·3	(79)	28·3	(89)
Newcastle upon Tyne	10·3	(78)	17·5	(93)	28·0	(90)
North Tyneside	12·0	(63)	26·8	(59)	35·9	(53)
South Tyneside	8·8	(88)	23·3	(75)	30·6	(78)
Sunderland	7·8	(92)	19·7	(87)	30·0	(81)
Inner London	9·7	(83)	20·5	(82)	30·1	(80)
Avon	13·7	(43)	28·5	(49)	40·1	(33)
Bedfordshire	13·9	(41)	28·8	(46)	38·9	(40)
Berkshire	19·7	(9)	33·3	(14)	41·0	(25)
Buckinghamshire	23·5	(4)	37·3	(5)	47·8	(5)
Cambridgeshire	17·6	(17)	29·4	(43)	40·1	(31)
Cheshire	16·3	(24)	30·9	(29)	40·6	(29)
Cleveland	12·9	(54)	30·1	(34)	35·2	(59)
Cornwall[1]	13·5	(48)	31·3	(24)	43·2	(16)
Cumbria	13·6	(47)	32·3	(19)	37·6	(45)
Derbyshire	11·5	(67)	27·9	(51)	34·1	(64)
Devon	12·7	(57)	27·9	(53)	38·9	(39)
Dorset	16·5	(23)	31·2	(26)	43·9	(14)
Durham	10·1	(79)	24·7	(69)	33·4	(70)
East Sussex	13·8	(42)	29·4	(44)	41·7	(23)
Essex	16·2	(26)	32·3	(20)	40·2	(30)
Gloucestershire	18·4	(14)	31·3	(23)	43·5	(15)
Hampshire	15·2	(31)	32·5	(18)	41·0	(24)
Hereford and Worcester	15·4	(29)	29·9	(39)	42·0	(21)
Hertfordshire	19·5	(10)	34·9	(11)	45·3	(10)
Humberside	12·9	(52)	25·9	(63)	34·1	(66)
Isle of Wight	6·2	(94)	19·4	(90)	31·5	(76)
Kent	17·3	(18)	31·6	(22)	39·4	(37)
Lancashire	15·2	(33)	30·2	(33)	38·3	(43)
Leicestershire	9·4	(85)	27·6	(54)	35·5	(55)
Lincolnshire	16·2	(27)	30·5	(31)	37·6	(46)
Norfolk	12·7	(59)	30·0	(36)	35·8	(54)
North Yorkshire	22·5	(5)	35·2	(8)	44·0	(13)
Northamptonshire	10·8	(74)	26·2	(62)	36·1	(51)
Northumberland	15·0	(34)	31·8	(21)	42·3	(20)
Nottinghamshire	10·7	(75)	25·5	(66)	32·9	(72)
Oxfordshire	14·5	(37)	30·2	(32)	38·9	(38)
Shropshire	16·6	(20)	29·5	(42)	39·6	(35)
Somerset	13·7	(46)	27·4	(55)	37·3	(48)
Staffordshire	12·6	(60)	26·5	(61)	34·8	(61)
Suffolk	11·4	(69)	26·5	(60)	37·9	(44)
Surrey	19·3	(11)	39·1	(4)	51·4	(3)
Warwickshire	16·7	(19)	31·2	(28)	40·7	(27)
West Sussex	18·9	(13)	35·1	(9)	47·4	(6)
Wiltshire	13·7	(44)	27·2	(57)	36·9	(50)
Total England	14·1	—	28·4	—	37·5	—

[1] Including Isles of Scilly.

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in rank order the percentage of all pupils gaining five or more higher grades A to C at GCSE in 1989, by county education authority in England.

Mrs. Rumbold: Information for 1989 is not yet available. For the latest available information I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Nicholas Bennett) on 18 January 1990, *Official Report*, column *333*.

Sciences

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps have been taken to ensure that there is ample provision within the national curriculum to allow for taking the three main sciences separately to O-level standard.

Mrs. Rumbold: The national curriculum for science sets out a balanced science curriculum. This includes the material from the three main sciences appropriate at GCSE level as a basis for further study in the separate sciences at A-level. It will be possible for schools to cover the curriculum through separate subject science teaching but decisions on the proposed arrangements for assessment of science at age 16 have not yet been taken.

Education Expenditure

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any evidence of links between spending on education, excluding teachers' salaries, and achievements by children at nine, 13, 16 and 18 years plus; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend is not aware of any such evidence. Socio-economic background is known to be linked with examination achievement at 16 and 18 years plus; research has indicated that there is no marked correlation between education spending and pupils' achievements once allowance has been made for these links.

Higher Education

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what is the number of home students currently in higher education, both full-time and sandwich students other than postgraduates in Scotland, England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom as a whole;

(2) what is the number of full-time home postgraduate students studying at levels beyond first degree in Scotland, England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom as a whole.

Mr. Jackson: The information is as follows.

Home students in higher education in the United Kingdom by country of study and level of courses, 1987-88

Country of study	*Postgraduate*	*First degree and other higher education*	*Total*
England	37·7	405·6	443·2
Wales	2·6	27·1	29·7
Scotland	6·0	70·8	76·8
Northern Ireland[1]	1·3	14·5	15·8
United Kingdom	47·6	517·9	565·5

[1] Data for students in higher education outside universities relate to 1986-87.

Source: Education Statistics for the United Kingdom, 1989 edition (HMSO).

Derby City Technology College

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what criteria he is using to decide on the establishment of a city technology college in Derby.

Mrs. Rumbold: The criteria for choice of city technology college locations are set out in the booklet "City Technology Colleges—A New Choice of School", published in October 1986. This is available in the Library. My right hon. Friend will make his decision with regard to these criteria and in the light of comments received during the consultation he is currently undertaking with interested parties in the area.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much private sector money has been *(a)* pledged and *(b)* received for the proposed city technology college in Derby.

Mrs. Rumbold: A total of £1·15 million has so far been promised by the private sector for the proposed Derby city technology college. Of this sum, £233,000 has been received.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he has taken to ensure that progress regarding planning permission for the land for the city technology college in Derby is halted pending the conclusion of the consultation process.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has taken no such steps.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much public sector money has been allocated for the proposed city technology college in Derby.

Mrs. Rumbold: The total of public sector money spent upon the proposed city technology college in Derby amounted to £1·145 million by the end of May 1990. Apart from some small administrative costs, no further funds have been, or will be, allocated until my right hon. Friend has made his decision upon the proposal.

City Technology Colleges

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he intends to issue guidelines for consultation for the establishment of a city technology college; and if he will lay them before Parliament.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend will be issuing no such guidelines. He will take decisions concerning the proposals to establish city technology colleges on which he is currently consulting in the light of all comments received from any interested parties.

Documents

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what criteria he uses when deciding which documents to pass on to the Public Record Office.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department complies with the guidelines issued by the Public Record Office on the selection of documents for permanent preservation. Decisions on which documents are transferred to the Public Record Office for this purpose are taken in consultation with PRO inspecting officers.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what system he employs to classify, log and otherwise record each document generated by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department's library maintains an online database which records every document published by the Department. Comprehensive printed lists are generated each month and cumulated annually. They are available to the public.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of and how many documents in 1989 he estimates were *(a)* passed on to the Public Record Office intact, *(b)* passed on to the Public Record Office in censored form, *(c)* retained by his Department in full, *(d)* retained by his Department in part, *(e)* destroyed, *(f)* otherwise disposed of and *(g)* otherwise unaccounted for.

Mrs. Rumbold: No document falls due for selection and transfer to the Public Record Office until it is at least 30 years old. A document's suitability for permanent preservation under the terms of the Public Records Act 1958 will be reviewed during that period. The Act does not require statistics to be kept in the form requested and to do so would inevitably incur disproportionate cost. However, in order to comply with their duties under the Act, Departments are obliged to ensure that all documentary records are properly preserved with a view to possible transfer to the Public Record Office and eventual release to the public. The general criteria under which the Department may retain documents over 30 years old are set out in section 3(4) of the Public Records Act.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what arrangements he has made for calculating the general schools budget of a local education authority with regard to funding of grant-maintained schools should all the schools within that local education authority become grant maintained.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend will keep in mind the prospective need for such arrangements as the grant-maintained sector grows.

Primary Schools

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a list of those primary schools which *(a)* have closed in England during the last three years, *(b)* have been considered by him and their closure approved and *(c)* have been considered by him and their closure rescinded; and if he will give for each school the number of pupils attending.

Mr. Alan Howarth *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* I have today written to the hon. Member with the information he requested. Copies have been placed in the Library.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Documents

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what criteria he uses when deciding which documents to pass on to the Public Record Office.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: My office is situated in the Cabinet Office, which complies with the guidelines issued by the Public Record Office on the selection of documents for permanent preservation. Decisions on which documents are transferred to the Public Record Office for this purpose are taken in consultation with PRO inspection officers.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what system he employs to classify, log and otherwise record each document generated by the Duchy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Each outgoing document from my private office is recorded in a document register. Each document is given a unique number and various details are recorded such as the date of the letter, security classification, subject, to whom the document was referred to and its file number.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what percentage of and how many documents in 1989 he estimates were *(a)* passed on to the Public Record Office intact, *(b)* passsed on to the Public Record Office in censored form, *(c)* retained in full, *(d)* retained in part, *(e)* destroyed, *(f)* otherwise disposed of and *(g)* otherwise unaccounted for.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: No document falls due for selection and transfer to the Public Record Office until it is at least 30 years old. A document's suitability for permanent preservation under the terms of the Public Records Act 1958 will be reviewed during that period. The Act does not require statistics to be kept in the form requested and to do so would inevitably incur disproportionate cost. However, in order to comply with their duties under the Act, Departments are obliged to ensure that all documentary records are properly preserved with a view to possible transfer to the Public Record Office and eventual release to the public. The general criteria under which the Department may retain documents over 30 years old are set out in section 3(4) of the Public Records Act.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Documents

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Lord President of the Council what percentage of and how many documents in 1989 he estimates were *(a)* passed on to the Public Record Office intact, *(b)* passed on to the Public Record Office in censored form, *(c)* retained by his Department in full, *(d)* retained by his Department in part, *(e)* destroyed, *(f)* otherwise disposed of and *(g)* otherwise unaccounted for.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: No Privy Council Office document falls due for selection and transfer to the Public Record Office until it is at least 30 years old. A document's suitability for permanent preservation under the terms of the Public Records Act 1958 will be reviewed during that period. The Act does not require statistics to be kept in the form requested and to do so would inevitably incur disproportionate cost. However, in order to comply with the duties under the Act, my Department ensures all documentary records are properly preserved with a view to possible transfer to the Public Record Office and eventual release to the public.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Lord President of the Council what criteria he uses when deciding which documents to pass on to the Public Record Office.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Privy Council Office complies with the guidelines issued by the Public Record Office on the selection of documents for permanent preservation.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Lord President of the Council what system he employs to classify, log and otherwise record each document generated by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Privy Council Office registry operates a numerical cataloguing system to classify and record documents by subject matter, for example, the relevant Act of Parliament in the case of papers relating to the discharge of statutory function, or the name of the relevant organisation in the case of charter matters. My office and that of the Lord Privy Seal have separate sub-systems for registering papers, also by subject.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Fees Office

Mr. Stern: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick upon Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what assessment has been made of the adequacy of the equipment and staffing numbers available to the Fees Office.

Mr. Beith: The number and grades of staff in the Fees Office, as in other offices and Departments of the House, are periodically reviewed by the Staff Inspector; and his recommendations, and those of the Board of Management, are submitted for consideration by the Commission. The Staff Inspector has recently completed a review of the staffing complement of the Fees Office at the grade of higher executive officer and below. His report will be considered by the Commission in due course, after appropriate consultation with the relevant trade unions and management. Computers and similar equipment are supplied to the Fees Office on the basis of the needs identified by the Accountant and the Head of the Administration Department and on the advice of the Computer Officer. I am not aware of any inadequacies in the staffing and equipment of the Fees Office that are not currently being addressed through these well-established procedures.

PRIME MINISTER

NATO Meeting

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Prime Minister what was discussed during her visit on 7 June to the NATO Ministers meeting.

The Prime Minister: I held a short meeting with the United States Secretary of State, during which he briefed me on the United States-Soviet meeting in Washington. I then made a speech over lunch with NATO Foreign Ministers, before leaving for the Soviet Union. A copy of my speech has been placed in the Library of the House.

Special Advisers

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Prime Minister which non-civil-service special advisers accompanied her on official visits abroad on each of the last 11 years; and what was their cost to public funds, in real terms.

The Prime Minister: For years before 1987-88 the information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Since 1 April 1987, no special adviser who is not a career civil servant has accompanied me on an official visit abroad.

European Council, Dublin

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Prime Minister if, pursuant to paragraph 2 of annex 1 of the communiqué of the Dublin European Council she will place in the Library the suggestions and written contributions submitted by member states, together with the analysis of the issues made by the Foreign Ministers of the member states.

The Prime Minister: The examination and analysis carried out by the Foreign Ministers, as requested by the 28 April meeting of the European Council in Dublin, is contained in annex I of the Presidency conclusions. No other document was prepared. It is for the governments concerned to decide whether they wish to make public their written contributions to that examination.

Nuclear Non-proliferation

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Prime Minister if, during her recent meeting with President Gorbachev in Moscow, she discussed the forthcoming fourth quinquennial review conference of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

The Prime Minister: No.

Documents

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Prime Minister what systems she employs to classify, log and otherwise record each document generated by her office; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Documents to and from my office are dealt with in accordance with established registry practices.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Prime Minister what criteria she uses when deciding which documents to pass on to the Public Record Office.

The Prime Minister: The guidelines issued by the Public Record Office on the selection of documents for permanent preservation.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Prime Minister what percentage of and how many documents in 1989 she estimates were *(a)* passed on to the Public Record Office intact, *(b)* passed on to the Public Records Office in censored form, *(c)* retained in full, *(d)* retained in part, *(e)* destroyed, *(f)* otherwise disposed of and *(g)* otherwise unaccounted for.

The Prime Minister: No document falls for selection and transfer to the Public Record Office until it is at least 30 years old. A document's suitability for permanent preservation under the terms of the Public Records Act 1958 will be reviewed during that period. The Act does not require statistics to be kept in the form requested and to do so would inevitably incur disproportionate cost. However, in order to comply with their duties under the Act, Departments are obliged to ensure that all documentary records are properly preserved with a view to possible transfer to the Public Record Office and eventual release to the public. The general criteria under which the Department may retain documents over 30 years old are set out in section 3(4) of the Public Records Act.

European Council, Dublin

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister whether she supported the re-appointment of Mr. Jacques Delors as president of the European Commission at the meeting of the European Council in Dublin; what alternative candidates were considered; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I seconded the presidency's proposal to re-appoint Mr. Jacques Delors as President of the European Commission for a further two years, which was carried by acclaim.

Gifts

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list all gifts received in her official capacity from *(a)* domestic and *(b)* overseas sources within the last 12 months; what procedure exists for receiving and documenting such gifts; and what becomes of them.

The Prime Minister: No.

Colin Wallace

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what steps she has taken to investigate the document, sent to her by Colin Wallace on 10 June alleging links between Charles Haughey and the IRA.

The Prime Minister: A reply will be sent on my behalf to Mr. Wallace's letter of 10 June.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Civil Servants (Workplaces)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessments under Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations have been undertaken at all workplaces used by civil servants in his Department.

Mr. Curry: The responsibility for complying with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH) within the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has been delegated to line managers who are familiar with local working arrangements and potential hazards. Technical assistance is available both from safety officers on their staff and from the departmental health and safety unit.

COSHH assessments of work activities which are liable to expose Ministry employees to substances hazardous to health have been undertaken both in respect of premises which are occupied by the Ministry and in respect of premises which are occupied by third parties but where Ministry employees use or may be exposed to such substances.

Detailed records are not held centrally and could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

The COSHH regulations impose a commitment to review assessments and this is a process which continues within the Ministry.

Waste Management

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what actions had been taken by his Department since the publication of the seventh report of the Royal Commission on environmental protection in response to its recommendations in respect of *(a)* independent assessments of the performance of waste treatment plant, *(b)* the resources needed by the farm waste unit and *(c)* the need for a review of the advisory material on waste management.

Mr. Curry: The Department provides a service to manufacturers for the independent assessment of the performance of waste treatment equipment and storage facilities. In 1987, the farm and countryside service was established within ADAS and the farm waste unit was incorporated within the mechanisation discipline of that service. This has strengthened the Ministry's ability to provide advice on environmental issues including farm waste disposal. The Department published, in 1985, the code of good agricultural practice which provides guidance to farmers on ways to reduce the risk of farm pollution of water courses.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total amount paid to farmers under the environmentally sensitive areas scheme in each of the designated areas; what is his estimate of the total savings in common agricultural policy expenditure arising from the scheme in each area; and what was the total amount received from the EEC to offset the payments made.

Mr. Curry: The costs of the annual payments made to farmers who signed ESA agreements up to 31 March 1990 are shown for the 10 English ESAs in the table. The EC reimbursed £0·762 million towards ESA payments made during the calendar year ending 31 December 1989. The economic studies which will throw light on any savings made under the CAP are not yet complete.

Annual cost of ESA agreements signed up to 31 March 1990

ESA	*£ million*
Broads	1·784
Pennine Dales	0·957
Somerset Levels and Moors	0·826

ESA	£ million
South Downs	0·580
West Penwith	0·351
Breckland	0·454
North Peak	0·729
Shropshire Borders	0·585
Suffolk River Valleys	0·902
Test Valley	0·026

Scrapie

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has investigated the possibility that the scrapie agent could be transmitted to cattle through contact with the scrapie-infected placenta of ewes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: There is no evidence that such transmission occurs. If it does, it is apparently of no consequence since sheep and cattle have been in close contact for many years without a scrapie-like disease becoming established in cattle in the past. Epidemiological studies have show that BSE was most probably caused by feeding cattle with compound feedstuffs containing protein derived from scrapie-infected sheep.

Potato Marketing Board

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the names of the members, and the organisations they represent, of the joint consultative committee of the Potato Marketing Board.

Mr. Curry: Membership of the committee is as follows:

Sir Michael Franklin KCB, CMG	Independent Chairman
Mrs. M. Barnett	PMB Consumers Liaison Committee
Mrs. H. Millar	National Consumer Council
Mr. L. G. Price	Retail Fruit Trade Federation
Mr. R. Murdy	British Retailers Association
Mr. R. Newborough	Produce Packaging and Marketing Association
Mr. J. McArthur	Scottish Potato Trades Association
Mr. K. G. Axworthy	National Federation of Fish Friers
Mr. T. Charlesworth Mr. C. M. A. McCarthy	Potato Processors Association
Mr. C. W. Login	National Joint Council of British Potato and Vegetable Merchants Association
Mr. R. Pooley	Federation of Agriculture Co-operatives UK
Mr. J. Arbuckle	National Farmers Union of Scotland
Mr. D. J. T. Piccaver Mr. J. H. Gittins	National Farmers Union of England and Wales
Mr. D. B. Sinclair Mr. F. C. Newbold Mr. C. A. Strawson	Potato Marketing Board

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will refer back to the Potato Marketing Board the proposed amendments to the existing potato marketing scheme.

Mr. Curry: No. The board's proposals were duly submitted to me after full consultation with the industry, and will be implemented soon.

Animal Classification

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will seek to persuade his EC counterparts to change the classification of animals from agricultural products to sentient beings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I fully accept that animals need proper care and must not be treated in the same way as inanimate goods. Rather than press for a new classification, however, the Government prefer to concentrate on negotiating tangible and enforceable welfare safeguards in the Community on protection of animals on farms, during transport and at the place of slaughter.

Documents

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what system he employs to classify, log and otherwise record each document generated by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The Department follows a comprehensive procedure for the documents it generates both to meet the requirements of the Public Records Acts and to ensure uniformity of treatment throughout. Documents are allocated to files which are identified by a subject code and number. Within files each document is individually numbered. The movement of all files is recorded.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what percentage of and how many documents in 1989 he estimates were *(a)* passed on to the Public Record Office intact, *(b)* passed on to the Public Record Office in censored form, *(c)* retained by his Department in full, *(d)* retained by his Department in part, *(e)* destroyed, *(f)* otherwise disposed of and *(g)* otherwise unaccounted for.

Mr. Curry: No document falls due for selection and transfer to the Public Record Office until it is at least 30 years old. A document's suitability for permanent preservation under the terms of the Public Records Act 1958 will be reviewed during that period. The Act does not require statistics to be kept in the form requested and to do so would inevitably incur disproportionate cost. However, in order to comply with their duties under the Act, Departments are obliged to ensure that all documentary records are properly preserved with a view to possible transfer to the Public Record Office and eventual release to the public. The general criteria under which the Department may retain documents over 30 years old are set out in section 3(4) of the Public Records Act.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what criteria he uses when deciding which documents to pass on the the Public Record Office.

Mr. Curry: The Department complies with the guidelines issued by the Public Record Office on the selection of documents for permanent preservation. Decisions on which documents are transferred to the Public Record Office for this purpose are taken in consultation with PRO inspecting officers.

Stubble Burning

Mr. Bright: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to be able to make an announcement on the criteria for temporary exemptions from the proposed ban under the Environmental Protection Bill's provisions on stubble burning.

Mr. Curry: Decisions on the need for an extent of any temporary exemptions can only be taken once the ban is in place and in the light of circumstances affecting particular crops in particular areas and particular weather conditions. I expect such exemptions to be strictly limited to exceptional circumstances.

EC Extensification Scheme

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has for implementing the European Community extensification scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: My right hon. Friends and I have decided to introduce pilot extensification schemes for beef and sheep under the Community rules. Cash incentives will be made available to about 100 participating producers in selected livestock areas who are prepared to reduce their production by at least 20 per cent. over a period of five years. Apart from reducing livestock production on these farms, the schemes should bring environmental benefits through the less-intensive use of land and a reduced requirement for fertilisers and pesticides. I shall place in the Library information on the rules of the scheme.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Know-how Fund

Mrs. Rosie Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in what ways were small companies being encouraged to be involved in the range of activities under the know-how fund for Poland and Hungary; what procedures a small company needs to go through to be involved in this project; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We have already had a large number of applications from small firms inquiring about opportunities under the know-how fund. Many of the applications are in the field of management training and we will soon be evaluating these proposals in the light of various managment sector missions that we have sent to eastern Europe.

There are also opportunities for small and medium firms to benefit from two recently inaugurated schemes, one for assistance with pre-feasibility investment schemes, the other for assistance with joint venture training.

Companies should apply to the joint assessment unit in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office if their interest lies in any of these areas.

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on activities to date of the know-how fund.

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many separate projects have been identified under the know-how fund for eastern Europe.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) on 14 March at column *236*, and to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Dr. Woodcock) on 13 June at column *213*. Seventy-nine projects were listed in those two replies. Since then we have agreed the following projects:

Czechoslovakia

A conference on privatisation to be held in Prague in September—26,000.

Contribution to the United Kingdom transport costs of Czechoslovak agricultural students undertaking practical attachments with British farmers—£1,000.

Symposium on the construction sector to be held in Prague in July—£5,000.

Hungary

Co-operation between the Open University and the Hungarian Open Business School—£56,000.

Visit of both Hungarian State Insurance Supervisors to the United Kingdom—£4,000.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether aid for developing countries to adopt chlorofluorocarbons substitutes will be additional to the current aid budget; and if he has anything to add to his answer of 14 May, *Official Report*, column *343*, concerning the amount of aid to be given for this purpose over the next three years.

Mrs. Chalker: Britain's contribution of up to $15 million to the funding mechanism to help developing countries meet their obligations under the strengthened Montreal protocol will be separate from the aid budget to developing countries. It will form part of a new and separate item in the ODA's expenditure plans.

WALES

Local Government Finance

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has on which councils in Wales are requiring payment of the poll tax in *(a)* 12 instalments and *(b)* 10 instalments.

Mr. Grist: Under the Community Charges (Administration and Enforcement) Regulations 1989, charging authorities are permitted to enter into agreements with chargepayers for payment of community charges other than in accordance with the instalments scheme prescribed in those regulations. Information about the use made of these powers is not held centrally.

Tourism

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales representations he has received concerning the development of gites type tourist facilities in rural Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend has received no such representations. The Wales tourist board's "Hafod" promotion of high-quality self-catering accommodation in rural areas forms part of the board's overall rural marketing strategy, but cannot be directly compared to gites type accommodation, which is of more variable quality.

The Wales tourist board examined the possibility of creating a gites type system for Wales in 1982, but concluded that the general standards of accommodation would be unlikely to reach an acceptable level.

Mental Health

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will set out in full the terms of reference for the recent study undertaken on behalf of the Welsh Office by the University of Manchester in relation to the development of the all-Wales strategy for mental health.

Mr. Grist: The study has been commissioned to show, with particular reference to the work of social services departments, the extent to which current services conform to the objectives of the all-Wales mental illness strategy and to indentify factors which either promote or inhibit its fulfilment.

Health Organisations

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list any new bodies, joint committees or co-ordinating organisations which he intends shall be established in Wales, or have already been established, whether on an all-Wales basis or on a regional or local basis, in respect of the implementation of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill, "Working for Patients", "Caring for People" and associated Government initiatives.

Mr. Grist: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman with the details he has sought on the organisational framework for implementing the White Paper proposals and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Health Authorities (Finance)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the district health authorities in Wales which have completed their register of capital assets; and if he will give the number of entries made on each register.

Mr. Grist: All health authorities with the exception of Clwyd and Gwynedd have completed their capital asset registers. Clwyd health authority has listed all its assets, but some 20 per cent. of its non-property assets have yet to be valued. Gwynedd has listed 95 per cent. of its assets and valued 90 per cent. Details of the numbers of entries included in each register are not held centrally.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales under what circumstances he would allow a higher than normal proportion of any capital receipts accruing to any district health authority in Wales to be used in respect of revenue expenditure; and what process would have to be followed on seeking such approval.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 29 June 1990.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the gross revenue expenditure of each district health authority in 1982-83 and 1989-90.

Mr. Grist: Accounts information for 1989-90 is not yet available. The gross revenue expenditure of each district health authority in 1982-83 was as follows:

	£000
Clwyd	64,286
East Dyfed	39,797
Gwent	79,892
Gwynedd	37,233
Mid Glamorgan	91,103
Pembrokeshire	13,002
Powys	18,537
South Glamorgan	107,851
West Glamorgan	61,807
Wales	513,508

Source: Health authorities annual accounts.

Nurses

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many grading appeals in respect of nursing staff have been successful in *(a)* Wales and *(b)* the East Dyfed health authority.

Mr. Grist: Latest information on the number of successful grading appeals made at local level to employing authorities is as follows:

	Number
Wales	482
East Dyfed	58

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many grading appeals in respect of nursing staff in *(a)* Wales and *(b)* the East Dyfed health authority are outstanding.

Mr. Grist: Latest information on the number of outstanding regrading appeals made at local level to employing authorities is as follows:

	Number
Wales	3,088
East Dyfed	177

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the average time a patient awaited treatment in each Welsh district health authority in March 1982 and at the latest available date.

Mr. Grist: Median waiting times are usually calculated on a calendar year basis. The figures given in the table relate to in-patients and day cases admitted as waiting list cases and discharged during 1982 and 1989.

Median waiting times (days)

District health authority	*1982*	*1989*
Clwyd	44	51
East Dyfed	36	42
Gwent	57	54
Gwynedd	34	35
Mid Glamorgan	47	35
Pembrokeshire	56	44
Powys	41	29
South Glamorgan	36	32
West Glamorgan	56	58

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the number of people on the waiting list for each district health authority in March 1982 and at the latest available date.

Mr. Grist: The information is shown in the tables:

Waiting lists 1982 and 1989
Number of patients on district health authority waiting lists
Table 1: On 31 March 1982

	Out-patients	*In-patients*	*Day cases*
Pembrokeshire	1,799	1,914	385
Clwyd	4,616	4,100	599
East Dyfed	3,518	1,584	196
Gwent	8,453	6,660	963
Gwynedd	3,157	1,632	388
Mid Glamorgan	14,110	7,642	29
Powys	282	61	0
South Glamorgan	12,979	4,972	678
West Glamorgan	14,136	4,063	101

Waiting lists 1982 and 1989
Number of patients on district health authority waiting lists
Table 2: On 30 September 1989

	Out-patients	*In-patients*	*Day cases*
Pembrokeshire	3,373	2,618	1,053
Clwyd	10,177	5,389	844
East Dyfed	6,328	3,443	369
Gwent	13,190	9,504	1,672
Gwynedd	5,265	3,476	589
Mid Glamorgan	17,171	6,930	514
Powys	1,096	61	1
South Glamorgan	16,087	6,582	1,564
West Glamorgan	14,820	6,328	405

Corlan Housing Association

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his most up-to-date estimate of the cost to public funds of the proposed takeover of the Corlan housing association and associated companies by Wales and West housing association.

Mr. Grist: The long-term cost to public funds is expected to be nil. However certain moneys owed to Housing for Wales by the Corlan housing association are not expected to be repaid in the current financial year and are being rescheduled as a short term interest bearing loan.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received relating to the finances of the Corlan housing association and its proposed takeover by Wales and West housing association.

Mr. Grist: In all, 20 letters and five petitions have been received. My right hon. Friend has met with a deputation representing the staff and tenants of the association.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether information arising from the HACAS inquiry into the financial crisis at the Corlan housing association has been supplied to *(a)* the South Wales constabulary, *(b)* the Director of Public Prosecutions and *(c)* the Serious Fraud Office.

Mr. Grist: The inquiry instituted by Housing for Wales into the affairs of the Corlan housing association is continuing.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his most up-to-date estimate of the impact on the number of new houses and flats to be constructed in the social housing category in Wales in 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93, of the finances of the Corlan housing association and its proposed takeover by Wales and West housing association.

Mr. Grist: Housing for Wales has made alternative arrangements for the completion of grant aided schemes under construction by the Corlan housing association. The social housing programme is not expected to be significantly affected; the completion of some schemes will be delayed by a few weeks beyond the date originally anticipated.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will make it his policy to place a copy of the HACAS report into the financing at Corlan housing association in the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Grist: Housing for Wales is responsible for the inquiry into the affairs of the Corlan housing association. It is not customary to publish reports of inquiries carried out under section 28 of the Housing Associations Act 1985.

Documents

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what system he employs to classify, log and otherwise record each document generated by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Copies of documents created by my Department are as a general rule placed on numbered registered files which are indexed by subject.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what criteria he uses when deciding which documents to pass on to the Public Record Office.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department complies with the guidelines issued by the Public Record Office on the selection of documents for permanant preservation. Decisions on which documents are transferred to the Public Record Office for this purpose are taken in consultation with Public Record Office inspecting officers.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of and how many documents in 1989 he estimates were *(a)* passed on to the Public Record Office intact, *(b)* passed on to the Public Record Office in censored form, *(c)* retained by his Department in full, *(d)* retained by his Department in part, *(e)* destroyed, *(f)* otherwise disposed of and *(g)* otherwise unaccounted for.

Mr. David Hunt: No document falls due for selection and transfer to the Public Record Office until it is at least 30 years old. A document's suitability for permanent preservation under the terms of the Public Records Act 1958 will be reviewed during that period. The Act does not require statistics to be kept in the form requested and to do so would inevitably incur disproportionate cost. However, in order to comply with their duties under the Act, Departments are obliged to ensure that all documentary records are properly preserved with a view to possible transfer to the Public Record Office and eventual release to the public. The general criteria under which the Department may retain documents over 30 years old are set out in section 3(4) of the Public Records Act.

Health Authority Staff

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what what the number of *(a)* nurses and midwives, *(b)* doctors and dentists and *(c)* all direct care staff,

including *(a)* and *(b)* for each district health authority in: *(a)* 1982 and *(b)* 1990, expressed as whole-time equivalents.

Mr. Grist: The available information is given in the table.

Staff in post as at 30 September (whole-time equivalents)

	Nurses and midwives		*Doctors and dentists*[1]		*Direct care staff*[2]	
	1982	*1989*	*1982*	*1988*	*1982*	*1989*[3]
Clwyd	3,503	3,635	273	283	4,215	4,524
East Dyfed	1,966	2,151	173	201	2,404	2,719
Gwent	4,141	4,412	338	365	5,050	5,537
Gwynedd	1,890	2,113	152	161	2,312	2,655
Mid Glamorgan	4,918	5,392	379	420	5,874	6,570
Pembrokeshire	631	743	60	75	782	965
Powys	1,092	1,144	33	37	1,221	1,313
South Glamorgan	4,607	4,946	644	682	6,371	7,106
West Glamorgan	3,161	3,495	301	321	3,961	4,497

[1] Excluding hospital practitioners, clinical assistants and locums.
[2] Nurses and midwives, medical and dental, professional and technical staff.
[3] Using 1988 figures for medical and dental staff as 1989 figures are not yet available.

Hospital Patients

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the number of *(a)* in-patients treated, *(b)* out-patients treated and *(c)* day cases for each district health authority in (i) 1982 and (ii) 1989.

Mr. Grist: Details of in-patients, out-patients and day cases treated in each district health authority in Wales in 1982 and 1988-89 are published in the relevant issues of "Hospital Bed Use Statistics" copies of which are in the Library of the House.

Quarrying

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning his policy towards the extension of existing quarries in areas of outstanding natural beauty.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Advice on planning applications for mineral extraction is given in the series of minerals planning guidance notes—MPGs—issued jointly by the Welsh Office and the Department of the Environment. MPG1—"General considerations and the Development Plan System"—reasserts the Government's policy that all minerals applications in areas of outstanding natural beauty

"should be subject to the most rigorous examination".

Health Service Capital Schemes

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the major capital schemes costing over £1 million which have been completed since 1982, are in process of construction or which are planned for each district health authority.

Mr. Ian Grist: The information is given in the table. Schemes planned comprise those for which approval in principle has been given.

Major health building schemes costing over £1 million
Health district and scheme

1. Completed since 1982

Clwyd
- Ysbyty Maelor Wrexham, Scheme 1
- Mold Community Hospital
- Chirk Community Hospital
- Ysbyty Glan Clwyd—
  - Scanner Suite and Equipment
  - Multi Disciplinary Training Unit

East Dyfed
- Prince Philip Hospital
- St. David's Hospital Carmarthen—
  - New Ward Block
  - Bryntirion Hospital development

Gwent
- Royal Gwent Hospital, Scheme 6
- Nevill Hall Hospital, Outpatients Department
- Tredegar General Hospital Upgrading

Gwynedd
- Ysbyty Gwynedd
- Llandudno Hospital Development

Mid Glamorgan
- Princess of Wales Hospital, Bridgend
- St. Tydfils Hospital Development

Powys
- Ystrandgynlais Community Hospital

South Glamorgan
- University Hospital of Wales (UHW)—
  - Medical Genetics Centre
  - Remedial Works
- Llandough Hospital Obstetric Unit
- Rookwood Artificial Limb and Appliance Centre

West Glamorgan
- Morriston Hospital Development, Schemes 1, 2 and 3
- Singleton Hospital
  - Pathology Department
  - Physical Medicine Department
  - Main Kitchen
  - Boiler House
  - Infrastructure Works
  - Sterile Products Unit
- Gorseinon Hospital Upgrading
- Neath Hospital Outpatients Department

2. Under Construction

Clwyd
- Deeside Community Hospital
- Ysbyty Glan Clwyd, Phase 2

East Dyfed
- Amman Valley Hospital development

Gwent
- Llanfrechfa Grange Hospital—Central Laundry
- Blackwood Acute Mental Illness Unit

Mid Glamorgan

Prince Charles Hospital, Merthyr, Phase 2
Ysbyty George Thomas
Aberdare General Hospital Geriatric Unit
East Glamorgan General Hospital Geriatric Unit

Pembrokeshire
Withybush Hospital Re-roofing

Powys
Machynlleth Hospital Development

South Glamorgan
University Hospital of Wales (UHW)—
Paediatric Cardiac Unit
Cardiac Catheter Laboratories
New Telephone Switchboard
Replacement Energy Sources
Upgrading of Intensive Care and Coronary Care Unit
Velindre Hospital, Linear Accelerator Suite

West Glamorgan
Singleton Hospital West Ward Block
Tonna Hospital Redevelopment
Morriston Hospital School of Nursing

3. *Planned*

Clwyd
Ysbyty Maelor Wrexham, Phase 2
Hollywell Community Hospital
Ysbyty Glan Clwyd Mental Illness Unit

East Dyfed
West Wales General Hospital Upgrading

Gwent
Torfaen Acute Mental Illness Unit
Abergavenny Acute Mental Illness Unit
Ebbw Vale Community Hospital

Gwynedd
Cefni Hospital New Ward Unit and Rehabilitation Facilities

South Glamorgan
University Hospital of Wales (UHW)—
MRI Scanner
New Kitchen

West Glamorgan
Morriston Hospital—
Scheme 4
Pathology Department
Singleton Hospital—
Linear Accelerators
Staff Residences

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Manhole Covers

Mr. Ted Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will take steps to restrict the import of manhole covers from India.

Mr. Redwood: My officials are currently considering with the industry whether there is evidence of serious injury to domestic producers arising directly from the import of manhole covers from India which might justify a call for safeguard restrictions. Any decision to impose restrictions would ultimately be a matter for the European Community.

Engineering Council

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has received a copy of the Engineering Council report published on 29 May concerning the Government's assistance to manufacturing industry to encourage innovation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Engineering Council published a press release on 29 May on its written evidence to the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology which is looking at "Innovation in Manufacturing Industry". My Department has given both oral and written evidence to this inquiry. The Government will respond in the normal manner to the Select Committee's findings once its report has been published.

Postal Services

Mr. Mudd: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects the publication, in draft form, of the European Community Green Paper on postal services.

Mr. Forth: The European Commission expects to publish the Green Paper on postal services towards the end of the year.

Broadcasting

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will ask the Director General of Fair Trading to investigate changes in share ownership of TVS Entertainment Ltd. and other companies holding ITV franchises.

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 25 June, at column *25*. The provisions of the Broadcasting Act 1981 operate without prejudice to the Fair Trading Act 1973. Under the latter, the Director General of Fair Trading has a duty to keep himself informed of mergers and proposed mergers. If changes in the share ownership of a company holding an ITV franchise gave rise to a merger situation qualifying under the Fair Trading Act for reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission he would advise my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on whether it should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Documents

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what criteria he uses when deciding which documents to pass on to the Public Record Office.

Mr. Forth: The Department complies with the guidelines issued by the Public Record Office on the selection of documents for permanent preservation. Decisions on which documents are transferred to the Public Record Office for this purpose are taken in consultation with PRO inspecting officers.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what percentage of and how many documents in 1989 he estimates were *(a)* passed on to the Public Record Office intact, *(b)* passed on to the Public Record Office in censored form, *(c)* retained by his Department in full, *(d)* retained by his Department in part, *(e)* destroyed, *(f)* otherwise disposed of and *(g)* otherwise unaccounted for.

Mr. Forth: Department of Trade and Industry estimates relate to files reviewed and are for *(a)* 4·3 per

cent.—4,463, *(b)* nil, *(c)* 7·3 per cent.—7,540 retained for second review, *(d)* nil, *(e)* 88·4 per cent.—91,339, *(f)* nil, *(g)* nil.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what system he employes to classify, log and otherwise record each document generated by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The Department of Trade and Industry raises and registers files by number and title, incorporating relevant documents, using widely accepted filing conventions for paper records.

Girobank

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects the sale of Girobank to be completed.

Mr. Forth: I am pleased to announce that the sale of Girobank by the Post Office to the Alliance and Leicester Building Society was completed today. When the sale of Girobank was announced in June 1988, we set out a number of factors which we and the Post Office agreed would be important in evaluating bids. I am fully satisfied that the sale to Alliance and Leicester meets these points. Alliance and Leicester is clearly well placed to develop and expand Girobank's business, a major objective of the sale. It will contribute to greater choice in banking services, while preserving the close links between Girobank and Post Office Counters. I am confident that both Girobank's staff and its customers will benefit from its new position in the private sector and I wish Girobank's management and staff well in this new and challenging stage of the bank's development.

My right hon. Friend the then Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster announced in April 1989 that, following a competitive bid process, the Post Office had agreed to sell Girobank to the Alliance and Leicester Building Society for £130 million, subject to later adjustments to the sale price principally in respect of the difference between the book and market values of Girobank's gilts portfolio. Following these adjustments, the proceeds received by the Post Office will amount to £111·9 million, comprising the repayment of Girobank's subordinated debt issued to it by the Post Office of £39 million, and payment by Alliance and Leicester of £72·9 million for the equity.

Euroenviron Initiative

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what support his Department has given to companies under the Euroenviron initiative; and to what use the measures were put.

Mr. Forth: Since the launch of Eureka Euroeviron in the United Kingdom on 23 January 1990, three research proposals involving United Kingdom companies have been approved for which the total DTI grant amounts of £1·2 million over three years. The projects will investigate a new technique for incinerating plastic shredder residues from car breaking with heat recovery and no emission of toxic fumes; the development of an ultra-low emission dry cleaning machine, and research into the recovery, and re-use for high quality goods, of plastic materials derived from automobile production and disposal.

The DTI has supported four successful regional seminars on Euroenviron since the London launch; a further nine are planned. These are maintaining the momentum developed by the initiative.

Brewing Industry

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received from the Small Independent Brewers Association regarding the implementation of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I have received no representations from the Small Independent Brewers' Association since 1 May 1990, when the measures to ensure that tenants of the major brewers were free to take a guest beer came into effect. Specific complaints should be put to the Office of Fair Trading.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what monitoring he is undertaking of the practical effects of the implementation of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on brewing.

Mr. Redwood: The Director General of Fair Trading is monitoring compliance with the measures and has taken steps to keep their effects under review.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will meet a delegation of the Small Independent Brewers Association to discuss the tactics of the big five breweries against Small Independent Breweries Association products since the implementation of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report.

Mr. Redwood: I should be happy to consider any request for a meeting. However the Director General of Fair Trading is monitoring compliance with the measures we have introduced, and it is important that any evidence of anti-competitive behaviour is passed to his office.

Scottish Consumer Council

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what grants he has made to the Scottish Consumer Council in each of the past five years.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 28 June 1990]:* The grant in aid paid by my Department to the Scottish Consumer Council, through the National Consumer Council, in each of the last five years with an estimate for the current year is as follows:

	£
1985-86	203,100
1986-87	215,796
1987-88	218,534
1988-89	238,076
1989-90	243,113
[1]1990-91	271,000

[1] Estimate.

Air Fares

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress has been made in the reduction of air fares within the European Economic Community; and if he is able to provide some examples of specific reductions.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have been asked to reply.

The European Community Council of Transport Ministers meeting on 18 June agreed on a second stage of air transport liberalisation measures and committed themselves to complete a single market in aviation by the end of 1992. The agreement reached will give airlines greater freedom to set innovative fares and take advantage of more open access to the market. The setting of fare levels is a matter for airlines' commercial judgment. However, where the United Kingdom has already concluded liberal bilateral agreements with other countries, fares have come down.

ENERGY

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when the contract was signed for the appointment of Imagination to be the co-ordinator of the share offer presentations for the forthcoming offers for sale of the successor companies to the area electricity boards in England and Wales.

Mr. Wakeham: I announced the joint appointment, with the 12 regional electricity companies, of Imagination as co-ordinators of the share offer presentations for the forthcoming offers for the sale of the 12 RECs on 4 May 1990, after terms and conditions had been agreed. A formal contract incorporating these terms and conditions is being prepared.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, further to his answer of 16 February, *Official Report*, column *468*, whether any of the estate agents advising on electricity privatisation have consulted him regarding any potential conflict of interest.

Mr. Wakeham: Before they were appointed all the property advisers assured my Department that they had no conflict of interest with their appointment. As I said in my reply of 16 February to the hon. Member, the contracts with these firms require them to consult me regarding potential conflict of interest. I am satisfied that these arrangements have enabled my Department to ensure that any such potential conflicts are avoided.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his answer of 5 February, *Official Report*, columns *454-58*, if he will list any changes in the companies retained by him to advise on electricity privatisation.

Mr. Wakeham: Since I last replied the following changes have taken place in the Department's contracts with advisers.

The following contracts have come to an end:

Adviser and Area
Lloyds Bank—Receiving Bank and Registrar
Lamb and Edge—Property Valuers
Grimley J. R. Eve—Property Valuers
Gerald Eve—Property Valuers
Knight Frank Rutley—Property Valuers
Weatherall Green and Smith—Property Valuers
Debenham Tewson and Cheshire—Property Valuers
Hartnell Taylor and Cook—Property Valuers
Connell Hallum and Brackett—Property Valuers
Matthews and Goodman—Property Valuers
Cook and Arkwright—Property Valuers
Bernard Thorpe—Property Valuers
Henry Butcher—Property Valuers
Lloyd Northover—Design Consultants

New contracts have been concluded with:

Adviser and Area
Price Waterhouse—Reporting accountants
Russell Reynolds—Recruitment consultants for Chairmanship, National Power
R. L. Associates—Setting X for Area Boards
Lincoln Hannah—Press cutting service
Imagination—Roadshow organisers
WCRS—Flotation advertising
Debenhams Tewson and Chinnocks—Property Valuers
Edward Erdman—Property Valuers
Rowe and Pitman—Brokers (in the process of being formally appointed)

In addition, a number of operational contractors have been or are in the process of being employed to provide the major flotation operations:

(i) the Share Information Office;
(ii) printing; and,
(iii) share application processing.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he intends to publish the valuations of the assets of the electricity supply industry which have been carried out by the firms of estate agents that are advising him.

Mr. Wakeham: The reports of the surveyors are commercially confidential documents.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether the firms of estate agents for the 12 electricity distribution companies, the National Grid Company, PowerGen and National Power appointed jointly with his Department were chosen by competitive tender.

Mr. Wakeham: The Government's central adviser. Jones Lang Wootton, was appointed by a competitive process. The valuers for the 12 regional electricity companies, the National Grid Company, PowerGen and National Power were joint appointments with the industry. These were either chosen by a competitive process or on the basis of existing arrangements with the individual companies concerned. For example, valuers who had recently advised a company were often picked in the interest of obtaining their accumulated knowledge and expertise with the related downward pressure on fees. This is an established practice in privatisation exercises. In all such cases the fees chargeable were renegotiated as if their selection had been on the basis of a competitive process. The Department drove a hard bargain in these cases and succeeded in obtaining charge rates which were well below the companies' normal commercial rates.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) whether annex B to the Cabinet Office guidelines on Government publicity applies to his specialist PR and marketing adviser and the PR and marketing adviser to his Department and the electricity supply industry;

(2) whether page 10 of the document entitled "The Government Information Officer" applies to his special PR and marketing adviser and the PR and marketing adviser to his Department and the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Wakeham: I have nothing to add to the letter I wrote to the hon. Member on 11 April 1990 on these matters.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has anything to add to his answer of 9 May, *Official Report*, column *167*, about James Capel's advice to journalists.

Mr. Wakeham: James Capel has not advised journalists of the value at which the electricity supply industry will be sold. It is in any case much too early to produce a meaningful estimate of the likely proceeds of the sale. Exactly how James Capel respond to speculation or questions about the likely proceeds which appear in the press is a matter for it.

Hinkley Point C

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will publish the report of the Hinkley Point C inquiry before he announces his decision and before the House rises for the summer adjournment.

Mr. Wakeham: I set out how I intend to handle the report of the Hinkley Point C public inquiry in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Woodford and Wanstead (Mr. Arbuthnot) on 14 June, at column *287*.

The report is long and detailed, and I am considering it carefully. I am not yet able to say whether I shall have reached a conclusion before the House rises.

Cullen Inquiry

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to receive the report of the Cullen inquiry.

Mr. Wakeham: The timing of the report is a matter for Lord Cullen. I look forward to receiving it when it is available.

National Power

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what firms of recruitment consultants have been employed to assist him in appointing a new chairman of National Power; and what is the cost to public funds.

Mr. Baldry: Russell Reynolds Associates has been appointed to assist my Department in finding a chairman of National Power. The fees being paid are commercially confidential.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to announce the selection of the new chairman of National Power.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) on 14 May, *Official Report*, column *317*.

Documents

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what criteria he uses when deciding which documents to pass on to the Public Record Office.

Mr. Wakeham: The Department complies with the guidelines issued by the Public Record Office on the selection of documents for permanent preservation. Decisions on which documents are transferred to the Public Record Office for this purpose are taken in consultation with PRO inspecting officers.

Mr. Fearn: to ask the Secretary of State for Energy what percentage of and how many documents in 1989 he estimates were *(a)* passed on to the Public Record Office intact, *(b)* passed on the the Public Record Office in censored form, *(c)* retained by his Department in full, *(d)* retained by his Department in part, *(e)* destroyed, *(f)* otherwise disposed of and *(g)* otherwise unaccounted for.

Mr. Wakeham: No document falls due for selection and transfer to the Public Record Office until it is at least 30 years old. A document's suitability for permanent preservation under the terms of the Public Records Act 1958 will be reviewed during that period. The Act does not require statistics to be kept in the form requested and to do so would inevitably incur disproportionate cost. However, in order to comply with their duties under the Act, Departments are obliged to ensure that all documentary records are properly preserved with a view to possible transfer to the Public Record Office and eventual release to the public. The general criteria under which the Department may retain documents over 30 years old are set out in section 3(4) of the Public Records Act.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what system he employs to classify, log and otherwise record each document generated by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: All documents raised in the Department are held on registered files.

Nuclear Power Stations (Decommissioning)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (M. Kirkwood), 25 June, *Official Report*, column *115*, what contingency plans his Department has to facilitate or undertake third-stage decommissioning in the event of the operators of nuclear power stations having inadequate resources to do so; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) of 6 March 1990 at column *556*.

Sizewell B

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will place a report on the breakdown of the £990 million avoidable costs that would be saved by cancellation of the Sizewell B nuclear power station in the Library.

Mr. Baldry: This is a matter for Nuclear Electric plc. The precise breakdown of the avoidable cost is commercially confidential. I have already indicated that the breakdown can be made available on this basis by the company to the Energy Select Committee if the Committee wishes.

Nuclear Electric

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to receive Nuclear Electric's review of its financial position.

Mr. Wakeham: We continue to review Nuclear Electric's financial position with the company's management and auditors. This work is nearing completion. The company's opening report and accounts will be published during the summer.

THE ARTS

Museums and Galleries (Maintenance)

55. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what further donations have been received from the private sector for the maintenance of museums and galleries since he last reported to the House.

Mr. Luce: The national museums and galleries which I sponsor receive continual support from the private and commercial sector for the maintenance and enhancement of their buildings.

Recent notable successes include the new Japanese galleries at the British museum, made possible by a £5 million public appeal in this country and Japan.

Repertory Theatres

56. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what information he has on the financial position of the repertory theatres in London and the regions.

Mr. Luce: At the end of March, cumulative deficits for building-based drama companies funded directly by the Arts Council represented about 6 per cent. of their total turnover. This figure conceals a wide variation in the performance of individual companies and takes no account of this year's substantial increase in Arts Council grants.

Opera

57. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he last officially visited the opera; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I attended a performance of Mozart's "La Clemenza Di Tito" at the Guildhall school of music and drama on 18 June.

Regional Film Theatres

58. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he intends to meet the British Film Institute to discuss the development of regional film theatres.

Mr. Luce: I regularly meet the chairman of the British Film Institute to discuss current issues.

National Gallery

59. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he last met the trustees of the national gallery to discuss their buildings and exhibits.

Mr. Luce: I meet frequently the trustees and directors of all the national museums and galleries which I sponsor to discuss a wide range of issues.

Community Theatre

60. **Mrs. Golding:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what financial support was provided in 1989 by *(a)* the Arts Council and *(b)* regional arts associations for community theatre productions.

Mr. Luce: Both the Arts Council and the regional arts associations fund a large number of companies which give performances in small-scale local venues.

Museums and Galleries (Charges)

61. **Sir David Price:** To ask the Minister for the Arts in light of the recent decision by the House of Lords in the case of James *v.* Eastleigh Borough Council, what advice he is now offering to museums and galleries in respect of concessionary admission charges for elderly people.

Mr. Luce: I shall ensure that the national museums and galleries which I sponsor are aware of this recent decision by the House of Lords.

British Film Institute

62. **Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he last met the British Film Institute to discuss its future plans for film production.

Mr. Luce: I meet the chairman and director of the British Film Institute from time to time. A wide variety of matters is discussed.

Wilding Report

63. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received following his statement on the Wilding report.

Mr. Luce: I have received representations from a wide range of interested organisations and individuals.

70. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on the progress in implementing the Wilding report reforms.

Mr. Luce: Since I announced on 13 March my proposals for a new structure of arts funding, good progress has been made by Mr. Mason, the manager of the reforms. The steering group I established has met regularly, and in addition, working groups of the interested parties are looking at detailed issues. As a result I hope to announce further decisions in the near future.

Theatre Royal, Bristol

64. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he plans to visit the Theatre Royal, Bristol.

Mr. Luce: I have no immediate plans to do so.

Business Sponsorship

65. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he intends to change the regulations for Government support for business sponsorship; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I recently announced a number of changes to the rules of my business sponsorship incentive scheme when it resumed in April of this year. The changes enable the scheme to focus on first-time sponsors and I am delighted that it is proving more effective than ever in bringing new money to the arts.

Liverpool Theatres

68. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will vist the Playhouse and Everyman threatres, Liverpool.

Mr. Luce: I have no plans to visit either of the two theatres at present.

West Yorkshire Playhouse

69. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he intends next to vist the West Yorkshire Playhouse, Leeds.

Mr. Luce: I shall be visiting the West Yorkshire Playhouse on 24 July.

Courtauld Gallery

71. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he intends to vist the new Courtauld gallery.

Mr. Luce: I visited Somerset house for a preview of the new Courtauld galleries in May and was delighted to attend the reception to celebrate the opening of the galleries, in the presence of Her Majesty the Queen Mother, on 12 June.

Arts Council

72. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he last met the chairman of the Arts Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I meet Mr. Palumbo regularly to discuss matters of mutual interest.

Museums and Galleries

73. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what proportion of museums and galleries are located outside south-east England.

Mr. Luce: According to the museums data base project, published in 1987, 67·5 per cent. of museums and galleries in Great Britain and Northern Ireland are located outside south-east England.

Haymarket Theatre, Leicester

74. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will visit the Haymarket theatre, Leicester.

Mr. Luce: I have no plans to do so at present.

Natural History Museum

66. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received from civil service trades unions on the effects of the level of funding for the natural history museum.

Mr. Luce: I have received no formal representations from civil service trade unions about the level of funding at the natural history museum.

However, I understand that at a recent meeting between the Office of Arts and Libraries and Institution of Professionals, Managers and Specialists (IPMS) representatives, the IPMS outlined its concerns about the museum's proposals, including the level of funding. My officials have subsequently briefed me on the outcome of the meeting.

Future funding for the natural history museum will be considered in conjunction with funding bids received from other national museums and galleries.

67. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received from academics about the effects of the level of funding for the natural history museum.

Mr. Luce: I have received many representations from members of the academic community about the level of funding for the natural history museum.

I will be considering future funding for the natural history museum in conjunction with funding bids received from other national museums and galleries.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received from the institution of Professionals, Managers and Specialists about the effects of the level of funding for the natural history museum.

Mr. Luce: I have received no formal representations from trade unions about the level of funding at the natural history museum.

However, I understand that at a recent meeting between the Office of Arts and Libraries and Institution of Professionals, Managers and Specialists (IPMS) representatives, the IPMS outlined its concerns about the museum's proposals, including the level of funding. My officials have subsequently briefed me on the discussion. I shall be meeting the chairman and director of the museum to discuss their plans in the near future.

Future funding for the natural history museum will be considered in conjunction with funding bids received from other national museums and galleries.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on his actions following the Adjournment debate on Wednesday 20 June to help funding problems at the natural history museum.

Mr. Luce: The natural history museum has submitted to me its corporate plan for the years 1990 to 1995. My officials will discuss the plan with the museum next month in the context of the corporate plan discussions held with all the national museums and galleries I sponsor. I will consider fully the points raised in the Adjournment debate on Wednesday 20 June before making the financial allocations to the national museums and galleries to be announced this autumn. I shall be meeting the chairman and director of the natural history museum to discuss their strategy and the wider issues.

ENVIRONMENT

Disabled People (Access to Sporting Events)

88. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received regarding access to sporting events for people with disabilities, following publication of the Taylor report.

Mr. Moynihan: We have received no such representations. Better access for disabled people to sporting events was recommended in my review report "Building on Ability" published in August 1989. I believe that improvements to football grounds as recommended in Lord Justice Taylor's report provide the opportunity to improve access for disabled people to this type of sports facility.

Blue Plaques

88. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements are to be made to sponsor and regulate the commemorative blue plaques in London of eminent literary and artistic persons.

Mr. Trippier: The present arrangements are set out in paragraph 4 of schedule 2 to the Local Government Act 1985. This provides that

"The [Historic Buildings and Monuments] Commission may in Greater London, and a London borough council may in its borough—

(a) provide; and

(b) on any conspicuous part of a house, building or place, with the consent of its owner, erect,

a commemorative plaque, tablet or sign indicating an event or matter of public interest in connection with the house, building or place or its site, and may in that area, with the like consent, maintain any such plaque, tablet or sign erected by it or by any other person or body, whether before or after the passing of this Act."

There are no plans to change this provision.

The commission has been operating a commemorative plaques scheme since April 1986 and has erected 35 plaques on London buildings. The commission also maintains a variety of commemorative plaques erected during the last hundred years by the Royal Society of Arts, London county council and the Greater London council. Information is not available on schemes operated by London boroughs.

The commission is always prepared to consider fresh suggestions for commemorative plaques.

Empty Property

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many public sector and private sector properties are currently estimated to be standing empty in England and Wales.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning on 27 February 1990 to the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) at columns *180-81*.

For information about Wales, I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Census Statistics

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he took to determine that the use of the statistics available from the 1981 census in order to determine the distribution of central support for local authority expenditures provides a sufficient and reliable means of recognising the particular needs and conditions of those local authorities which have experienced change since that study.

Mr. Chope: We use the latest information available on a consistent basis for all local authorities in calculating entitlements to revenue support grant. For a number of social characteristics of local authorities the information from the 1981 census of population is the latest available on this basis.

Documents

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of, and how many documents in 1989 he estimates were *(a)* passed on to the Public Record Office intact, *(b)* passed on to the Public Record Office in censored form, *(c)* retained by his Department in full, *(d)* retained by his Department in part, *(e)* destroyed, *(f)* otherwise disposed of and *(g)* otherwise unaccounted for.

Mr. Chris Patten: No document falls due for selection and transfer to the Public Record Office until it is at least 30 years old. A document's suitability for permanent preservation under the terms of the Public Records Act 1958 will be reviewed during that period. The Act does not require statistics to be kept in the form requested and to do so would inevitably incur disproportionate cost. But in order to comply with their duties under the Act, Departments are obliged to ensure that all documentary records are properly preserved with a view to possible transfer to the Public Record Office and eventual release to the public. The general criteria under which the Department may retain documents over 30 years old are set out in section 3(4) of the Public Records Act.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria he uses when deciding which documents to pass on to the Public Record Office.

Mr. Chris Patten: My Department complies with the guidelines issued by the Public Record Office on the selection of documents for permanent preservation. Decisions on which documents are transferred to the Public Record Office for this purpose are taken in consultation with PRO inspecting officers.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what system he employs to classify, log and otherwise record each document generated by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: My Department operates in accordance with procedures agreed with the Public Record Office, which are designed to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Public Records Act 1958.

Antarctica

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether either his Department or the Nature Conservancy Council will be represented on the United Kingdom delegation to the special consultative meeting of Antarctic treaty parties to discuss comprehensive measures for the protection of the Antarctic environment to be held in Santiago, Chile in November.

Mr. Chris Patten *[holding answer 29 June 1990]:* The composition of the United Kingdom delegation to the meeting in Santiago has not yet been decided. I will consider the matter in due course with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs who has overall responsibility for the Government's policy on the Antarctic.

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he or his Department have had with conservation experts in Australia with regard to the Australian Government's refusal to sign the convention for the regulation of Antarctic minerals resources and proposals to declare Antarctica a wilderness reserve.

Mr. Chris Patten *[holding answer 28 June 1990]:* None.

Planning Legislation

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes he proposes to make to planning legislation in England and Wales; and whether he has any plans to abolish county structure plans.

Mr. Michael Spicer *[holding answer 29 June 1990]:* The White Paper "The Future of Development Plans" (Cm

569), published in January 1989, set out the Government's proposals for the reform of the development plan system. Other legislative proposals have been the subject of recent consultation papers. Further announcements will be made in due course about the timing and content of any legislation.

Charitable Housing Associations

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in devising a new system of portable discounts to enable tenants of charitable housing associations to purchase their own homes; and when he expects this to be in operation.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 29 June 1990]:* The Housing Corporation has now introduced a new scheme, known as the tenants' incentive scheme, under which registered housing associations, whether or not charitable, may give grants to assist their tenants to move out and buy homes of their own.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will make an order under section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 confirming the charge caps on those local authorities which neither accepted the caps he proposed nor put forward alternative amounts within the statutory period of 28 days of their being designated for capping.

Mr. Chris Patten *[pursuant to his reply, 19 June 1990, c. 477-78]:* I have today laid before the House a draft order, under section 104 of the 1988 Act, setting out my decisions on the final caps of 16 authorities which did not accept the caps which I proposed for them and put forward alternative amounts within the 28-day period. I have carefully considered the cases which the authorities made in support of the figures which they suggested. In the case of Brent, Southwark and Wigan I have decided to increase the caps which I proposed for them by £2·5 million, £2·5 million and £2 million respectively. In the case of the other 13 authorities I have decided to confirm their caps at the level I originally proposed.

The 16 authorities and their caps included in the draft order are as follows:

Implied reduction in budget

	£	£ million	£ per adult
Avon	507,100,000	26·6	37
Barnsley	132,000,000	10·0	59
Brent	244,200,000	5·1	26
Calderdale	125,400,000	7·5	52
Derbyshire	520,600,000	40·0	56
Greenwich	203,000,000	10·0	65
Hammersmith and Fulham	155,800,000	11·7	99
Haringey	206,500,000	10·0	71
Islington	185,800,000	3·7	30
Lambeth	285,100,000	8·8	51
North Tyneside	122,900,000	6·8	45
Rochdale	144,000,000	8·0	51
Rotherham	157,500,000	7·9	39
St. Helens	122,800,000	3·9	29
Southwark	229,400,000	11·6	71
Wigan	192,600,000	8·0	34

As I said on 6 June in response to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton), I laid before the House that day a draft section 104 order confirming Hillingdon's cap.

Mr. Ron Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate how many people have refused to pay the community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope *[pursuant to his reply, 27 June 1990 c. 261]:* This information is not available centrally but reports indicate that in many authorities over 80 per cent. of charge payers have begun to make payments and there are very few cases of wilful refusal to pay.

SCOTLAND

Scottish Homes

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will direct Scottish Homes to turn over to the relevant district councils the property maintained by them on behalf of their tenants and recent owner-occupiers of Scottish Homes; and if he will make the finance available to the district council for this adoption to take place.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is for Scottish Homes, in discussion with individual district councils to decide whether it is appropriate to make alternative arrangements for future maintenance of common amenities. Responsibility for bearing a proportionate share of the burden of common charges is clearly set out in the sales agreement under which former tenants of Scottish Homes have purchased their houses.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the cost of the poll tax transitional allowances scheme in Scotland in 1989-90 if the calculation of benefit had been based on the actual poll tax paid by each applicant in that year rather than the notional figure used in the present scheme.

Mr. Rifkind: It was never the intenion to base the scheme on charges higher than those considered necessary by the Government to maintain local authority services in the transition from domestic rates to the community charge. A range of projections was made when the scheme was under consideration which included the use of actual rather than assumed charges.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what he estimates will be the total cost for the transitional allowance for the poll tax for the financial year 1990-91; how many people he expects will benefit from transitional allowances in that year; and what the average payment per head will be;

(2) what is his latest estimate of the total cost of the transitional allowance for the poll tax in Scotland in the financial year 1989-90; how many poll tax payers will benefit; and what the average payment per head will be.

Mr. Rifkind: Formal returns have not yet been made to the Scottish Office by local authorities of the numbers of people entitled to relief and the amount of relief awarded either individually or in total. Figures so far received by

my Department of the numbers entitled to relief and of the cost are both informal and incomplete and do not provide an adequate basis for making a reliable estimate of the kind sought by the hon. Member.

Forestry

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the Forestry Commission will be withholding grants from Economic Forestry Group plc in relation to its applications for woodland grant in view of the damage to sites of archaeological importance at Tarland and Ashkirktown; whether it intends to initiate prosecutions; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The damage done to these archaeological sites was in clear breach of the Forestry Commission's woodland grant scheme approvals which required that they should be protected. The commission will therefore be witholding grants on both applications. The Tarland site was not scheduled; a decision has still to be taken on the question of a prosecution in respect of the damage done to the scheduled Ashkirktown site.

Kidney Disease

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of renal units; and how many persons are receiving kidney dialysis treatment.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There are 12 units in Scotland providing treatment for around 900 patients per annum.

Benefit (Young People)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what response he has made to the statement of the president of the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents of 18 May on the effects of changes in the payments system on young people no longer able to qualify for benefit.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am placing in the Library the official unrevised copy of the speech which I made at the annual meeting of the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents on 18 May in response to the remarks of the president of the association. I may have added some impromptu remarks.

Documents

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of, and how many documents in 1989 he estimates were *(a)* passed on to the Public Record Office intact, *(b)* passed on to the Public Record Office in censored form, *(c)* retained by his Department in full, *(d)* retained by his Department in part, *(e)* destroyed, *(f)* otherwise disposed of and *(g)* otherwise unaccounted for.

Mr. Rifkind: The records of the Scottish Office are specifically exempted from the Public Records Act 1958, but broadly similar procedures are followed with a view to transferring records to the Scottish Record Office. No document falls due for such selection and transfer until it is at least 30 years old. A document's suitability for permanent preservation will be reviewed during that period. The Act does not require statistics to be kept in the form requested and to do so would inevitably incur disproportionate cost. There is an obligation under the Act to ensure that all documentary records are properly preserved with a view to possible transfer and eventual release to the public. The general criteria under which a Department may retain documents over 30 years old are set out in section 3(4) of the Public Records Act.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what criteria he uses when deciding which documents to pass on to the Public Record Office.

Mr. Rifkind: The Department complies with the guidelines issued by the Public Record Office on the selection of documents for permanent preservation. Decisions on which documents are transferred to the Scottish Record Office for this purpose are taken in consultation with the SRO inspecting officer.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what system he employs to classify, log and otherwise record each document generated by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: Because of the large number involved no attempt is made to classify, log and record each document, although a standard registry system is in operation which provides for the opening, titling, indexing and maintenance of official files.

Agency Nurses

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many agency-based nurses are employed on a casual labour basis in *(a)* Scottish and *(b)* Glasgow hospitals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information about agency nurses is collected twice yearly and the average whole-time equivalents for the quarter ending 31 March 1990 for Scotland and Glasgow hospitals are 215 and 127 respectively.

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to reduce the number of trained, experienced nurses who rely for employment on agency-based casual labour; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government do not have a policy of direction of labour and nurses are free to seek employment in the public, private or voluntary sectors.

Halons

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take steps to ensure that every precaution is taken in Scottish hospitals to prevent release of halons in the atmosphere; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The use of halogens in Scottish hospitals is not widespread and is mainly confined to fire extinguishers used to combat small and incipient fires in specialised areas such as computer or electrical installations, where a suitable alternative is not available and where the overall safety of patients and staff is paramount.

School Assemblies

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice he has given to education authorities concerning religious observance at school assemblies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 28 June 1990]:* A draft circular on religious education and religious observance was issued for consultation on 29 March 1990. Reponses are currently being studied.

School Buses

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice he has given to education authorities concerning child safety on school buses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 28 June 1990]:* The safety of pupils using transport made available by education authorities is the responsibility of the authority concerned. Authorities have a duty of care arising from the common law, and also specifically from the provisions in the Schools (Safety and Supervision of Pupils) (Scotland) 1990 Regulations.

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to how many children travel to school each day by school bus in each education authority area.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 28 June 1990]:* The information requested, taken from a survey undertaken in October 1989 and assembled by education authority area, is as follows:

Region	*Children receiving free transport by bus*
Borders	3,243
Central	7,532
Dumfries and Galloway	9,205
Fife	14,495
Grampian	16,249
Highland	9,478
Lothian	10,037
Strathclyde	52,126
Tayside	6,790
Orkney	1,322
Shetland	1,810
Western Isles	2,048
TOTAL	134,335

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice he has given to education authorities concerning the criteria to be applied in determining whether a child qualifies to travel to and from school by school bus.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 28 June 1990]:* Education authorities are required by the terms of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 to make free travel arrangements for pupils who live outwith the statutory walking distance from school. The Act defines the statutory walking distance as being two miles for pupils under the age of eight years and three miles for any other pupils. Authorities have discretion to provide free travel arrangements in other circumstances.

Community Care

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will make available to local authorities sufficient funding to allow them to provide domiciliary night care facilities as an integral part of their community care programmes; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make available to Strathclyde regional council the extra funding needed to allow the council to provide community care facilities for the handicapped.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 28 June 1990]:* It is for local authorities to decide on the allocation of funds to particular services for which they may be responsible. I am aware that Strathclyde regional council already provides an extensive range of services for handicapped people and other persons requiring care in the community and that these include domiciliary services extending to some provision for night care.

Water Supply (Aluminium Levels)

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the supply zones for which applications have been made for authorisation to relax the standard for aluminium set in the water regulations; and whether in each case he proposes to give consent.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 29 June 1990]:* Relaxation of the standard has been requested and authorised in respect of naturally-occurring aluminium in the following supply zones:

Dumfries and Galloway
- Black Esk
- Penwhirn
- Carsphairn
- New Abbey
- Wanlockhead
- Palnure

Grampian
- Inverurie—Newbigging (until 1995)
- Strathdon

Highland
- Ardvasar/Dariach
- Balmacara
- Beauly Firth
- Carbost
- Dornie
- Drumbeg
- Durness
- Glendale
- Kentallen
- Kilchoan
- Kilmaluag
- Kilmuir
- Kinlochbervie
- Laid
- Mellon Udrigle
- Melness
- Nedd
- Onich
- Penifiler
- Poolewe
- Portree
- Raasay
- Scourie
- Shieldaig
- Spean Bridge
- Spey Valley—Blackpark
- Strontian
- Uig/Idrigill

Strathclyde
- Brodick (until 2000)
- Catacol (until 1997)

Kilmory/Sliddery (until 1998)
Lochranza (until 2000)
Pirnmill (until 1997)
Loch Gair (until 1996)
Portnahaven (until 1991)
Nerebolls (until 1991)
Craighouse (until 1999)
Ross of Mull (until 1994)
Kilberry (until 1999)
Arinagour (until 1997)
Iona (until 1995)
Mulindry (until 1994)

New Abbey Water Supply

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the New Abbey water supply in Dumfries and Galloway will meet the European Community drinking water standard for aluminium at the end of 1990 when the article 20 delay expires.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 29 June 1990]:* Because of naturally-occurring aluminium in the source water, the supply concerned will not always meet the standard. A relaxation of the standard has been authorised to cover this for the time being, but the water authority intends to develop schemes to remove the need for such relaxation.

Water Supply

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the supply zones which are the subject of the new article 9 designations which he referred to in his answer of 20 February, *Official Report*, column *727*.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 29 June 1990]:* The additional derogations for naturally occurring aluminium referred to in my answer of 20 February relate to the following supply zones:

Dumfries and Galloway—Black Esk and Lochinvar.
Highland—Beauly Firth and Spey Valley.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the answer of 20 February, *Official Report*, column *727*, what target dates have been agreed for compliance with the standards for aluminium, nitrate and bacteria listed in the water regulations for each of the individual water supply zones.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 29 June 1990]:* Water authorities have given undertakings to carry out improvement programmes in which the target dates fro compliance with the aluminium standard are as follows:

	Date
Borders	
Galashiels	1992
Ale	1996
Earnscleuch	1994
Central	
Alloa	1990
Falkirk (part)	1990
Cowie, Plean	1992
Kirkintilloch	1994
Falkirk, Larbert	1990
Bridge of Allan	1995
Dumfries and Galloway	
Lochfoot (mainly industrial supply)	1999
Killylour	1992
Euchan	1995
Auchneel (phase 1)	1992
Auchneel (new works)	1997
Winterhope	1996
Grampian	
Fraserburgh	1993
Glendye	1996
Buckie	1995
Glenlatterach	1994
Keith	1994
Lossiemouth (High Level)	1994
Highland	
Achiltibuie	1997
Bonar Bridge	1996
Caithness (except Wick)	1996
Carrbridge	1997
Corpach, Caol	1998
Culrain	1997
Dornoch	1996
Dounreay	1991
East Ross/Black Isle	1994
Garve	1995
Golspie/Brora	1996
Nairn	1995
Roskhill/Dunvegan	1992
Strathnairn	1994
Wick	1996
Lothian	
Edinburgh Fairmilehead (8 zones)	1997
Rosebery (5 zones)	1990
Hopes (4 zones)	1995
Stobshiel (2 zones)	1994
Whittinghame (6 zones)	1994
Pateshill (8 Zones)	1992
Strathclyde	
Afton Supply	1991
Kilmaurs	1993
Auchenlongford	1991
Kilmarnock (N)	1993
Kilmarnock (S)	1993
Darvel Valley	1993
Stewarton	1993
Saltcoats/Stevenston	1993
Irvine	1993
Prestwick	1993
Troon	1993
Ardeer	1993
Ayr	1993
Girvan (N)	1993
Girvan (S)	1994
Skelmorlie	1995
Kilbirnie	1992
Dumbarton Town	1996
Bearsden, Clydebank	1996
Howwood, Johnstone	1991
Greenock	1996
Renfrewshire East	1995
Renfrewshire South	1994
Inverclyde West	1996
Crookfur, Newton Mearns	1995
Paisley Town	1994
Neilston, Uplawmoor	1996
Ardrishaig	1995
Campbeltown	1994
Carradale	1992
Clachan	1994
Rothesay	1994
Furnace, Minard	1994
Inveraray	1994
Dunoon, Kilmun etc	1993
Muasdale	1992
Strachur	1995

	Date
Tarbert	1995
Tighnabruaich	1991
Tobermory	1993
Bowmore, Port Ellen	1993
Orkney	
Mainland (S and E)	1994
Kirkwall	1996
Mainland (N and W)	1997
Westray	1994
Sanday	1995
Shetland	
Aith	1994-95
Bressay	1990-91
Burra Isle	1992-93
Cullivoe	1990-91
Cunningsburgh	1991-92
Gulberwick/Quarff	1994-95
Lerwick	1990-91
Mid Yell	1990-91
Reawick/Skeld	1996-97
Sandness	1995-96
South Yell	1990-91
Sullom Voe	1990-91
Walls	1995-96
Whalsay	1995-96

The nitrate standard is exceeded only occasionally in nine small sources in Grampian region. By 1991, the standard will be met by blending and the sources will be replaced by the following dates:—

	Date
Grampian	
Auchengoul	1991
Auchedly	1990
Belhelvie	1990
Berefold	1994
Easterton	1995
Kennethmont	2000
Pitcaple	1991
Tarves	1995
Insch, Largie	1995

Improvements to deal with occasional non-compliance with bacteriological standards are scheduled to be made as follows:

	Date
Borders	
Tweedsmuir	1994
Bowland	1990
Dumfries and Galloway	
All zones by except	1990
Lochfoot	1991
Glengap	1991
Winterhope	1991
Highland	
Achiltibuie	1997
Ballachulish	1992
Bonar Bridge	1996
Bracadale	1995
Carrbridge	1992
Culrain	1997
Durness	1995
East Ross/Black Isle	1992
Fassfearn	1997
Gairloch	1992
Garve	1995
Harrapool	1994
Helmsdale	1992
Inverness Balmore	1991
Kinlochbervie	1991
Kinlochleven	1992
Kyleakin	1995
Kyle of Lochalsh	1992
Lairg	1992
Lochcarron	1991
Lochinver	1992
Onich	1992
Rosehall	1997
Roskhill/Dunvegan	1992
Ullapool	1992

A further 108 small—100 to 1,000 cu m per day—or very small—less than 50 cu m per day—supplies will have improved disinfection installed between 1992 and 1997.

	Date
Lothian	
Edinburgh, Alnwickhill	1992
Edinburgh, Fairmilehead	1993
Torduff	1993
Castle Moffat	1993
Whittinghame	1994
North Pentlands	1993
Pateshill	1994

SOCIAL SECURITY

Disabled People (Benefits)

12. **Mrs. Roe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement as to how many people will benefit from the review of benefits for disabled people set out in "The Way Ahead".

28. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people will benefit from the review of benefits for disabled people set out in "The Way Ahead".

Mr. Scott: We estimate that some 850,000 people will benefit from the proposals set out in "The Way Ahead" (Cm. 917) and the interim measures we announced in October 1989.

15. **Mr. Hannam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he is taking to improve the structure of benefits for disabled people and their carers.

Mr. Scott: Our proposals to improve the balance and structure of social security benefits for disabled people and their carers are set out in "The Way Ahead: Benefits for Disabled People" (Cm. 917) which we put before the House on 10 January. In 1993-94 the changes will add some £300 million to the £8·3 billion we are already spending on benefits for long-term sick and disabled people and their carers.

Maintenance

13. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the progress of his proposals to oblige fathers to provide financial support for their children born out of marriage with whom they no longer reside.

Mr. Newton: Social security law has always placed an obligation on parents to maintain their children, and this

applies just as much to an unmarried father as to any other parent. We are continuing to look at ways of ensuring that parents do as much as possible to meet this obligation.

44. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to announce proposals resulting from his review of the maintenance system; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Action is already being taken to improve the existing arrangements: for example, by various measures included in the current Social Security Bill, by the proposals recently announced by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office to make court orders more effective, and by giving greater emphasis to work in DSS offices on recovering maintenance. A wide-ranging review is in progress, with the aim of making proposals for reform later this year.

38. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what progress he has made towards securing greater recovery of the costs of child support from divorced and separated fathers.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The amount of maintenance recovered from absent parents in respect of their children for whom income support is claimed was £155 million in 1988-89. We have met our target of £180 million for 1989-90, and we expect the sum collected to increase further to £260 million in 1990-91.

22. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the Government's plans to improve the collection of maintenance for lone parents.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Government are concerned that so few lone parents receive maintenance. We are taking action to improve the effectiveness of the present system. There are measures in the Social Security Bill and the Home Office have announced proposals on payment arrangements. Our far-reaching review of maintenance is moving forward with all urgency, examining where changes need to be made in the current system in the longer term.

18. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to announce proposals resulting from his review of the maintenance system; and if he will make a statement.

23. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to announce proposals resulting from his review of the maintenance system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friends to the reply given earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell).

Benefit Increases

14. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the net cost of a further increase in the basic retirement pension of £5 for a single person and £8 for a couple if this were extended to income support and to national insurance benefits tied to the pension, and the cost of an increase in child benefit to £8·60 a week.

17. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the net cost of a further increase in the basic retirement pension of £5 for a single person and £8 for a couple if this were extended to income support and to national insurance benefits tied to the pension, and the cost of an increase in child benefit to £8·60 a week.

34. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the net cost of a further increase in the basic retirement pension of £5 for a single person and £8 for a couple if this were extended to income support and to national insurance benefits tied to the pension; and the cost of an increase in child benefit to £8·60 a week.

35. **Mr. Tracey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the net cost of a further increase in the basic retirement pension of £5 for a single person and £8 for a couple, if this were extended to income support and to national insurance benefits tied to the pension; and the cost of an increase in child benefits to £8·60 a week.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I am sure that my hon. Friends, and indeed all hon. Members, will be interested to know that to increase state pensions and related pensions in the way described would cost in the order of £3 billion, and to increase child benefit would have a net cost of £635 million.

Disabled People (Discrimination)

16. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he next intends to meet representatives of disabled persons' organisations to discuss the problem of discrimination against disabled people.

Mr. Scott: I regularly meet the disability organisations to discuss a wide range of issues. I met the Disability Benefits Consortium—an umbrella group representing over 250 disability organisations—on 5 April in the second of a series of meetings to discuss their views on "The Way Ahead".

Blind People (Disability Allowance)

19. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make the new disability allowance available to blind people to cover the full range of costs incurred by their disability.

Mr. Scott: The new disability allowance, which will extend help to less severely disabled people of working age and below, will benefit people with seeing disabilities who have mobility or care needs. The surveys of disability carried out by the OPCS found that attendance allowance and mobility allowance are well directed towards disabilities causing the heaviest expenditure. These benefits also provide help to people with other disabilities, such as blindness, which are frequently combined with locomotion or self-care disabilities. The new disability allowance will build on that relatively simple framework.

Computerisation

20. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how he anticipates his Department's computerisation programme will benefit social security claimants.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Computerisation has improved the speed and accuracy with which benefit claims are

handled. It provides a better service to the public on inquiries. It has enabled us to move benefit processing work out of London to areas where it is easier to recruit and retain good staff—and so provide a better service to our London customers.

National Insurance

21. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people would be affected by the removal of the upper earnings limit for national insurance contributions.

26. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many standard rate tax payers would be affected by the removal of the upper earnings limit from national insurance contributions.

29. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many standard rate tax payers would be affected by the removal of the upper earnings limit for national insurance contributions.

46. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people would be affected by the removal of the upper earnings limit for national insurance contributions.

Mr. Hague: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people would be affected by the removal of the upper earnings limit for national insurance contributions.

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many standard rate taxpayers would be affected by the removal of the upper earnings limit for national insurance contributions.

Mr. Scott: I refer my hon. Friends to the reply given earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce).

24. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what recent representations he has received regarding the level of national insurance contributions.

Mr. Scott: Representatives of the business community have recently urged us to retain the upper earnings limit for employees' national insurance contributions and to keep employers' national insurance contributions as low as possible.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many standard rate taxpayers would be affected by the removal of the upper earnings limit for national insurance contributions.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: If the upper earnings limit for employees' National Insurance contributions were removed it is currently estimated that about 3·3 million people would pay more contributions, of whom about 2·1 million people would be standard rate tax payers. If the corresponding upper profits limit for self-employed people were also removed it is estimated that about another 500,000 people would pay more contributions, of whom about 200,000 would be standard rate tax payers.

War Widows (Pensions)

25. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to review the current guidelines governing payment of war widows' pensions.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: There are no plans to change the existing provisions for war widows pensions.

Disabled People

27. **Mr. Lester:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what further measures the Government are planning to introduce to help those disabled people whose care and mobility needs are less severe.

Mr. Scott: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) on 5 March at columns *525-26*.

47. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the measures introduced in April to assist sick and disabled people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Improvements made to social security benefits for long-term sick and disabled people in April were as follows:

(i) an increase in the income support and housing benefit disability premium of £1 for single people and £1·60 for couples above the normal uprating;
(ii) an increase in the income support and housing benefit disabled child's premium of £8·55 above the normal uprating to bring it into line with the adult disability premium;
(iii) an increase in the earnings limit for invalid care allowance from £12 to £20;
(iv) an increase of £6·50 in the therapeutic earnings limit for invalidity benefit and severe disablement allowance.
(v) the extension of attendance allowance to disabled babies under two. Carers of disabled babies will automatically be eligible to claim invalid care allowance.
(vi) the extension of mobility allowance to people who are deaf and blind

These measures form the first stage of our plan to provide a better balanced structure of benefits for disabled people as set out in "The Way Ahead" (Cm. 917). Taken together these proposals will provide extra help for some 850,000 people.

37. **Mr. Alfred Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he is taking to improve the structure of benefits for the most severely disabled people.

Mr. Scott: The existing benefits structure already recognises that disabled people have extra needs. The OPCS survey findings showed that attendance allowance and mobility allowance are well targeted on the most common of the more costly disabilities. The new disability allowance will build on that framework by offering a relatively simple and readily understood benefit to both severely and moderately disabled people. The closer alignment of invalidity benefit and severe disablement allowance with the proposed age-related addition will substantially increase the benefit income of large numbers of very severely disabled people by up to £10 a week at current rates.

Child Benefit

30. **Mr. Janman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the reduction in public expenditure, if child benefit were paid only to households with a gross income of £13,000 per annum or less and for the first two children only.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: About £3·1 billion after allowing for associated extra expenditure of around £185 million on income-related benefits.

40. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement about single parent child benefit.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: One-parent benefit is paid in addition to child benefit to a person responsible for bringing up children on his or her own. One-parent benefit provides a worthwhile addition to the income of a lone parent who is working and not dependant on income support. It is now 12 per cent. higher in real terms than in 1979.

Water Filters

31. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what provision he makes for benefit recipients whose health requires the use of water filters to claim reimbursement for the installation costs of such filters.

Mr. Scott: Help with these costs may be available from the social fund. An income support recipient can apply for a community care grant or budgeting loan. Anyone, whether in receipt of income support or not, can apply for a crisis loan if there is serious risk to their health or safety.

Income-related Benefits

32. **Mr. Alison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by how much spending on income-related benefits for families with children has increased since April 1988.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Estimated expenditure on income-related benefits for families with children increased by some £280 million in cash terms between 1988-89 and 1989-90. This figure represents the latest available cash estimate based on the annual statistical inquiry and the public expenditure White Paper 1990. It excludes housing benefit paid to unemployed families with children, as this figure cannot be separately identified. It also excludes forecast expenditure for the current financial year.

Taking into account the additional annual expenditure on family credit compared with family income supplement, the real increases in children's rates in the income-related benefits in April 1989 and the real increases in the income support family premium and adult credit in family credit in the current financial year, the provision —including forecast spending for families with children —now amounts to over £350 million a year extra in real terms compared with the position before the reforms were introduced in April 1988.

Household Incomes

33. **Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to publish the 1985 to 1987 figures on households below average income.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Following the recent report by the Social Services Committee, we have asked DSS statisticians to carry out some additional work on the composition and characteristics of the lowest income group, as the Committee suggested. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State wrote to the hon. Member last month explaining that, while this additional work meant that publication would not be possible on the timescale originally envisaged, we had suggested that the statisticians should aim to complete their work within about four to five weeks. This work has not yet been completed.

Income Support

36. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what improvements have occurred recently in the quality of service to claimants of income support; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Since the Government reforms were introduced in 1988, the social security system has become simpler for claimants to understand and easier for staff to operate. There have been very real all-round improvements in the standards of service to the public. For example, in 1989-90 the average time taken to clear income support claims improved by 25 per cent. to 4·7 days compared with 1987-88, the last year before the reforms, and error rates fell by 31 per cent. to 7·9 per cent.

41. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what the level of income support will be for youth training participants in this financial year.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Participants in youth training do not normally receive income support. Instead they receive a training allowance which exceeds the income support rates of personal allowance. The minimum value of the lower and higher levels of the youth training allowance are £29·50 for trainees aged 16 and £35 for trainees aged 17.

42. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest figure he has for the number of lone parent families in receipt of income support; and how many such families were receiving supplementary benefit five years ago.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The latest published figures are those quoted in my reply to my hon. Friend on 2 April at column *487*.

Deaf People

39. **Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the implications of the recent report "The Way Ahead" for deaf people.

Mr. Scott: A number of proposals set out in "The Way Ahead: benefits for disabled people" will benefit people who are deaf. The new disability allowance, which will extend help to less severely disabled people of working age or below, will benefit people who have mobility or care needs. People disabled early in life who have not been able to build up a national insurance contributions record will gain from the introduction of an age related addition in severe disablement allowance; and those who are partially capable of work will be helped by the new disability employment credit, which will make it easier for disabled people to take up or remain in work. Some deaf people will have already benefited from the extension of mobility allowance to people who are both deaf and blind, introduced in April 1990 as part of "The Way Ahead" proposals.

Invalid Care Allowance

43. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he next expects to review the criteria for payment of invalid care allowance.

Mr. Scott: The earnings limit for people receiving invalid care allowance was increased, in April, from £12 to

£20 per week. The extension of attendance allowance for children under age two from April, and for terminally ill people without the normal six-month waiting period, proposed for October 1990, will enable more carers to qualify for invalid care allowance. We also propose to introduce, from October, a £10 carers premium into income support, housing benefit and community charge benefit for those receiving invalid care allowance.

Housing Benefit

45. **Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will extend housing benefit to include water rates.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: No. Housing benefit is intended to meet reasonable accommodation costs. Help towards water charges forms an integral part of overall income support levels.

Carers' Premium

48. **Sir David Price:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people he expects will benefit from the introduction of the new carers' premium.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We expect the new £10 premium to be introduced in October, to help 30,000 carers through income support, housing benefit and community charge benefit.

Invalidity Pension

49. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the real increase in value of the invalidity pension since 1979.

Mr. Scott: The available information is as follows:

	£	*Per cent.*
November 1979 rates in cash	23·30	—
April 1990 rate in cash	46·90	—
Per cent. change in real terms	—	−3·1
Per cent. change between uprating periods November 1978-79 to April 1989-90	—	5·4

Notes:

(i) The figures relate to basic invalidity pension. In addition a claimant may be entitled to Invalidity Allowance and/or Additional Pension.

(ii) The percentage change between uprating periods is calculated as the percentage change in the average real value of benefits during the uprating periods April 1989 to April 1990, as compared to the period November 1978 to November 1979.

Departmental Service

50. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how his Department is planning to improve its service to the public.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Since the Government reforms were introduced in 1988, the social security system has become simpler for claimants to understand and easier for staff to operate. There have been very real all-round improvements in the standards of service to the public. Nevertheless, there is still room for further improvement, particularly in inner London. This is being tackled by relocating work which requires no face-to-face contact away from 21 London offices to areas where recruitment and retention of staff is easier. There is already substantial evidence that significant improvements in accuracy, clearance times and quality of service are being made.

By 1991 the major programme underway to computerise social security operations will bring major improvements in service standards to all local offices. It produces faster and more accurate payments and decisions, and provides fast access to information needed to deal with queries.

In 1991, the new agency to administer the benefit systems will be established, having as one of its principal aims a high quality service for customers.

Community Charge Benefit

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether any information has been supplied by Lambeth council to his Department about claims for community charge benefit in that borough.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Community charge benefit caseload data have yet to be supplied by Lambeth council.

Attendance and Mobility Allowances

Mr. Terry Fields: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants were examined by doctors acting on behalf of his Department for the purpose of assessing attendance allowance and mobility allowance claims over the last 12 months; and what was the average fee paid to doctors for such examinations.

Mr. Scott: Approximately 700,000 claimants were examined in connection with claims to attendance and mobility allowances in the last 12 months. An average fee figure is not available. The fee per case in the financial year 1989-90 varied between £25·90 and £69·80 depending on the location and the duration of the examination. The great majority of these would be at or near the lower end of that range.

Mr. Terry Fields: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many complaints his Department has received about doctors arising from examinations for mobility allowance and attendance allowance; and how such complaints are dealt with.

Mr. Scott: No central record is kept of the number of complaints against examining medical practitioners—EMPs. In fact, many apparent complaints are appeals against the decision made. The number of complaints against the doctors' conduct, manner or behaviour is very small in relation to the 700,000 examinations carried out annually.

Each of these complaints is investigated by the Department's regional office senior medical officer. The doctor is sent a copy of the report of the examination complained about and of the claimant's complaint and asked for his or her comments. Subsequent action depends on the individual complaint and the past record of the EMP. In extreme cases the doctor's employment on this work may be terminated forthwith and an explanation of the reason sent to him or her.

If it appears that the doctor requires guidance on the attitude required to be shown to claimants in order to prevent further complaints this is done. If it becomes clear that despite such guidance the doctor is unsuited to the work, for one reason or another, further work is not made available and an explanation is sent to the doctor.

In all cases a detailed reply is sent to the complainant including, where appropriate, an indication of action which has been taken as a result of the complaint.

Mr. Terry Fields: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many medical centres his Department operates for the purpose of medical examinations for people who claim mobility allowance; and how many medical centres there are in each region.

Mr. Scott: Examinations in connection with initial and renewal claims to mobility allowance are normally carried out in the examining doctor's own surgery premises. Appeals and references to a medical board are dealt with in the Department's medical adjudication centres which also deal with industrial injuries, war pensions and severe disablement allowance examinations.

The number of these centres is 94, divided among the regions as follows:

	Numbers
North-East	13
London North	14
London South	11
Wales/South-West	17
Midlands	14
North-West	12
Scotland	13

Earnings Allowance

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many new claims for reduced earnings allowance were made in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I regret that the information is not available because details of claims for industrial injuries benefit do not distinguish between claims for disablement benefit and reduced earnings allowance. However, a special count undertaken last year suggests that about 23,000 claims for reduced earnings allowance were made in 1989.

Residential Homes

Mr. Norris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he intends to commission the study into the costs of residential care and nursing homes outlined in the Government's response to the second report of the House of Commons Social Services Committee of Session 1989-90 (HC 257) on "Community Care: The Future Funding of Private and Voluntary Residential Care".

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We have commissioned the management consultants Price Waterhouse to undertake a rapid investigation into the costs of running residential care and nursing homes across the country.

Industrial Deafness

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list, by category, those statistics his Department maintains or has access to with regard to claims for pensions for industrially-induced deafness.

Mr. Scott: Information is maintained on the numbers of successful claims for occupational deafness and those disallowed either on the occupational criteria or on hearing losses below the prescribed standard.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people dropped out of making claims for pensions for noise-induced industrial deafness at the stage where the five-year rule came into effect in *(a)* St. Helens and *(b)* the United Kingdom in the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Scott: The available information is as follows. In Great Britain during the five-year period April 1985 to March 1990 a total of 11,742 claimants were disallowed because they had not made a claim within five years of

leaving the relevant occupation—the provision intended by regulation 25 of the Industrial Injuries (Prescribed Diseases) Regulations 1985. They were not, therefore, referred for audiometric testing to establish whether they satisfied the necessary level of hearing loss. For St. Helens the relevant figure for the four-year period to March 1990 is 107 claimants. Individual figures for St. Helens are no longer available for periods before April 1986.

Documents

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what criteria he uses when deciding which documents to pass on to the Public Record Office.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Department complies with the guidelines issued by the Public Record Office on the selection of documents for permanent preservation. Decisions on which documents are transferred to the Public Record Office for this purpose are taken in consultation with PRO inspecting officers.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what system he employs to classify log and otherwise record each document generated by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Department receives and generates many millions of documents in the course of its business, and it would be impracticable, and disproportionately costly, to record these individually. However, the vast majority are placed with related documents, on registered files in accordance with well-established registry practices.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of and how many documents in 1989 he estimates were *(a)* passed on to the Public Record Office intact, *(b)* passed on to the Public Record Office in censored form, *(c)* retained by his Department in full, *(d)* retained by his Department in part, *(e)* destroyed, *(f)* otherwise disposed of and *(g)* otherwise unaccounted for.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: No document falls for selection and transfer to the Public Record Office until it is at least 30 years old. A document's suitability for permanent preservation under the terms of the Public Record Act will be reviewed during that period. The Act does not require statistics to be kept in the form requested and to do so would inevitably incur disproportionate cost. However, in order to comply with their duties under the Act, Departments are obliged to ensure that all documentary records are properly preserved with a view to possible transfer to the Public Record Office and eventual release to the public. The general criteria under which the Department may retain documents over 30 years old are set out in section 3(4) of the Public Records Act.

Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many reported payments were actually made under the Vaccine Damage Payment Act, for the past five years up until the latest year for which figures are available.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The figures are in the table.

Year	*Payments*
1985	26
1986	25
1987	9
1988	4
1989	4

Note:
Payment is often made in a different year to that in which the award decision is made because of the need to set up a trust fund.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total cost of running the vaccine damage payment scheme for the last three years up until the latest year for which figures are available.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information is in the table.

Year	*£*
1987	[1]310,000
1988	[1]155,000
1989	[1]105,000

[1] Figures contain both administrative costs and payments made under the Act.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications his Department received last year for payments under the Vaccine Damage Payment Act; and what were the figures for each year from 1985.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information is in the table.

Year	*Number of applications*
1985	79
1986	79
1987	65
1988	39
1989	53

Income Support

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), *Official Report*, 21 June, column *707*, if he will give, for the latest date available, a list of the offices with the number of cases with a poll tax deduction in place.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The latest count, completed in May 1990, showed that 22 offices in Scotland had income support cases with a deduction to clear community charge arrears. Up to this date no deductions had been taken in England and Wales. The table records the offices and the number of such deductions in each office.

Local Office	*Number of cases*
Airdrie	1
Ayr	145
Bathgate	19
Bellshill	28
Clydebank	7
Cumbernauld	1
Dumbarton	37
East Kilbride	49
Falkirk	746
Galashiels	264
Glasgow (Anniesland)	20
Glasgow (Bridgetown)	36

Local Office	Number of cases
Glasgow (Maryhill)	20
Glasgow (Parkhead)	17
Glasgow (Partick)	123
Glasgow (Provan)	154
Glasgow (Springburn)	73
Hamilton	2
Johnstone	16
Motherwell	3
Stirling	672
Stranraer	1

DEFENCE

Air Traffic Control

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the results of the recent survey in which military and civilian air traffic controllers were required to report all infringements of rule 21 and rule 36 airspace.

Mr. Neubert: This is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. I understand, however, that the results of this survey, which was completed on 30 June, have not yet been analysed.

HMS Centurion

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why the new security blockhouse/gatehouse at HMS Centurion cannot be used.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The installation will not be in use until ancillary works and some external roadworks have been completed.

Regency Net and Cemetery Net Systems

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) at which Royal Air Force, Royal Air Force/United States Air Force and United States Air Force bases in the United Kingdom there are facilities of the regency net and cemetery net systems;

(2) what is the purpose of the regency net antenna being erected at RAF St. Mawgan.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Cemetery net is a command and control system for United States Commander in Chief Europe. There are cemetery net facilities currently located at RAF Mildenhall and RAF Greenham Common. Regency net is intended as a successor to cemetery net. Details of the regency net configuration are classified, although I can confirm that a facility is currently being planned for RAF St. Mawgan.

Regiments

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, further to his reply of 14 June, *Official Report*, columns *326-27* concerning regiments, if he will give the total annual cost of each regiment listed.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I regret that the information is not available in the form requested.

Low Flying

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to produce a new edition of his Department's booklet entitled "Defence and the Environment"; and if he will include information on low-flying training, and the measures taken to reduce its environmental impact.

Mr. Neubert: There are no plans at present to produce a new edition of this booklet. However, the actions taken by the Department to protect the environment, and to minimise the adverse effects of its essential activities, were recently summarised on pages 51-52 of the 1990 "Statement on the Defence Estimates" (Cm. 1022-I). This included information on measures taken to reduce the environmental impact of low-flying training.

Atlantis

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department is participating in the United States space shuttle Atlantis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Ministry of Defence has no plans to participate in the United States space shuttle Atlantis.

Training and Consultancy Services

Mrs. Rosie Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps his Department and the armed forces have taken to contract out training and consultancy services to small companies; what contracts on what subjects have been let in the last two years; what value these contracts were for; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: We continue to review and market test support activities including training and consultancy services and to award contracts where it is demonstrated that they will provide the best value for money. The choice of contractor will depend entirely upon the proposals received following normal competitive tender action. Small firms are encouraged to participate in this process whenever possible through the Ministry of Defence's successful small firms initiative, and by the new suppliers service of MOD.

Complete figures on training and consultancy services are not held centrally but it has been possible to identify a number of contracts let over the past two years in the following areas:

Year	Number of contracts	Total value (£)
Driver training		
1988-89	16	305,680
1989-90	19	168,000
Technical support services		
1988-89	2	593,486
1989-90	6	524,020
Academic services		
1988-89	Nil	Nil
1989-90	2	2,048,870

In addition, details of management and computer consultancy contracts for the last two years were given to my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) by my hon. Friends the Minister of State and the then

Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement on 28 March 1990 at column *236* and 4 April 1989 at column *130*.

Stornoway Airport

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date the prohibition of practice approaches by military aircraft at Stornoway airport took effect.

Mr. Neubert: The prohibition of non-essential overshoots by Tornado F3 aircraft based at RAF Stornoway when it is active came into effect for the latest activation, from 25 to 29 June. The prohibition will be extended to visiting aircraft in time for the next activation in September.

RAF Shackleton Crash

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress of the investigation into the RAF Shackleton crash on Harris on 30 April.

Mr. Neubert: A military aircraft accident summary will be published once the report of the board of inquiry has been completed.

St. David's Airfield, Pembrokeshire

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what *(a)* navigational lights and *(b)* security lights will be provided on the proposed over-the-horizon radar at St. David's airfield, Pembrokeshire; and at what height and distance they will be visible.

Mr. Alan Clark: There are no plans to include navigational lights on the proposed over-the-horizon radar at St. David's airfield, Pembrokeshire. The whole question of lighting will, however, be fully addressed in the environmental impact assessment.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any non-Ministry of Defence sites were included in the 166 sites examined for the over-the-horizon radar proposed for St. David's airfield, Pembrokeshire.

Mr. Alan Clark: No. All the 166 sites considered for the installation of either the transmitter or the receiver for the proposed trial of the over-the-horizon radar in the United Kingdom were already in Ministry of Defence use.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the proposed landscaping of the over-the-horizon radar site at St. David's airfield, Pembrokeshire.

Mr. Alan Clark: Proposals for landscaping of the over-the-horizon radar site at St. David's airfield, Pembrokeshire, will be addressed in the environmental impact assessment.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes in current flight patterns, including take-offs and landings, will be necessary at RAF Brawdy if the proposed over-the-horizon radar installation is constructed on the St. David's airfield, Pembrokeshire.

Mr. Alan Clark: If the proposed over-the-horizon radar is built at St. David's airfield, minor adjustments in the radar pattern and westerly departure routes from RAF Brawdy may be necessary. There will be no impact on safety or operations at RAF Brawdy.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what alternative arrangements are proposed to provide RAF Brawdy with an emergency landing strip if the present one at St. David's airfield, Pembrokeshire, is used for the proposed over-the-horizon radar installation.

Mr. Alan Clark: St. David's airfield is not normally designated as an emergency landing strip for RAF Brawdy. A number of airfields will remain available to aircraft on training flights from RAF Brawdy in an emergency. Which is used would depend on where the training flight took place, and weather conditions.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply of 19 June, *Official Report*, column *782*, if he will make a statement on other means by which radar cover could be provided similar to that proposed as a result of the installation of over-the-horizon radar at St. David's airfield, Pembrokeshire.

Mr. Alan Clark: At present, radar coverage of the United Kingdom air defence region to the north of the United Kingdom is provided principally by airborne early warning (AEW) aircraft, supplemented by shipborne radars, ground-based microwave radars in the United Kingdom, and allied ground-based systems in Iceland and Norway. Studies have concluded that a northward-looking over-the-horizon radar (OTHR) located in this country could make a particular contribution to the air defence of the United Kingdom by providing wide area coverage of a considerable proportion of the Norwegian sea. This would allow greater flexibility and efficiency in the use of scarce air defence assets that would otherwise have to fulfil this role; it would also allow frequent coverage of areas where the regular use of AEW aircraft would be uneconomic.

Alternative methods of providing similar coverage to an OTHR, such as space-based radar or additonal AEW aircraft, would cost substantially more.

Documents

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what criteria he uses when deciding which documents to pass on to the Public Record Office.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Department complies with the guidelines issued by the Public Record Office on the selection of documents for permanent preservation. Decisions on which documents are transferred to the Public Record Office for this purpose are taken in consultation with PRO inspecting officers.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of and how many documents in 1989 he estimates were *(a)* passed on to the Public Record Office intact, *(b)* passed on to the Public Record Office in censored form, *(c)* retained by his Department in full, *(d)* retained by his Department in part, *(e)* destroyed, *(f)* otherwise disposed of and *(g)* otherwise unaccounted for.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No document falls due for selection and transfer to the Public Record Office until it is at least 30 years old. A document's suitability for permanent preservation under the terms of the Public

Records Act 1958 will be reviewed during that period. The Act does not require statistics to be kept in the form requested and to do so would inevitably incur disproportionate cost. However, in order to comply with their duties under the Act, Departments are obliged to ensure that all documentary records are properly preserved with a view to possible transfer to the Public Record Office and eventual release to the public. The general criteria under which the Department may retain documents over 30 years old are set out in section 3(4) of the Public Records Act.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what system he employs to classify, log and otherwise record each document generated by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Documents in the Ministry of Defence are normally placed on departmental files and processed in accordance with departmental instructions and registry practices.

Dishonesty Offences

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defen ce if he will list *(a)* the nature of the offence and *(b)* the sentence for each of the soldiers currently serving sentences for dishonesty at Colchester military corrective training centre.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces will write to the hon. Member.

British Aerospace

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply of 26 June, on how many occasions in the last six months he has been in communication with British Aerospace regarding the future equipment requirements of the armed forces.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Ministry of Defence has regular contacts with British Aerospace on a wide range of procurement issues.

Service Personnel (Scotland)

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many service personnel are stationed in Scotland.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As at 1 July 1989, the latest date for which figures are available, 20,035 service personnel were stationed in Scotland.

Catering Firms

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information on Army training schedules is normally provided to private catering firms that have won Army contracts.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Catering firms that win Army contracts are given the information necessary to enable the company to provide the required service. Such information is given in the contract document. Contracts with firms providing catering facilities to summer camps have hitherto included the location and dates of the particular event, and the name of the unit attending camp. Instructions have been given that in future the name of the unit should not appear in the contract.

Tornado

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he discussed with British Aerospace the possibility of not authorising work on the order for the eighth batch of Tornado aircraft.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Ministry of Defence maintains close and detailed discussions with all its main suppliers; the timing and content of these discussions is commercially confidential between the Ministry of Defence and the suppliers.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply of 25 June, when he informed British Aerospace of his decision not to authorise work on the order for the eighth batch of Tornado aircraft.

Mr. Alan Clark: The contracting authority for the Tornado is the NATO Multi-Role Combat Aircraft Development and Production Management Agency (NAMMA). It was informed of the decision on 18 June. British Aerospace was advised informally on the same day.

Deansway Catering

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the security classification of the list given to Deansway Catering detailing training schedules for the Army.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No list was provided to Deansway Catering Company Ltd. detailing training schedules. Information on the contracted tasks was provided in the individual contracts for the specific events. The contract documents bore no security classification.

Combat Aircraft

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply of 26 June, about assessed need for combat aircraft, in which sections of the 1989 and 1990 "Statement on the Defence Estimates" the assessed need for combat aircraft is described.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As I pointed out in my reply of 26 June, at column *199*, the assessed need for combat aircrft has been reflected in the plans described in successive "Statements on the Defence Estimates". In the case of the 1989 and 1990 statements, I refer the hon. Gentleman to paragraphs 329 and 330 and tables 4 and 5 and to paragraphs 315 and 316 and table 5 respectively.

Local Government Finance

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of service personnel in Scotland will receive reimbursement due to high community charges.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Eleven per cent. of those service personnel living in service accommodation, in the current year, will receive refunds of part of their accommodation charges as a result of community charges which exceed the service average by more than £1 per week.

CIVIL SERVICE

Trade Unions

79. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service when he last met representatives of the civil service trade unions; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher).

Agencies

80. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what further agencies will be established in the next four months.

81. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what proposals he has to create further next steps agencies.

Mr. Luce: My noble Friend the Lord Chancellor today launched the Land Registry as an executive agency. This takes the total number of established agencies to 32, together employing some 80,000 staff. In addition, I expect the national physical laboratory and national engineering laboratory to be launched as executive agencies soon.

EMPLOYMENT

Liverpool Skill Centre

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what discussions took place between his Department and METEL prior to the dismissal of the Liverpool skill centre staff including the timing of these discussions.

Mr. Eggar: The sale negotiations with Merseyside Education Training Enterprise Ltd—METEL—for the Liverpool skill centre were carried out by the Department's professional advisers, Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte. The negotiations extended over a period of months and were concluded on 14 May.

As far as staff redundancies were concerned, METEL had made it clear, prior to the sale, to staff, trade unions, and the Department that they would need to restructure the business, and that redundancies were expected. The speed with which the redundancies came, and that they affected all staff, was not signalled in the pre-sale discussions, and was a great disappointment to the Department.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what provisions were made in respect of the numbers of people to be employed at the METEL skill centre in Liverpool after its sale.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 23 June 1990]:* The skill centre was sold as a going concern, and no specific provisions were made in respect of the exact number to be employed by METEL after completion of the sale.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many of the staff working at the Liverpool skill centre were dismissed on 15 May; and if he was informed that the dismissals would take place prior to the sale of the skill centre.

Mr. Eggar: *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* All the staff working at the Liverpool skill centre on 15 May 1990 were made redundant. The Department was not informed, prior to the sale, that all staff would be dismissed.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether the recognised trade unions were consulted about the dismissals on redundancy terms of the staff of the Liverpool skill centre, in line with the Employment Act 1975; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* On completion of the sale of the Liverpool skill centre, the issues of trade union recognition and consultation on redundancies became matters for the new owners.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the future of Liverpool skillcentre as a training centre.

Mr. Eggar: The sale of the training business at the Liverpool skill centre to Merseyside Education Training Enterprise Limited was negotiated on the basis that it would continue to operate as a training business. Now that the centre is in the private sector, it is for METEL to determine the future of the business. However, I have no reason to believe that METEL will not continue to operate a training business from the centre.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if will he give details of how the severance payments to the staff of the Liverpool skill centre who have been dismissed will be funded.

Mr. Eggar: Merseyside Education Training Enterprise Limited, which purchased the business of the Liverpool skill centre, made it clear, prior to the sale, to staff, trade unions, and the Department that they would need to restructure the business, and that redundancies were expected. In negotiating the price for the training business, some allowance was made for anticipated redundancies. It will be for METEL to pay the severance payments agreed with staff.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make it his policy to offer reinstatement into the civil service to the staff of the Liverpool skill centre who have been dismissed.

Mr. Eggar: An agreement has been reached with the trade unions concerned for my Department to give preferential consideration to applications for reinstatement from staff employed in the Skills Training Agency —STA—immediately before the sales were concluded, including those at the Liverpool skill centre, if they are made redundant in the private sector within three years of completion of the sales. Within the terms of the agreement everything that can be done to help staff from the Liverpool skill centre will be done.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the effect on training provision in the Liverpool area of the Liverpool skill centre developments.

Mr. Eggar: Now that the Liverpool skill centre is in the private sector it is for the purchaser, Merseyside Education Training Enterprise Limited to determine the future of the business. I have no reason to believe that the sale of the Liverpool skill centre to METEL will adversely affect training provision in the Liverpool area.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. Terry Fields: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many businesses started under the enterprise alowance scheme in each year since 1982; how many businesses folded after the first year; and how many continued operating into the *(a)* second, *(b)* third, *(c)* fourth, *(d)* fifth, *(e)* sixth, *(f)* seventh, *(g)* eighth and *(h)* ninth year.

Mr. Nicholls: The numbers of businesses started under the enterprise allowance scheme are as follows:

Financial year	*Total number*
February 1982 to July 1983 (pilot in five parts of the country)	3,331
August 1983 to March 1984 (national implementation)	27,629
1984-85	46,037
1985-86	60,037
1986-87	86,751
1987-88	106,305
1988-89	98,522
1989-90	77,886
April 1990 to May 1990	12,662

Information on the number of businesses which folded after the first year, and those which continued operating into further years is not collected from all former scheme participants. However, regular national follow-up surveys are undertaken and the latest show that of businesses completing a full year on the scheme 74 per cent. were still trading six months later, 9 per cent. were in paid employment or other self-employment, and 15 per cent. were unemployed. The remaining 2 per cent. were sick, retired, or provided no answer; and two years later 65 per cent. were still trading.

Job Clubs

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) for each region and for Great Britain as a whole, how many people *(a)* have joined job clubs, and *(b)* have left job clubs, from 1 April 1989 to the latest possible date; and *(c)* what were their destinations, showing how many entered a job, employment training, or another positive scheme;

(2) what information he has about the relative value for money of internal job clubs and agency job clubs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The employment service became an executive agency on 2 April 1990. Mr. Mike Fogden, the Employment Service Agency's chief executive, will be replying in writing to the hon. Lady.

Restart Courses

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether unemployed claimants who have been out of work for over two years and who are quarterly attenders will be required to attend restart courses if they turn down the offer of a place on another scheme from this autumn; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Yes. The requirement to attend a restart course will apply to all claimants who have been unemployed for two years or more and who, at subsequent restart interviews, refuse all offers of help made to them.

Unemployed Claimants

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many unemployed claimants in each month since 9 October 1989, for each region and for Great Britain as a whole, have been *(a)* issued with warning letters for not actually seeking work, *(b)* had their claims referred to an adjudication officer for not actively seeking work, *(c)* had their claims (i) allowed or (ii) disallowed and *(d)* have been referred to an adjudication officer for refusing suitable employment; and how many of those in *(d)* have had their benefit disqualified.

Mr. Eggar: The employment service became an executive agency on 2 April 1990. Mr. Mike Fogden, the Employment Service Agency's chief executive, will be replying in writing to the hon. Lady.

Hotel and Catering Training

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has for the future of hotel and catering training.

Mr. Nicholls: The White Paper "Employment for the 1990s" set out the Government's view that independent and voluntary arrangements are more likely to be effective than those agreed by statute.

In November 1989 the Government accepted proposals put forward by the chairman of the hotel and catering training board for new independent training arrangements in the hotel and catering industry. These new arrangements were prepared following full consultation with the main employer associations in the industry.

TVEI, St. Helens

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on technical and vocational education initiative spending in St. Helens, with special reference to any budgetary changes.

Mr. Eggar: The St. Helens TVEI pilot programme, which started in 1986, has a budget of £2 million. A total of £1·3 million has been spent up to 31 March 1990. St. Helens enters the extension phase of TVEI in September 1990. A sum of £238,000 has been offered for the first year of the extension phase.

Health and Safety

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will detail the number of *(a)* deaths, *(b)* major injuries, *(c)* minor injuries and *(d)* dangerous occurances in the construction industry for each year from 1974 to 1989.

Mr. Nicholls: The available information for Great Britain is provided in the tables. Data for the latest year commencing 1 April 1989 are not yet available.

Injuries occurring within the construction industry, as reported to all Health and Safety Commission/Health and Safety Executive enforcing authorities

Year	Employees			Self-employed			Non-employed		
	Fatal	Major[2]	Over three day[3]	Fatal	Major[2]	Over three day[3]	Fatal	Major[2]	Over three day[3]
[1]1974	166	[6]	34,432	[6]	[6]	[6]	[6]	[6]	[6]
[1]1975	182	[6]	35,397	[6]	[6]	[6]	[6]	[6]	[6]
[1]1976	156	[6]	35,983	[6]	[6]	[6]	[6]	[6]	[6]
[1]1977	130	[6]	32,685	[6]	[6]	[6]	[6]	[6]	[6]
[1]1978	121	[6]	33,679	[6]	[6]	[6]	[6]	[6]	[6]
[1]1979	119	[6]	31,654	[6]	[6]	[6]	[6]	[6]	[6]
[1]1980	128	[6]	29,362	[6]	[6]	[6]	[6]	[6]	[6]
1981	105	1,690	44,072	11	40	[6]	12	36	[6]
1982	100	1,950	39,062	18	51	[6]	13	33	[6]
1983	118	2,178	[6]	22	57	[6]	11	66	[6]
1984	100	2,288	[6]	17	70	[6]	7	75	[6]
1985	104	2,239	[6]	22	113	[6]	13	78	[6]
[4]1986-87	99	2,736	16,468	26	443	704	14	162	[6]
[4]1987-88	103	2,767	16,622	40	561	763	15	153	[6]
[4 5]1988-89	100	2,865	16,240	36	755	975	14	130	[6]

[1] Injuries reported to Health and Safety Executive's Factory Inspectorate only.
[2] As defined under the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1980 for the years 1981 to 1985 and under the wider definition of the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985 for subsequent years.
[3] Injuries causing incapacity for work for more than three days reported directly to enforcing authorities under the Factories Act for the years 1974 to 1980 and under RIDDOR for the years 1986-87 onwards. Data for 1981-82 based on claims notified via the DHSS for industrial injury benefit.
[4] Year commencing 1 April.
[5] Provisional.
[6] Not available.

Dangerous occurrences occurring within the construction industry as reported to Health and Safety Executive's factory and agricultural inspectorates[1]

Date	Number of dangerous occurrences[2]
1981	377
1982	378
1983	404
1984	368
1985	408
1986-87	637
1987-88	636
[3]1988-89	739

[1] As defined under the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (NADOR) for the years 1981-85, and under the wider definition of the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) for subsequent years.
[2] Details of accidents occurring in the construction industry reported to other authorities are not readily available.
[3] Provisional.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many sites have been given preventive workplace inspection by a Health and Safety Executive inspector *(a)* weekly, *(b)* monthly and *(c)* never, as a proportion of the total.

Mr. Nicholls: The information is not available in the form requested. Workplaces for which the Health and Safety Executive is the enforcing authority receive preventive inspections at intervals which vary according to risk and need, rather than at any fixed frequency.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Stretford, 24 April, *Official Report*, column *174*, about health and safety offences, what criteria are used to decide whether a case is passed to the Crown prosecution service; and which body decides whether to initiate prosecutions for manslaughter.

Mr. Nicholls: The nature of the offence is the main criterion used to decide whether a case should be passed to the Crown prosecution service or not. The character of the defendent may also be relevant. The Crown prosecution service decides whether or not a charge of manslaughter is appropriate.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Stretford, 15 May, *Official Report*, column *402*, whether the Health and Safety Executive will consider initiating comparative research into accident or incident rates on *(a)* civil engineering and *(b)* construction projects within Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: There are no plans to do so at present.

Youth Training

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish assessments made by his Department of the additional contribution to be made by employers in 1990-91 towards the cost of youth training.

Mr. Nicholls: The Government do not publish yearly forecasts of the additional contributions, both in money and in kind, to be made by employers to new youth training. These contributions are expected to exceed those of previous years, reflecting the growing recognition of employers that it is in their interests to contribute to training and the greater benefits to employers of the new youth training arrangements.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether his Department accepts youth training trainees as unemployed for funding purposes under the European social fund.

Mr. Eggar: In accordance with International Labour Organisation recommendations, young people on YT are considered to be part of the work force in employment and

are therefore not deemed to be unemployed. I have no plans to adopt a different definition for the purpose of the European social fund.

Trans-national Training

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has on the policy of West Germany in dealing with trans-national training projects; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My Department is currently seeking information from European social fund applicants on all likely trans-national training projects, including those linked with West Germany. Once we have replies we will approach the other member states concerned with those projects to establish their policy towards them.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what applications his Department has received from the Trident training initiative for European social fund funding towards the cost of trans-national projects.

Mr. Eggar: According to my Department's records, no applications have been received for ESF funding from the Trident training intitiative up to the year ending 1989. The project applications for 1990 have yet to be submitted.

Documents

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of and how many documents in 1989 he estimates were *(a)* passed on to the Public Record Office intact, *(b)* passed on to the Public Record Office in censored form, *(c)* retained by his Department in full, *(d)* retained by his Department in part, *(e)* destroyed, *(f)* otherwise disposed of and *(g)* otherwise unaccounted for.

Mr. Eggar: No document falls due for selection and transfer to the Public Record Office until it is at least 30 years old. A document's suitability for permanent preservation under the terms of the Public Records Act 1958 will be reviewed during that period. The Act does not require statistics to be kept in the form requested and to do so would inevitably incur disproportionate cost. However, in order to comply with the Act, the Employment Department group is obliged to ensure that all documentary records are properly preserved with a view to possible transfer to the Public Record Office and eventual release to the public. The general criteria under which the Employment Department group may retain documents over 30 years old are set out in section 3(4) of the Public Records Act.

Work-related Further Education

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the spending on work-related further education in 1990 prices for 1987-88, 1988-89, 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Mr. Eggar: The total expenditure on work-related further education by the Employment Department group Training Agency and its predecessors, the Training Commission and the Manpower Services Commission is as follows:

	£ million
1987-88	128
1988-89	127
1989-90	112
1990-91	[1]108

[1]Projected.
The figures shown are at constant 1989-90 prices and were calculated by use of the GDP deflator index.

Unemployed People, Salisbury

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, of the 150 people claiming unemployment-related benefits at his Salisbury office, who are registered as not having a permanent or fixed address, how many have had *(a)* availability and *(b)* actively seeking work interviews.

Mr. Eggar: The employment service became an executive agency on 2 April 1990. Mr. Mike Fogden, the Employment Service agency's chief executive, will be replying in writing to my hon. Friend.

Technical and Vocational Education

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the level of spending per child on the technical and vocational education initiative extension in 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Eggar: TVEI introduces long-term developments in schools to help prepare young people for the world of work. Spending is not necessarily geared to the number of students. It is therefore not appropriate to calculate unit costs.

Documents

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what criteria he uses when deciding which documents to pass on to the Public Record Office.

Mr. Eggar: The Employment Department group complies with the guidelines issued by the Public Record Office on the selection of documents for permanent preservation. Decisions on which documents are transferred to the Public Record Office for this purpose are taken in consultation with Public Record Office inspecting officers.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what systems he employs to classify, log and otherwise record each document generated by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The Employment Department group does not necessarily record each document raised. Instead, all documents are filed using widely accepted filing conventions in accordance with the relevant instructions.

Skill Centres

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the skill centres which are to be closed as training businesses and sold, giving *(a)* the valuation of and its assets sold, *(b)* the number of expressions of interest received and *(c)* the income likely to be received from successful purchasers.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The centres to be closed by my Department as training businesses are

Chelmsford, Chesterfield, Northampton, Portsmouth, Reading, Twickenham and Letchworth, excluding the gas safety training business purchased by Mr. J. James, which is due to be relocated.

With the exception of Chesterfield, where the property will revert to the landlord, the Government's property interests in these centres will shortly be marketed. It would be prejudicial to the sale to give the valuation of the assets or to reveal the number of expressions of interest. The equipment at the closed centres is being sold by auction over the next few weeks and for commercial reasons it is not possible to reveal valuations at this stage.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether the new pension arrangements of all civil servants involved in the privatisation of the Skills Training Agency and skill centres are compatible with the civil service pension scheme.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The pension arrangements of the purchasers of the Skills Training Agency were all subject to an independent assessment by the Government Actuary's Department. The assessment concluded that the respective arrangements are broadly comparable to those of the principal civil service pension scheme and hence met the undertaking given by the then Secretary of State when the sale was announced.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if companies or individuals who had unsuccessfully bid for any or all of the skill centres were contacted about the further sale of Lambeth skills centre after 19 February.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* No. The only organisation interested in Lambeth at the final offer stage, other than one bidder interested in a very large network, was The Training Business.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total expenditure involved in the payment to Astra Training Services Ltd. for the acquisition of skill centres and other Skills Training Agency facilities.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The sale of the training businesses at 45 skill centres plus the Skills Training Agency head office, mobile training service, sales teams and colleges to Astra Training Services Limited involved a payment from the Government to Astra of some £10·7 million.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list *(a)* the skill centres and *(b)* the type of assets covered by the clawback procedures.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* Clawback will apply to the freehold and long leasehold properties acquired by Astra Training Services Limited. These are skill centre premises at:

Barking
Basildon
Bellshill
Billingham
Birmingham
Bradford
Bristol
Cheshire
Dundee
Durham
Enfield Annex
Gloucester
Gwent
Hillington
Hull
Irvine
Manchester
Medway
Milton Keynes
North Staffordshire
Norwich
Peterborough
Plymouth
Preston
Redruth
Rochdale
Sheffield
Southampton
Tyneside
West Glamorgan
West Sussex
Wigan
Wrexham

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if the Lakin Consortium put in bids, prior to 19 February, for any skill centres.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* Yes. An indicative bid was received from the consortium headed by Mr. Lakin by the Government's sale advisers and it was placed on a shortlist of potential purchasers in mid-November 1989.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate the total income likely to be received on completion of the sale of *(a)* skill centres as training businesses and *(b)* skill centres which will be closed and held as land and premises.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The sale of skill centres as training businesses is complete and total income received was £65,000. The Government's remaining property interests are about to be marketed and it would be prejudicial to the sale to give an estimate of proceeds.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if The Training Business Group Ltd. put in a bid, prior to 19 February, for any skill centres.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* Yes. An indicative bid was received from The Training Business by the Government's sale advisers and they were placed on a shortlist of potential purchasers in mid-November 1989.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list, for each of the successful bidders of the 51 skill centres the conditions covering *(a)* the length of time training must be carried on and *(b)* the quality of the training.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* In accepting the offers of successful bidders, I satisfied myself that they met the key objectives of the sale that as much as possible of STA's training business was transferred to the private sector, and that the training businesses sold had good prospects of future viability. I did not impose on any bidder specific operating conditions on the length of time training must be carried on, or the quality of training to be provided.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what guarantees of employment training

income have been given to *(a)* Astra Training Services Ltd., *(b)* the Lakin Consortium, *(c)* The Training Business Group Ltd. and *(d)* METEL for the years 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* No guarantees of employment training income have been given to any purchaser of skill centres for the current or any subsequent year.

Skills Training Agency

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps were taken to ensure that the bid procedure, involved in the privatisation of the Skills Training Agency was fair and reasonable to all potential purchasers.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* My right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) announced on 13 March 1989 that he intended to sell the Skills Training Agency by private tender. In September 1989 advertisements were placed in the national press inviting potential bidders to contact Deloitte Corporate Finance for a copy of the information memorandum. The memorandum fully described the STA, the scale of its operation, the nature of its business, and the property that it occupied. Those interested could request information packs which give details of the individual skill centres and other units of sale. Further information was made available to shortlisted bidders, who were able to visit STA sites, talk to local managers, and make the inquiries they felt necessary to enable them to judge whether to proceed to make a final offer. All bids were evaluated against the same criteria, taking full account of the objectives for the sale. These objectives were placed in the Vote Office on 13 February 1990—*[Official Report,* 1 May 1990, column *42).* All evaluations and recommendations on bids were made by professional advisers.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if the selection of advisers on the privatisation of the Skills Training Agency was based on competitive tendering.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* Deloitte, Haskins and Sells were appointed on the basis of competitive tender to advise the Secretary of State on the feasibility of transferring the Skills Training Agency into the private sector. Deloittes were then appointed on the basis of a single tender to act as main sale advisers and to undertake some accountancy work.

The surveyors, King and Co., and solicitors, Field Fisher Waterhouse, advising on the sale were also appointed on the basis of competitive tenders.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps were taken to ensure that the general principles contained in paragraph 32.1.2 of chapter 32 of Her Majesty's Treasury's manual "Government Accounting on Disposal of Assets were observed in the privatisation of the Skills Training Agency.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The Department took particular care to ensure that appropriate systems of control were instituted over the disposal of assets involved in the privatisation of the STA. Staff involved in the sale of assets were not involved in valuations. Valuations of premises assets were made by external specialist advisers, appointed for the purpose. Valuations of equipment assets was subject to indexation using the "Business Monitor".

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many of the civil servants identified as surplus to requirements in note 11 of the Skills Training Agency accounts 1988-89 had left before 13 February.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The number of staff employed in the Skills Training Agency fell by some 500 between March 1989 and February 1990.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment on which assets the clawback procedure for the Skills Training Agency privatisation will apply.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* Clawback has been applied to the freehold and long leasehold properties acquired by Astra Training Services Limited. It will be applied as appropriate when the Government's remaining property interests in the STA are sold.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the reasons for the reduction of employers' income to the Skills Training Agency from March 1989 to February 1990.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The employer income received by the Skills Training Agency between April 1989 and March 1990 was £12·4 million compared to £13·8 million in the previous year. The reduction reflected in part the ending of two short-term training schemes, funded by the construction industry training board and the engineering industry training board respectively, which were available in 1988-89 but not in 1989-90; and in part a substantial reduction in the size of the British Coal retraining scheme for redundant employees.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if METEL and The Training Business Group Ltd., have benefited in any of the contractual agreements covering employment conditions or pension rights following the privatisation of the Skills Training Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The contractual agreements covering employment terms and conditions met the requirements of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations. Pension and redundancy terms met requirements set by the Secretary of State. These regulations and requirements applied to all purchasers, including METEL and The Training Business, and were for the benefit of staff transferring to the private sector.

Lambeth Skill Centre

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if any positive cash amounts were bid for the Lambeth skill centre.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* No, at the final offer stage no positive cash amounts were bid for the Lambeth skill centre.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give details of the regulations with The Training Business Group Ltd., and the transfer of Lambeth skill centre.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The regulations governing the sale of the Lambeth skill centre to The Training Business Group Ltd. were the same as those which applied to all the STA sales. Staff terms and conditions were transferred under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what provisions were made in respect of the numbers of people employed at the Lambeth skill centre after its sale.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The skill centre was sold as a going concern, and no specific provisions were made in respect of the number to be employed by The Training Business after completion of the sale.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 3 July 1990

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Romania

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy with regard to aid to Romania.

Mr. Waldegrave: It remains our policy that long-term economic aid, but not humanitarian aid, to Romania is conditional on a genuine commitment to democracy and economic freedom in Romania. The conditions for aid to be released have not yet been met.

Zimbabwe

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to Zimbabwean authorities regarding the recent murder in Harare of Mr. Brian Angel, a United Kingdom citizen.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have expressed our concern about Mr. Angel's death to the Zimbabwe Government both in Zimbabwe and, most recently, in London on 22 June 1990 when the permament secretary of the Zimbabwe Ministry of Foreign Affairs called on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. We have called for a full investigation and understand that this is under way. We expect to be informed of the outcome.

South Africa

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the South African Government on their responsibility for Namibian debt.

Mr. Waldegrave: The pre-independence debt question is a matter for resolution between the Governments of Namibia and South Africa and discussions have already begun. Both Governments are aware of our hope that early solutions satisfactory to both sides will be found to this and other aspects of their future economic relations.

Soviet Union

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the content of the 28 April letter to him from the Soviet Foreign Minister; what was his response; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Mr. Shevardnadze's letter proposed a ban on all nuclear weapons from Baltic waters, airspace and the sea bed. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs' reply made clear that, while we agreed on the importance of maintaining stability in northern Europe, we did not believe that a nuclear-free Baltic would contribute to the security of that region.

Rights of the Child

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has yet set a timetable for the verification of the UN convention on the rights of the child; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) on 9 May column *176*.

Namibia

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what timetable he has been given by the South African Government for their withdrawal from and control of Walvis bay in Namibia in accordance with UN Security Council resolution 432.

Mr. Waldegrave: The future of Walvis bay is a matter for negotiation between the Governments of Namibia and South Africa. We hope that an early solution satisfactory to both sides can be found.

Angola

Mr. Kirkhope: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the recent talks in Portugal between the two sides in the Angolan civil war.

Mr. Waldegrave: We welcome the Portuguese initiative in bringing the MPLA Government of Angola and UNITA together for talks. We are encouraged by the signs that some progress has been made towards resolving differences. We urge the two sides to continue to work for an early ceasefire and a lasting political settlement.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement of forthcoming business in the European Community Council of Ministers.

Mr. Maude: The Foreign Affairs Council will meet on 16 and 17 July. Ministers will discuss how to carry forward work on institutional reform on the basis of the agenda approved by the Dublin European Council. Ministers will also have a short discussion of economic and monetary union and possibly of presidency plans for the social action plan. They will hold an orientation debate on development co-operation. Ministers will discuss assistance to central and eastern Europe against the background of political and economic reform, and will review Community relations with Romania. The Council will further discuss the Commission's proposals on developing the Community's relations with Yugoslavia. It may also again discuss proposals for strengthening EC relations with the Mediterranean countries in general. Discussion is also expected on EC aid to Chile and Colombia, Namibia's application for accession to the Lomé convention and the Communities' position on the forthcoming Paris conference on least-developed countries. The Council will discuss the GATT Uruguay round and will look forward to the Trade Negotiation Committee in Geneva the following week. It is possible that Ministers will discuss EC/EFTA relations, and will

consider whether or not to call a Youth Council later in the year. The Council will discuss preparations for a meeting of the EC/Malta Association Council which will take place in the margins of the Foreign Affairs Council. It is expected that the Maltese Foreign Minister will present Malta's application for EC membership.

The Internal Market Council will meet on 17 July. We expect discussion of a number of measures relevant to the completion of the single market. The "utilities directive" liberalising public procurement in the water, energy, transport and telecommunications sectors is close to adoption, but may not be ready for adoption at the Council. The last IMC of the Irish presidency completed consideration of a number of outstanding items: hence the current agenda is thinner than usual.

The Economic and Finance Council will meet on 23 July. On 8 May 1990, the Commission published its technical proposals for VAT, mutual assistance and intra-trade statistics based on the agreements reached at ECOFIN at the end of 1989. The Council will have an initial discussion of these proposals. There will be a discussion of the state of preparations for the intergovernmental conference on economic and monetary union.

The Agriculture Council will meet on 23 and 24 July and may discuss the welfare of pigs and calves, reform of the dried grape regime, non-food uses of agricultural products, aromatised wines, organic production, pathogens in feedingstuffs and poultry and hatching eggs.

The Budget Council will meet on 26 or 27 July to consider the 1991 preliminary draft budget submitted by the Commission.

ENERGY

National Power

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he is able to make an announcement about the chairmanship of National Power.

Mr. Wakeham: I am delighted to announce the appointment of Sir Trevor Holdsworth as chairman of National Power. Sir Trevor retired as chairman of GKN plc in 1988 and was president of the CBI from 1988 to 1990. He is chairman of British Satellite Broadcasting and Allied Colloids Group plc and deputy chairman of Prudential Assurance plc.

Nuclear Electric

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what month he expects Nuclear Electric plc to publish its annual accounts.

Mr. Baldry: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 2 July, *Official Report*, column *432*.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) whether he will review the appointment of Kleinwort Benson as his merchant banking advisers on the privatisation of the electricity supply industry of England and Wales;

(2) what action he proposes to take to extend the range of merchant banking advice he has available to him on the privatisation of the electricity industry of England and Wales.

Mr. Baldry: I am entirely satisfied with the role Kleinwort Benson is performing as merchant banking advisers on the privatisation of the electricity supply industry in England and Wales.

Sizewell B

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he expects to ask the chairman of Nuclear Electric to carry out a further review of the progress on the Sizewell B nuclear power station in 1991.

Mr. Baldry: Nuclear Electric will continue to review regularly progress at Sizewell B.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he has made of the need for new electricity generating capacity requiring to be completed in England and Wales in the 1990-1998 period *(a)* assuming the completion of Sizewell B nuclear power station and *(b)* assuming that it is not completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The need for new capacity by 1998 is uncertain and will depend upon a number of factors including the future demand for electricity and commercial judgments on the economic life of existing plant. These are matters for the industry.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will exempt public electricity suppliers from paying the non-fossil fuel levy in respect of all the costs of Sizewell B nuclear power station incurred after his letter to the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) of 26 June.

Mr. Baldry: No.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what estimates were made of the level of the non-fossil fuel levy in 1994, 1995 and 1996 in the event of the cancellation of Sizewell B nuclear power station.

Mr. Baldry: The effect on the fossil fuel levy of the cancellation of Sizewell B would depend on the closure dates and performance of Nuclear Electric's other stations.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what independent financial advice he took on the comparison between the economics of combined cycle gas turbine stations and the completion of Sizewell B described in his letter of 26 June to the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark).

Mr. Baldry: My Department undertook the analysis using the best available information.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what comparisons he has made of the costs and benefits of expenditure on *(a)* Sizewell B nuclear power station and *(b)* research and development on the UKAEA safe integral reactor and other advanced nuclear power station designs;

(2) what assessment he has made of the impact on the environment of expenditure of £990 million on *(a)* Sizewell B nuclear power station and *(b)* energy efficiency and conservation.

Mr. Baldry: The assessment of the case for continuing with the construction of Sizewell B concentrated on economic grounds, although it also took into account environmental and other considerations. We perceive a need for new generating capacity in the mid-1990s, taking into account the potential for greater energy efficiency. The case for completing Sizewell B must therefore be assessed against the economics of alternative forms of generation, available for immediate construction. It is not likely that an alternative design of nuclear plant could be brought into operation within the time scale required.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make it his policy to carry out a further review of the economics of the Sizewell B nuclear power station when it is *(a)* 50 per cent. complete and *(b)* 66 per cent. complete.

Mr. Baldry: We will continue to monitor closely the costs of Sizewell B through six-monthly progress reports which Nuclear Electric will continue to provide to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. Any further economic analysis of Sizewell B will be carried out as necessary.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Brixton Prison

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* prison officers in Brixton prison and *(b)* prisoners committed suicide in Brixton prison last year.

Mr. Mellor: Three prison officers employed at Brixton prison committed suicide in 1989. Eight inmates died by their own hand in the same year. At the coroners' inquests verdicts of suicide were returned in two cases; other verdicts were returned in the remaining cases.

Race Relations

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to make a decision about the application from Staffordshire county council for section 11 funding for bilingual assistant posts.

Mr. John Patten: The application was received on 28 March and is currently under consideration. A decision will be taken as soon as possible.

Political Asylum

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for *(a)* political asylum and *(b)* variation of leave to remain in the United Kingdom have been received in each quarter since 1 January 1988; how many have been (i) granted, (ii) refused and (iii) await decision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 26 June 1990]:* The available information is given in the tables.

Table A: Applications for refugee status, or variation of leave to remain in the United Kingdom, made during the period 1 January 1988 to 31 March 1990, by quarter.

	Applications for refugee status	*Applications for variation of leave*[2]
1988		
Quarter 1	1,327	77,200
Quarter 2	1,197	73,700
Quarter 3	1,361	74,500
Quarter 4	1,378	71,000
1989		
Quarter 1	[1]2,275	64,800
Quarter 2	[1]5,645	59,900
Quarter 3	[1]3,025	70,200
Quarter 4	[1]3,380	72,900
1990		
Quarter 1	[1]2,450	72,100

[1] Provisional figures.
[2] Includes referred entry clearance applications, and enquiries submitted by letter, as well as variation of leave cases. Includes both general and Eastern European immigration casework.

Table B: Decisions made during the period 1 January 1988 to 31 March 1990 on applications for refugee status, or for variation of leave

	Refugee cases	*Variation of leave cases*
Grants	[1]12,475	[2][3][4]420,545
Refusals	1,615	[3][4]30,005
Cases outstanding as at 31 March 1990	[5]16,272	[5][6]27,968

[1] Grants of refugee status or of exceptional leave.
[2] Grants of extensions or of settlement.
[3] Includes both general and Eastern European immigration casework.
[4] Does not include decisions on referred entry clearance applications, or enquiries submitted by letter.
[5] This figure is a total of all work outstanding in the Refugee Unit.
[6] Includes referred entry clearance applications as well as variation of leave cases. The figure comprises 26,359 general immigration cases and 1,609 Eastern Europe.

Multi-faith Education

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much money has been spent by the Commission for Racial Equality in the last five years in promoting multi-faith education.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 19 June 1990]:* The quantifiable cost of this work over the last five years is £12,850, being the net cost of three publications designed to convey factual information about different religions.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Higher Education

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the numbers due to enter higher education in October 1990.

Mr. Jackson: Our latest projection indicates that, at over 208,000 the number of home students entering full-time higher education this autumn will be more than 4 per cent. above last year's record level.

Further Education, Isle of Wight

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will list the capital allocations for further education for the Isle of Wight for the last two years; and if he will tabulate the projects to which the sums apply;

(2) if he will list the allocations for the Isle of Wight college of art and technology for *(a)* a residential block, *(b)* a short-course teaching block, *(c)* minor works and *(d)* equipment.

Mr. Jackson: Annual capital guidelines to the Isle of Wight authority for the college of art and technology for 1990-91 were as follows:

	£
a. Residential Block	200,000
b. Teaching Block	155,000
c. Minor Works	20,000
d. Equipment	22,000

For 1988-89, a total of £40,000 was allocated for further education equipment. There were no capital allocations for further education in 1989-90.

Alzheimer's Disease

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what research is being undertaken at his instigation by the Medical Research Council to establish any possible connections between Alzheimer's disease and human spongiform encephalopathies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: Under the terms of its royal charter, it is for the council itself to decide what research to undertake. The council is not currently undertaking research into a possible connection between Alzheimer's disease and human spongiform encephalopathies. Until now there has been no scientific evidence to suggest that there is any possible link between these two diseases which show separate and distinct neuropathologies. The council is always willing to consider soundly based proposals for research.

Correspondence

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* the text of the reply to the letter of 21 June from the head teacher at Beaufort Street county primary, junior mixed and infants school, Liverpool.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The following is the text of the Department's reply:

Dear Mrs. Redmond

Thank you for your letter of 21 June 1990 to the Secretary of State.

You have in your letter raised some very important issues. I understand that after nineteen years at Beaufort County Primary School you will be retiring with mixed feelings.

The Secretary of State wrote recently to all head teachers stressing his appreciation for the hard work teachers are undertaking in our schools. He has made clear on many other occasions that the teaching profession deserves gratitude, recognition and respect for its professionalism and the commitment shown to pupils. Ministers value that commitment very highly indeed.

I hardly need to tell you that teaching remains a very attractive career for many people. You may know that about 25,000 people enter or re-enter the profession each year. Despite what we are sometimes led to believe, wastage is generally low. The latest data indicate that less than 1% of teachers leave for other paid employment.

The Government's proposals for local authority current spending in 1990/91 allow for almost £15 billion to be spent on education. That is 9·6% higher than the comparable total for this year. Within the £15 billion total, specific grants of over £180 million will be available under the Education Support Grants programme and the LEA Training Grant Scheme to help implement the education reforms. Given effective management, the total should be sufficient to allow good progress to be made in getting the reforms into place. It allows for LEAs and schools to give more priority to spending on key areas of books and equipment, repairs and maintenance compared with the levels of spending assumed for this year.

The vast majority of teachers support the aims of the National Curriculum, which is founded on current best practice. Its introduction together with other education reforms does place extra demands on teachers, and the Government has responded to pleas that further reforms might overstrain teachers' goodwill and commitment. The intention is to ensure that the reforms are implemented at a reasonable pace, while retaining the momentum already gained.

You express particular concern about children with special educational needs (SEN) in relation to the National Curriculum. The Government believes that all children, including those with SEN should follow the National Curriculum to the maximum extent possible. The levels of attainment within the National Curriculum are being flexibly designed so that almost all pupils, including those with special educational needs, will be able to show what they have achieved and, more importantly, what progress they have made over time. Up until now too many pupils have had limited educational opportunities, and that includes children with SEN. Their curricula have often lacked breadth and balance and they have not been challenged into achieving their full potential. The Government firmly believes that the National Curriculum will lever up standards in education and benefit children including those with special educational needs.

Maintained schools are under a duty to offer the National Curriculum to all their pupils unless exceptions are made in accordance with the relevant Sections of the Education Reform Act (ERA). Some children with SEN, such as those referred to at the end of your letter, may have a statement of their special educational needs drawn up in accordance with the Education Act 1981. That Act rejects the concept of labelling pupils and concentrates instead on identifying individual pupils' needs and ensuring that those needs are met. In future each statement will be able to specify how the National Curriculum is to apply to the individual pupil. A statement can modify or disapply the National Curriculum requirements, and where appropriate offer an individual programme of study. However, where exceptions are made, maintained schools are still under duty to ensure that the curricula they offer pupils are balanced and broadly based, in accordance with the requirements of Section 1 of the ERA.

The quality of your own commitment to teaching and the development of your pupils is very clear from your letter. We too are dedicated to the well being of education and to giving the best support we can to teachers. Important changes are taking place, particularly with the introduction of the National Curriculum and Local Management of Schools, and I would ask you to have faith that those who will be working in and on behalf of education after you have retired will carry forward the best values and build upon the best practices of teachers in your generation.

Yours sincerely

G. A. HOLLEY
Schools 2 Branch

City Technology Colleges

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) in respect of each city technology college, what amount of annual per capita

grant he has agreed to pay for the financial year beginning in September; what unit of cost per pupil has been used in calculating the amount of annual per capita grant; how this cost has been determined; and what enhancement of annual per capita grant has been allowed under the terms of paragraph 11 of the model funding agreement;

(2) in respect of each city technology college, what amount of earmarked annual grant he has agreed to pay in the financial year beginning in September; and for what purpose each element of earmarked annual grant has been approved.

Mrs. Rumbold: The level of recurrent expenditure for city technology colleges for the academic year beginning this September has not yet been agreed.

Birmingham City Action Team

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what actions he has undertaken in the past six months in support of the Birmingham city action team and the east Birmingham task force.

Mr. Alan Howarth: As a member of a team of Ministers with responsibility for oversight of city action teams and inner-city task forces in various parts of England, I became sponsor Minister for the Birmingham city action team and the east Birmingham task force late last year. I have sought to encourage co-operation between business, local authorities, the voluntary sector and local people. In this capacity, since the beginning of this year I have visited Birmingham seven times, meeting a variety of local groups and visiting local projects.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

India

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether United Kingdom Government aid will be given to support any development of the Rihard II power generation project in northern India.

Mrs. Chalker: At the request of the Government of India, the Department of Trade and Industry has nominated a main contractor for the second stage of the power station. An offer of aid has been made subject to appraisal of the project.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Company Reports

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what reports other than reports prepared under the Companies Acts may be required under clause 78(2) of the Finance Bill 1990.

Mr. Lilley: The proposed tax return for companies under pay and file, which has been developed in consultation with bodies representing businesses and the legal and accountancy professions, requires companies to provide a copy of their full accounts prepared under the Companies Act, which will include the directors' and auditor's reports, with the return. Insurance companies will also be required to provide a copy of the report made to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry under part II of the Insurance Companies Act 1982.

House Purchase

Mr. Gerald Bowden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to amend the provisions of subsection (6) of section 354 of the Taxes Act 1988 in order to provide that interest eligible for relief on bridging finance for house purchases is extended beyond the initial 12-month period of relief as of right and not discretion.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 2 July 1990]:* None. I am not aware of any need for a change in the present rules.

Documents

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of and how many documents in 1989 he estimates were *(a)* passed on to the Public Record Office intact, *(b)* passed on to the Public Record Office in censored form, *(c)* retained by his Department in full *(d)* retained by his Department in part, *(e)* destroyed, *(f)* otherwise disposed of and *(g)* otherwise unaccounted for.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 2 July 1990]:* No document falls due for selection and transfer to the Public Record Office until it is at least 30 years old. A document's suitability for permanent preservation under the terms of the Public Records Act 1958 will be reviewed during that period. The Act does not require statistics to be kept in the form requested and to do so would inevitably incur disproportionate cost. However, in order to comply with their duties under the Act, Departments are obliged to ensure that all documentary records are properly preserved with a view to possible transfer to the Public Record Office and eventual release to the public. The general criteria under which Departments may retain documents over 30 years old are set out in section 3(4) of the Public Records Act.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what criteria he uses when deciding which documents to pass on to the Public Record Office.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 2 July 1990]:* My right hon. Friend's Departments comply with the guidelines issued by the Public Record Office on the selection of documents for permanent preservation. Decisions on which documents are transferred to the Public Record Office for this purpose are taken in consultation with PRO inspecting officers.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what systems he employs to classify, log and otherwise record each document generated by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 2 July 1990]:* The Treasury does not record each document generated. Papers are collected on to files which are given specific titles. These files are then registered on to a records management computer system. These practices are in accordance with the Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967. Each file bears the classification of the highest classified document enclosed in each file.

Pensions

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the effects of the level of inflation on pensions.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have been asked to reply.

The Government have maintained their commitment to increase the state retirement pension fully in line with prices, as measured by the retail prices index.

WALES

NHS Trusts

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the latest figure for the number of national health service hospitals in Wales seeking self-governing trust status.

Mr. Grist: The Department has so far received no applications for self-governing status, but has received one formal expression of interest from Pembrokeshire health authority.

Countryside Council for Wales

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to establish the headquarters of the Countryside Council for Wales in Aberystwyth, Ceredigion; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: We have decided that the headquarters of the Countryside Council for Wales will be at Plas Penrhos, Ffordd Penrhos, Bangor, which is currently the Nature Conservancy Council's headquarters for Wales. The present buildings can accommodate most of the new headquarters staff although some additional accommodation may be needed later. It will probably be necessary to relocate the north Wales regional office of the Nature Conservancy Council which at present shares the headquarters buildings; the precise location will depend on the availability of suitable alternative accommodation but it is envisaged that it will be in, or within daily travelling distance of Bangor.

We have received representations for the headquarters to be situated at a number of other locations in Wales which we have considered very carefully. However, on balance we have chosen Bangor mainly because suitable accommodation requiring the minimum of adaptation is immediately available and it will reduce staff inconvenience and relocation costs to a minimum.

Crown Buildings, Cathays Park

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects the Export Credits Guarantee Department insurance services group to vacate the New Crown building, Cathays park, Cardiff.

Mr. David Hunt: I expect the new company which is to be formed from the insurance services group of ECGD to move from the New Crown building, Cathays park as soon as alternative accommodation can be found; this is not expected to be for some time after incorporation of the company as a new building is likely to be necessary.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the energy efficiency of the Crown buildings, Cathays park.

Mr. David Hunt: A consulting engineer was commissioned by the Property Services Agency to produce an energy survey report on the Crown buildings in Cathays park. My Department and Property Holdings—Department of the Environment—are now considering the consultant's recommendations.

Quarrying

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will call in the application by Pioneer Aggregates to extend Aberduna quarry, Maeshafn, Llanferres, Clwyd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: No. On present information, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales sees no reason why an application of this nature, which does not appear to raise planning issues of more than local importance, should not be decided by Clwyd county council.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will now pursue an appeal against the quashing of an enforcement notice relating to the activities of Messrs. F. G. Whitley and Co. in respect of the quarry Moel Findeg, Maeshafn, Llanferres, Clwyd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: No. The notice was quashed by my right hon. Friend in accordance with the ruling given by the High Court and he has no present jurisdiction in the matter. He understands however that Clwyd county council is pursuing the case to the Court of Appeal.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Allen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the latest figure for the number of confirmed cases of BSE in *(a)* the east midlands and *(b)* Nottinghamshire.

Mr. Maclean: Following is the information:

County	*Confirmed cases*
Warwickshire	159
Northamptonshire	115
Nottinghamshire	83

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of holdings which have had at least one case of BSE in the last two years, by county, in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean: The information for Great Britain for the two years from 30 June 1988 to 29 June 1990 is as follows:

County	*Holdings*
Bedfordshire	15
Cambridge	22
Essex	32
Hertfordshire	40
Lincolnshire	58
Norfolk	96
Northamptonshire	64
Suffolk	66
Cheshire	208
Derbyshire	119
Hertfordshire and Worcestershire	161
Lancashire	191
Leicestershire	156

County	Holdings
Manchester	8
Merseyside	5
Nottinghamshire	48
Shropshire	199
Staffordshire	164
West Midlands	11
Avon	150
Cornwall	569
Devon	849
Dorset	482
Gloucestershire	207
Somerset	578
Wiltshire	394
Clwyd	103
Dyfed	362
Glamorgan Mid	16
Glamorgan South	18
Glamorgan West	5
Gwent	72
Warwick	85
Cleveland	11
Cumbria	194
Durham	43
Humberside	46
Northumberland	32
Tyne and Wear	1
Yorkshire North	327
Yorkshire South	30
Yorkshire West	43
Berkshire	43
Buckinghamshire	54
Hampshire	217
Isle of Wight	33
Kent	110
London	4
Oxon	104
Surrey	69
Sussex East	96
Sussex West	145
Borders	11
Central	17
Dumfries	69
Fife	19
Grampian	82
Highland	20
Lothian	10
Orkney	7
Shetland	1
Strathclyde	112
Tayside	25
Gwynedd	38
Powys	116

Silver Foxes

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many silver fox farms there are in the United Kingdom; and whether there is a feral population of silver foxes.

Mr. Maclean: Farmers do not need licences to keep silver foxes and we do not collect this information. There is no evidence of feral silver foxes in the United Kingdom.

Agricultural Dwellings

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what action he takes to ensure the independence of his Department's assessment of the financial viability of proposals for agricultural workers' dwellings; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what action he takes to ensure that his Department's independent advice to local authorities on proposals for agricultural dwellings is not compromised by the commercial advice given by the Agricultural Development Advisory Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Local authorities receive advice on the rehousing of agricultural workers from agricultural dwellings house advisory committees—ADHACs. These consist of an independent chairman and one representative each of employers and employees. These representatives must be unconnected with the case. The role of the Agricultural Development Advisory Service is confined to the provision to ADHACs of a factual account of the agricultural enterprise in question. ADHACs are entitled to seek alternative sources of information on this point if they so wish.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Marchioness

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Attorney-General (1) if he will bring charges under the Merchant Shipping Act 1988, section 30, in connection with the collision between the Bowbelle and the Marchioness on 20 August 1989;

(2) if he will bring manslaughter charges against any of the parties involved in the collision between the Bowbelle and the Marchioness on 20 August 1989;

(3) if he will bring charges under the Merchant Shipping Act 1988, section 31, in connection with the collision between the Bowbelle and the Marchioness on 20 August 1989.

The Attorney-General: The Director of Public Prosecutions announced on 26 April 1990 that the master of the Bowbelle was to be prosecuted for an offence contrary to section 27 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1970 as substituted by section 32 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1988. The charge alleges that he failed properly to discharge a duty, namely to ensure that a proper lookout was kept by all available means, to such an extent as to be likely to cause the loss or destruction of, or serious damage to, another ship or the death of, or serious injury to, another person.

Those proceedings are now pending at Bow Street magistrates court. The Director of Public Prosecutions does not envisage any further charges.

PRIME MINISTER

National Health Service

Q6. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Prime Minister whether she will make a statement on the progress of preparations on the Government's proposed changes in the financing of the national health service.

The Prime Minister: Royal Assent for the National Health Service and Community Care Act was received on 29 June. Preparations for implementation of the new financial arrangements are proceeding well.

Bootle

Q64. **Mr. Carr:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next expects to visit Bootle.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

European Community Summit

Q71. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the recent European Community summit of Heads of Government held at the conclusion of the Irish presidency; and if she will list the principal conclusions.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement I made to the House on 28 June.

USSR (Financial Aid)

Q105. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has recently held discussions with Chancellor Kohl and other European Community Government leaders concerning the subject of the provision of financial aid to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Aid to the Soviet Union was discussed at the Dublin European Council. I refer the hon. Member to the statement I made to the House on 28 June.

Metrocentre, Gateshead

Q116. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next proposes to make a visit to the Metrocentre at Gateshead, Tyne and Wear.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Retirement Pensions

Q130. **Sir David Price:** To ask the Prime Minister whether, in view of the recent decision by the House of Lords in the case of James *v.* Eastleigh borough council, she will introduce amending legislation to provide equal age eligibility between men and women for the state retirement pension.

The Prime Minister: The James case was concerned with concessions to people by reference to their age. It has no effect on the law on social security and, therefore, there is no need to amend that law in the light of this judgment.

Film Studio, Rainham

Q134. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Prime Minister what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to encourage proposals by MCA to build a film studio complex in Rainham, Essex.

The Prime Minister: I have met Mr. Lew Wasserman, chairman of MCA Inc. A number of Government Departments and agencies have had discussions with the company about its proposals.

IRA

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Prime Minister whether any representations were made to Her Majesty's Government by the Government of Australia about Irish terrorism following the murder of two Australian tourists by the IRA operating in Holland.

The Prime Minister: No such representations have been made.

Engagements

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 July.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others, including one with Chief Anyaoku, the new Secretary General of the Commonwealth. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today, including one with the Chinese ambassador. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Environment and Health

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Prime Minister what steps have been taken by the Government to implement the European charter on environment and health; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The European charter on environment and health consists in the main of a broad statement of principles and priorities for the protection of the environment and health. Government policy is already fully consistent with these principles and we are active in all the priority areas listed in the charter. We will be publishing a full statement of our policies for the environment in a White Paper later this year. As to the specific proposals in the charter for further international action, my hon. Friend the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health, indicated at the Frankfurt conference that the United Kingdom stood ready to discuss these through existing international machinery. A copy of his speech is in the Library.

TRANSPORT

London Underground (Bridges)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many bridges which traverse the London underground network have failed the BD21/84 guidelines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I understand from London Underground Ltd. that, as of 26 June 1990, 59 structures carrying highways over its network have failed the criteria of BD21/84.

In all these cases it has notified the highway authorities concerned so that necessary measures can be taken to maintain traffic and safeguard the public.

Strengthening work is in hand on six structures and temporary measures are either in force or being investigated for the rest.

Cycle Lanes

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his most up-to-date estimate of the additional cost to public funds of incorporating a cycle lane on the second Severn bridge.

Mr. Atkins: The most recent estimate, provided in 1988, put the cost of incorporating a cycle lane in the second Severn bridge at almost £10 million.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received regarding cycle lanes on the second Severn crossing.

Mr. Atkins: Representations have been received from cycling organisations, including Cyclebag and the Cyclists Touring Club, requesting that the second Severn crossing include provision for cyclists.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will incorporate a cycle lane in the second Severn road bridge.

Mr. Atkins: No, it is not the intention that a cycle lane should be incorporated in the second Severn road bridge.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the decision to omit a cycle lane from the design of the second Severn bridge was made.

Mr. Atkins: When tenders were invited in spring 1989 for the design and construction of a second Severn crossing, my Department suggested to tenderers that they should consider incorporating cycling facilities, although it was not a firm requirement that such facilities should be provided. None of the tenderers put forward proposals for a cycle lane on the new crossing.

Newbury Bypass

Sir David Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he anticipates he will be in a position to announce jointly with the Secretary of State for the Environment the decision on the route to be adopted for the Newbury bypass on the A34.

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Transport and the Secretary of State for the Environment hope to be able to make an announcement soon following the public inquiry into the A34 Newbury bypass.

Railway Services

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent discussions he has had with British Rail about improvements to existing rail links from the south coast to the north and Scotland.

Mr. Freeman: None. This is a commercial matter for British Rail.

East Usk Sidings

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next expects to respond to the petition by residents of Newport, Gwent, against British Rail's operations at East Usk sidings, presented by the hon. Member for Newport, East on 18 June.

Mr. Freeman: The matters raised in the petition are for British Rail and the local authority to resolve. I understand that BR has had discussions with local residents and Newport borough council and plans to take remedial measures to alleviate the disturbance caused by its operations at East Usk sidings.

MV Derbyshire

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now make an ex-gratia payment to the families of the people who died when the MV Derbyshire sank.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have no plans to make an ex-gratia payment to the dependants of those who were lost in the MV Derbyshire tragedy.

Private Aircraft

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the total number of air hours flown in United Kingdom airspace for the last three years for which figures are available by *(a)* commercial and *(b)* private aircraft.

Mr. McLoughlin: The figures are not available in precisely the form requested, but the most likely numbers are given in the table.

The commercial aircraft figures relate to aircraft of more than 2,300 kg mass. The private aircraft figures are for United Kingdom-registered aircraft only, but for all flying including that flown outside United Kingdom airspace.

	Commercial	*Private*
1987	606,000	800,000
1988	655,000	876,000
1989	706,000	991,000

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many private pilots are currently registered in the United Kingdom.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Civil Aviation Authority has issued 55,135 private aeroplane licences and 2,203 private helicopter licences. However, the CAA has no knowledge of how many of these licence holders are currently exercising the privileges of the licences.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many accidents for each of the last three years have involved aircraft flown by private pilots.

Mr. Atkins: Not all accident reports indicate the type of licence held by the pilot. A flight which is clearly a private flight may well be flown by the holder of a commercial licence and conversely many private aircraft are registered in the public transport category so that they can be flown on payment by, for example, other club private pilots. Taking these points into consideration, the safety data analysis unit of the CAA believes that the following table represents the accidents involving pilots with private or student licences.

Accidents involving United Kingdom registered aircraft flown by pilots with private or student licences

	Fatal accidents	*Total accidents*
1987	19	137
1988	11	165
1989	11	203

Accidents to foreign registered aircraft in United Kingdom airspace flown by private licence holders

1987	2	3
1988	1	2
1989	1	1

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to ban the transport of nuclear waste and spent nuclear fuel on roll-on, roll-off passenger ferries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 2 July 1990]:* No. I am satisfied with the safety arrangements for such transport, which is permitted within the conditions prescribed in the international maritime dangerous goods code.

Rail Industry (Injuries)

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many railway staff have been killed or suffered major injuries for the period 1979-83 and 1984-88; and what they represent as a proportion per 1,000 railway staff employed.

Mr. Parkinson *[pursuant to his reply, 24 May 1990, c. 294]:* In the period 1984-88, 98 staff died and 979 suffered major injuries, totalling 1,077. The average number of staff employed during that period was 181,200. The proportion of deaths and major injuries to 1,000 employed was 5·94.

In the period 1979-83, 153 railway staff died and 1,613 suffered major injuries, totalling 1,766. The average number of staff employed during that period was 228,200. The proportion of deaths and major injuries to 1,000 employed was 7·74.

In the period 1974-78, 209 railway staff died and 3,023 suffered major injuries, totalling 3,232. The average number of staff employed during that period was 246,400. The proportion of deaths and major injuries to 1,000 employed was 13·1.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

National Physical Laboratory

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress has been made towards the establishment of the National Physical Laboratory as an executive agency.

Mr. Ridley: I am establishing the National Physical Laboratory—NPL—and an executive agency with effect from 3 July. The NPL is the eighth executive agency to be established within the DTI. Nearly 50 per cent. of the Department's staff are now working in agencies.

Establishing the NPL as an executive agency will assist it to improve further the quality and cost effectiveness of its services. The primary measure of the NPL's performance will be its ability to satisfy its customers in terms of value for money and the quality of its work whilst fully covering its costs. I am also setting the NPL quality of service and efficiency targets as follows:

- to improve to 90 per cent. by 1994-95 the percentage of calibrations completed within six weeks;
- to complete at least 95 per cent. of contract research investigations on time over the period 1990-91 to 1994-95;
- to increase by at least 3 per cent. the number of research milestones achieved annually per scientist over the period 1990-91 to 1994-95;
- to reduce the cost of administrative support so that by 1994-95 it represents no more than 20 per cent. of NPL's full economic cost;
- to increase the proportion of staff time attributed to programme-related work by 5 per cent. over the period 1990-91 to 1994-95;
- to reduce the cost of NPL per member of project staff by 2 per cent. per annum over the period 1990-91 to 1994-95; and
- to secure a combination of output efficiency and cost reduction measures which, taken together, represent a requirement on NPL to improve its overall efficiency by more than 2 per cent. a year over the period 1990-91 to 1994-95.

DEFENCE

Parachute Training

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South on 9 May, *Official Report*, column *137*, how many of the 97 cases of injury and death of parachute trainees at RAF Brize Norton in 1989 were related to ill health; how many had seen a medical officer prior to the incident; and of these, how many were certified unfit to continue with immediate training.

Mr. Neubert: There were no cases of injury or death at No. 1 parachute training school which were related to ill health. It is not known how many had seen a medical officer prior to the incident; medical records for those attending parachute training at RAF Brize Norton are returned to the trainees unit for regular soldiers and to general practitioners for territorials at the end of the course. If trainees were certified as unfit to continue immediate training they would not parachute again until cleared by the medical officer.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if there was an outbreak of sickness and diarrhoea at the RAF Brize Norton parachute training camp during the first two weeks of August 1989.

Mr. Neubert: No. On a station the size of RAF Brize Norton, with upwards of 7,000 personnel, sickness and diarrhoea are endemic.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what training is given to parachute instructors so that they will recognise concussion or other forms of illness which could impair the safety of parachute trainees; and what first aid training is given.

Mr. Neubert: All NCO parachute jumping instructors are required to obtain a first aid certificate during basic training as a physical training instructor; this includes recognition of some forms of concussion. There is no training given in the recognition of any forms of illness as the trainees have immediate access to fully qualified medical officers the moment they feel unwell. During all forms of parachute training there is a fully qualified medical attendant and ambulance available at all times. There is always an individual responsibility to report sick if the trainee considers he is unfit to continue training. Queen's regulations demand this for all services.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many parachute trainees at RAF Brize Norton reported to a medical officer and were categorised as requiring 48 hours or more withdrawal from the course in 1989.

Mr. Neubert: Fifty-seven.

Army Personnel (Summer Camps)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps will be taken to ensure that the safety of Army personnel attending summer camps can be secured, in the

light of information provided by his Department to Messrs Deansway Catering of Worcester; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Appropriate measures are taken to provide adequate security, in the light of the threat, to all personnel attending summer camps run by the Army. In the case of those units on which information was provided by Deansway Catering Company Ltd., steps have already been taken to alert the relevant districts and units on the need to be particularly vigilant.

Oil Pollution, Aquila

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cause of the recent leak of oil from his Department's site at Aquila on to adjoining land; what steps have been taken to remove the pollution caused; on how many previous occasions similar incidents have occurred; what steps are being taken to prevent a recurrence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: Extensive investigations made by my Department have not revealed any recent leakage of oil from the MOD Aquila site. It appears that the source of the recent pollution was outside the MOD site and that oil was introduced into one of the drains which run underneath the site. Two minor incidents involving oil spillage have occurred on the Aquila site, in February 1988 and June 1989. In each case immediate action was taken to limit and repair any damage.

ENVIRONMENT

Drinking Water

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the operation of the drinking water inspectorate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The drinking water inspectorate was established on 2 January 1990. Its principal tasks will be to check that the quality of public water supplies complies with legal requirements and that water companies are carrying out improvement programmes to which they are committed by undertakings under section 20 of the Water Act 1989. Before the end of the year, the inspectorate will make an inspection of each of the 39 water companies. It will publish a report upon its first year of operations, copies of which will be placed in the Library of the House of Commons.

Housing

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the number of housing starts and completions in the Northern region in each quarter of 1988 and 1989 and the first quarter of the current year.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Latest available figures for the Northern region show 2,027 dwelling starts reported in the fourth quarter 1989, and 2,428 in the first quarter of 1990. Corresponding figures for dwellings completed were 2,837 and 1,996, respectively. The latest quarterly figures for 1988 up to the third quarter of 1989 appear in table 1.3 of "Housing and Construction Statistics, Part 1, No. 40", which is in the Library.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the number of housing starts and completions in each standard region in 1988 and 1989, together with the percentage change between 1988 and 1989.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The latest available figures for all housebuilding, private and public, are as follows:

Housebuilding Starts and Completions

(Thousands)

	Starts			*Completions*		
	1988	*1989*	*Per cent. change*	*1988*	*1989*	*Per cent. change*
North	10·3	9·8	−4	8·6	9·7	+13
Yorkshire and Humberside	17·9	15·9	−11	16·9	14·4	−15
East Midlands	21·7	16·8	−23	19·9	15·9	−20
East Anglia	16·5	11·4	−31	13·2	13·7	+3
South East:						
London	15·4	13·7	−11	12·5	12·9	+4
Rest of South East	63·7	41·9	−34	55·5	47·9	−14
South West	30·2	19·2	−36	23·7	21·0	−11
West Midlands	19·1	15·6	−19	17·6	14·2	−19
North West	18·7	18·0	−4	18·5	16·3	−12
England	213·4	162·3	−24	186·3	166·0	−11

In 1988 private enterprise housebuilding was at its highest since 1973. Because of the need to raise interest rates to keep down inflation the fall during 1989 and early 1990 is not surprising. Interest rates will remain at current levels as long as is necessary to defeat inflation.

Greenhouse Effect

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on alternatives to chlorofluorocarbons currently in use which are greenhouse gases.

Mr. Trippier: HCFC 22 is an important transitional substance to replace CFC 12. Its global warming potential (GWP) is about a fifth of CFC 12. Other new chemicals are being developed which are also greenhouse gases but with a fraction of the GWP of the CFCs they are to replace.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy in respect of the use of HFC 134A as an alternative to chlorofluorocarbons.

Mr. Trippier: HFC 134A is an environmentally acceptable alternative to CFC12—it has no ozone

depletion potential and its global warming potential is less than a sixth that of CFC12. The Government expect industry to use substitutes in a way which ensures minimum emission to atmosphere.

Mink

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the number and distribution of feral mink in Great Britain.

Mr. Trippier: My Department maintains no records of numbers or distribution of feral mink.

Pavements

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what statutory requirements and regulations concerning the minimum and maximum heights of pavements local authorities are required to observe.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 29 June 1990]:* The law on highways is a matter for the Department of Transport, but I understand that there are no such statutory requirements.

Joint Committee for Nature Conservation

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether the proposed joint committee for nature conservation will assume responsibility for the peatland resource survey currently being undertaken by the Nature Conservancy Council;

(2) whether the proposed joint committee for nature conservation will have a responsibility for establishing the criteria for identifying and safeguarding blanket and raised peatland bogs of national or international importance.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 29 June 1990]:* The main duties and responsibilities of the joint committee were set out in the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) on 23 November 1989, *Official Report*, columns *16-17*. The committee will be responsible for establishing guidelines to assist the county councils in designating sites of special scientific interest and sites of national or international importance for nature conservation. Proposals for the detailed programme of work to be undertaken or overseen by the committee are currently being drawn up in consultation with the Nature Conservancy Council and the other Government Departments involved.

Ozone Layer

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans the Government have to reconsider their position on phase-out targets, for chemicals that destroy the ozone layer, before the forthcoming Montreal protocol renegotiations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 2 July 1990]:* I refer the hon. Member to the statement made in the House by the Secretary of State yesterday.

Sewage Discharges

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his oral answer of 27 June, *Official Report*, columns 309-10, whether his undertaking that new outfalls will be designed to be fully treated includes schemes which are currently at the planning stage.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My officials wrote on 7 June to the National Rivers Authority to explain how the policy announced on 5 March by my right hon. Friend, at column *452*, would be applied. A copy of this letter has been placed in the Library.

This makes it clear that discharges to estuaries must receive secondary treatment where the dry weather flow exceeds 1,500 cu m a day. The outfall at Lavernock will therefore be designed to discharge sewage which has received secondary treatment.

Crown Buildings, Cathays Park

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the requirement for modern air conditioning in the *(a)* Crown building and *(b)* New Crown building, Cathays park.

Mr. Chope: *(a)* The Crown building at Cathays park has no air conditioning except for one small computer room in the basement. There has been no assessment of the requirement for air conditioning in the remainder of this listed building.

(b) The New Crown building was built with air conditioning throughout. Following an assessment of the additional requirements of modern information technology, the system is currently being enhanced.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the application of combined heat and power to the future energy requirements of the Crown buildings complex, Cathays park, Cardiff.

Mr. Chope: No assessment has been made of the application of combined heat and power to Cathays park. Such an assessment would normally be appropriate when the existing plant became due for renewal.

Construction Industry

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department will fund further research into the use of Mundic in the construction industry.

Mr. Chope: No.

Tyneside Enterprise Zone

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his replies given to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central on 7 June, *Official Report*, column *688*, and 20 June, *Official Report*, column *566*, what was the sum added to the revenue support grant for England 1990-91 in respect of business rates otherwise payable in *(a)* the Newcastle and *(b)* the Gateshead portions of the Tyneside enterprise zone.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 27 June 1990]:* A total of £81 million was added to the revenue support grant for

England in 1990-91 as being broadly equivalent to the amount of rates that would have been paid in 1990-91 but for the exemption from rating of properties in enterprise zones. No part of this figure is specifically attributed to any individual enterprise zone. As all business rates are gathered into a central pool and then paid out to authorities on the basis of their relevant populations an authority containing an enterprise zone would not lose income as a result. Any difference between authorities in the amount which they need to spend to provide a standard level of service at average efficiency is measured in their standard spending assessments and is provided for in their RSG.

Tourist Resorts

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider specific grants for capital projects to tourist resort local authorities.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 27 June 1990]:* My Department has no plans to make such grants. I understand that the English tourist board is the agency through which taxpayers' money is made available for tourism in England.

Property Services Agency

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the expected magnitude of the liquidated damages that the Property Services Agency will recover from the main contractor at the RAF St. Mawgan site in relation to the building of nine hardened aircraft shelters.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 28 June 1990]:* The extent of liquidated damages, if any, cannot be assessed until the contract is complete.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which company is supplying the main door drive units at RAF St. Mawgan; and whether extensive prototype tests have been carried out to the satisfaction of the Property Services Agency.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 28 June 1990]:* The units were supplied by NEUERO Industrieanlage Technik of Melle, West Germany. Prototype tests were carried out several years ago before NEUERO units were used for similar projects at other RAF stations, where the units are operating satisfactorily.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library a copy of the site welding diary at RAF St. Mawgan recognised by the Property Services Agency in its contract specification.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 28 June 1990]:* There is no specific requirement for a "site welding diary" in the specification. The clerk of works' diaries recording the labour on site and areas of work in hand on each day are commercial in confidence.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many representations he has received complaining about the quality of Property Services Agency overseeing of the steel-work element used in Government-funded contracts;

(2) if he will place in the Library the detailed criteria used by the Property Services Agency when choosing specialist sub-contractors.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 28 June 1990]:* It is the responsibility of a main contractor to deliver a project in accordance with the contract specification, including dealing with any problems relating to products incorporated in the design. No project in which Cimolai has been involved has included defective products when handed over to the PSA. Representations have been received about problems arising between Cimolai and its sub-contractors, but these have not related to the quality of PSA oversight. In considering the choice of sub-contractors (whether selected by the main contractor or nominated by the PSA) PSA has regard to a firm's expertise and experience in the field of work concerned and previous performance, and to its resources and financial stability.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Management Consultants

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the studies conducted inside his Department by management consultants over the last 10 years, naming the consultancy, the cost, the subject and the outcome in each instance.

Mr. Cope: With the exception of the cost, which I consider would be a breach of commercial confidentiality, the information is as follows:

Consultancy	*Subject*	*Outcome*
1980-81		
Beecom (NI) Ltd.	Monitoring the implementation of productivity/ bonus schemes	Systems implemented
1981-82		
Beecom (NI) Ltd.	Monitoring the implementation of productivity/ bonus schemes	Systems implemented
1982-83		
Beecom (NI) Ltd.	Monitoring the implementation of productivity/ bonus schemes	Systems implemented
1983-84		
Beecom (NI) Ltd.	Monitoring the implementation of productivity/ bonus schemes	Systems implemented

Consultancy	*Subject*	*Outcome*
1984-85		
Beecom (NI) Ltd.	Monitoring the implementation of productivity/ bonus schemes	Systems implemented
Institute of Manpower Studies	Development of an Equal Opportunities Monitoring System	System developed
1985-86		
Beecom (NI) Ltd.	Monitoring the implementation of productivity/ bonus schemes	Systems implemented
Deloitte Haskins and Sells (now Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte)	Development of an improved Management Information System	Introduction of an improved Management Information System
Gilpin Black Associates	Developing input/output measures for individual assignment teams	Improved means of measuring performance
Institute of Manpower Studies	Development of an Equal Opportunities Monitoring System	System developed
1986-87		
Beecom (NI) Ltd.	Monitoring the implementation of productivity/ bonus schemes	Systems implemented
Coopers and Lybrand Associates (NI) Ltd.	Castlenavan Quarry, (DOE owned). Advising the Department on accounting procedures appropriate to a quarrying operation	Majority of recommendations accepted and implemented
	Design of Bookkeeping system for Government Accounts Branch	System introduced
Deloitte, Haskins and Sells	Financial Management Survey in two of the Education and Library Boards	Recommendations translated into Action Plans for implementation
Institute of Manpower Studies	Development of an Equal Opportunities Monitoring System	System Developed
Purchasing Index (UK) Ltd.	Assistance with establishment and developing Central Unit of Purchasing	Unit established and operational
Touche Ross	Review of current Management Information Systems within the Standard Capital Grants Scheme	Of the 16 recommendations made, three were rejected because they were already in place, eight referred to variations on current practice and the remaining five were implemented
PA Management Consultants	Report on shift and complementing study (Fresh Start)	Report commissioned aid with Fresh Start. Proposals were ultimately rejected
1987-88		
Coopers and Lybrand Associates	Awareness and effectiveness of the Standard Capital Grants Scheme	The report showed that the Capital Grants Scheme was not cost effective and did not provide good value for public money. It was decided to end the scheme as from 31 March 1988 and re-target resources more effectively
	Financial Management Survey in other three Education and Library Boards	Recommendations translated into Action Plans for implementation
Deloitte Haskins Sells	Financial Management Survey in two of the Education and Library Boards	Recommendations translated into Action Plans for implementation
Diane Bailey Associates	To provide training for Senior Management in the introduction of the new Staff Appraisal System	Staff Appraisal System successfully implemented
Institute of Manpower Studies	Development of an Equal Opportunities Monitoring System	System developed
PA Management Consultants	Development of Organisation Development Programme	Implemented Organisation Development Programme
Miss D. M. Phillips	Legislative and functional review of the Department's Historic Monuments and Buildings Branch	Recommendations partially accepted
Purchasing Index (UK) Ltd	Development of permanent arrangements following Central Unit of Purchasing and the monitoring of oil buying for Northern Ireland public sector	Agreement to establish Government Purchasing Service
A. A. Wright	Development of car leasing scheme	Savings across Northern Ireland public sector
1988-89		
BIS-Beecom International Ltd.	To prepare incentive bonus schemes to improve the efficiency of the directly employed labour in the Department's Water Service	Incentive bonus schemes being introduced

C. Dermot Boylan	Northern Ireland share of Whitehall investigation into works contracts	Lectures to project sponsor
Capita Ltd.	Presenting Market Testing Seminar	Presentation
CIPFA Services Ltd.	Engaged by DOE's Water Service to undertake a purchasing study	Recommendations partially implemented
Coopers and Lybrand Associates (NI) Ltd.	Review of privatisation options on vehicle inspection	Recommendations partially implemented
	Evaluation of tenders for sewer and mobile plant maintenance in the DOE's Water Service	Implemented
W. Halcrow	Efficiency Study of the DOE's Environmental Protection Division	Conclusions still under consideration
PA Management Consultants	Typing Services	Recommended that typing service should conduct an organisational Development (OD) Programme
	Development of OD Programme	Recommendation implemented Organisation Development Programme
Miss D. M. Phillips	Legislative and functional review of the Department's Historic Monuments and Buildings Branch	Recommendations partially accepted
Policy Research Institute	Evaluation of the Belfast Action Teams (1-6)	Ongoing
Purchasing Index Ltd.	Monitoring of oil-buying for Northern Ireland public sector	Oil buying monitoring
1989-90		
BIS-Beecom International Ltd.	to prepare incentive bonus schemes to improve the efficiency of the directly employed labour in the DOE's Works Service	Incentive bonus schemes being introduced
Business and Economic Initiative	Market Testing Computer Bureau	In house bid prepared
Capita	To lead the market testing exercise of the TC Stores which service the Training Centre Network	Ongoing—for completion in 1990
Coopers and Lybrand Associations (NI) Ltd.	Financial Management Survey in other three Education and Library Boards	Recommendations translated into Action Plans for implementation
	Review of privatisation options for vehicle inspection	Recommendations partially implemented
	Evaluation of tenders for sewer maintenance and repairs in the DOE's Water Service	Implemented
	Evaluation of the Belfast Action Teams (7-8)	Ongoing
Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte	Market Testing Computer Bureau	Used to support decision to move towards formal tender action
Gilpin Black Associates	Advice to Training Centre network on means to achieve registration of Ballymena TC for British Standard 5750 (Quality Assurance Level)	Ongoing—for completion in 1990
Institute of Manpower Studies	Development of an Equal Opportunities Monitoring System	System Developed
MMM Consultancy Ltd.	Review of Transport and Mobile Plant in the Department of the Environment	Recommendations under consideration
Peat Marwick McLintock	Engaged by the DOE's Roads Service to undertake efficiency study at Castlenavan Quarry	Majority of recommendations accepted and being implemented
Price Waterhouse	Review of Departmental investment arrangements	Recommendations being considered
Purchasing Index (UK) Ltd.	Monitoring of oil-buying for Northern Ireland public sector	Oil buying monitoring
J. C. Stott	1. Effect of Government purchasing on smaller firms in the single European Market 2. Development of public purchasing system	Government purchasing service developing arrangements for accreditation of suppliers, improve vetting, better information, better links with EC
J. W. Struthers	Crown car lease hire scheme	Scheme implemented
WDR Taggart	Feasibility of contracting out grounds maintenance of country parks	The study concluded that very limited savings could be achieved
Medical Director, Home Office	Report on Workings of Prison Medical Services for MMRD Report	MMRD Report on Prison Medical Services
Psychological Services for Kent	Psychological tests for new recruits	Advice on recruitment by using psychological tests analysis. As a result the Northern Ireland Prison Service was able to eliminate a number of unsuitable candidates

Kidney Disease

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the number of renal units in the Province; and what is the number of persons receiving kidney dialysis.

Mr. Needham: There is one regional renal unit in the Province together with a satellite renal dialysis unit in Omagh. At present 145 persons are receiving kidney dialysis.

Gas Pipeline

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will commission a study of the feasibility of installing a branch gas pipeline to Northern Ireland from the gas pipeline crossing the Irish sea from Morecambe bay.

Mr. Needham: The possibility of using natural gas for electricity generation in Northern Ireland is currently being examined. It is too early to speculate on the likely route of any gas interconnector from Great Britain.

Population Statistics

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the proportion of the Northern Ireland population aged *(a)* under 10 years, *(b)* under 15 years, *(c)* under 20 years, *(d)* under 25 years, *(e)* under 35 years, *(f)* over 60 years, *(g)* over 65 years and *(h)* over 80 years.

Mr. Needham: The latest available information taken from the 1989 mid-year population estimates is as follows:

	Per cent.
Under 10 years	17·0
Under 15 years	24·9
Under 20 years	33·5
Under 25 years	42·2
Under 35 years	56·7
Over 60 years	16·5
Over 65 years	12·3
Over 80 years	2·5

Derry Youth and Community Workshop

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* to show, for each year since it was set up, the sums paid from public funds to the Derry youth and community workshop; which body provided funds and for what amounts; for what purposes they were granted and used; and whether the Fair Employment Agency or its successor has carried out or is considering an investigation into this body.

Mr. Needham: The information requested on the sums paid from public funds is set out in the table:

Period Ending	*Public Funding* £	*Source*
31 December 1978	140,953	Department of Manpower Services
31 December 1979	272,624	Department of Manpower Services
31 December 1980	393,890	Department of Manpower Services
	7,500	Historical Buildings Council (Department of the Environment)
	16,161	European Social Fund
3 December 1981	387,960	Department of Manpower Services
	5,000	Historical Buildings Council (Department of the Environment)
31 December 1982	585,565	Department of Manpower Services
31 March 1983	179,810	Department of Economic Development
31 March 1984	670,728	Department of Economic Development
31 March 1985	807,898	Department of Economic Development
31 March 1986	815,437	Department of Economic Development
31 March 1987	986,000	Department of Economic Development
31 March 1988	975,081	Department of Economic Development
31 March 1989	1,148,980	Department of Economic Development
31 March 1990	1,301,134	Department of Economic Development

The purpose of this funding was to provide training and work experience for the development of young people in the Londonderry area.

The Derry youth and community workshop has not been investigated by either the Fair Employment Agency or the Fair Employment Commission. The latter determines its own investigation policy.

Fair Employment

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many permanent employees the Inner City Trust, Londonderry has; and how many are *(a)* Protestants, *(b)* Roman Catholics and *(c)* others; whether the Fair Employment Agency or its successor carried out any investigation into this body or is any investigation contemplated.

Mr. Needham: When registered by the Fair Employment Commission on 6 February 1990 the Londonderry Inner City Trust had 150 employees. The Fair Employment Commission is not releasing information on community composition from individual monitoring returns at present.

Neither the Fair Employment Commission nor the former Fair Employment Agency has conducted investigations into this body.

Health Centres

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* to show *(a)* each health centre in the council areas of (i) Londonderry, (ii) Limavady and (iii) Strabane, *(b)* the number of employees at each such centre, *(c)* the number who are male and female and *(d)* the number of

(1) males and (2) females who are *(x)* Roman Catholics, *(y)* Protestants and *(z)* others and if he will indicate how many shown as others were born or educated in (A) Great Britain, (B) the Irish Republic and (C) elsewhere.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 20 June 1990]:* The Western health and social services board has made its return to the Fair Employment Commission as required by the fair employment legislation. The information requested by the hon. Gentleman is not required by the fair employment legislation, is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Elderly People

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what response he has made to the European Commission communication on aging (COM(90)80 FINAL).

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply to him by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health today.

Blind People

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many blind people receive the disability premium.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I regret that the information is not available.

Retired Households (Income)

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if, on the basis of data in the family expenditure survey for 1987, he will state the average percentage income of *(a)* all retired households, *(b)* single retired households, *(c)* retired one-man households and *(d)* retired one-woman households; in each case in all five quintile groupings, which is derived from (i) original income, (ii) contributory retirement pension, (iii) supplementary benefit and (iv) housing benefit; and what is the total average income of each group in each quintile.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information requested is set out in the tables[1].

Table 1
All retired households

	Average percentage[2] income derived from:			
Quintile	*Original income[3] per cent.*	*Retirement pension and supplementary benefit[4] per cent.*	*Housing benefit per cent.*	*Gross income[5] £*
Lowest	10	80	8	47·50
2	14	64	21	63·70
3	22	61	12	80·50
4	35	52	6	109·80
Highest	75	23	0	254·80
Overall	47	44	6	111·20

[1] *Source:* Family Expenditure Survey.
[2] Percentage figures may not sum to one hundred as Social Security benefits, other than those listed are not included.
[3] Original income consists of all gross income less all income from benefits.
[4] It is not possible to accurately identify the state retirement pension and supplementary benefit separately from the Family Expenditure Survey.
[5] £s per week at 1987 prices.

Table 2: Single retired households

	Average percentage income derived from:			
	Original income per cent.	*Retirement pension and supplementary benefit per cent.*	*Housing benefit per cent.*	*Gross income*
Quintile				
Lowest	7	85	6	44·00
2	13	71	14	55·80
3	13	62	22	64·90
4	26	51	17	77·10
Highest	71	23	3	167·50
Overall	39	48	10	81·90

Table 3: Single male retired households

	Average percentage income derived from:			
	Original income per cent.	*Retirement pension and supplementary benefit per cent.*	*Housing benefit per cent.*	*Gross income*
Quintile				
Lowest	5	87	7	47·00
2	16	70	13	59·80
3	18	60	20	69·40
4	37	47	9	87·40

	Average percentage income derived from: Original income per cent.	Retirement pension and supplementary benefit per cent.	Housing benefit per cent.	Gross income
Highest	77	20	1	204·50
Overall	46	44	7	93·50

Table 4: Single female retired households

	Average percentage income derived from: Original income per cent.	Retirement pension and supplementary benefit per cent.	Housing benefit per cent.	Gross income
Quintile				
Lowest	7	85	6	43·40
2	13	71	15	54·80
3	13	63	23	64·00
4	23	52	19	74·70
Highest	68	24	3	156·90
Overall	36	49	11	78·80

Independent Living Fund

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of those receiving assistance from the independent living fund are *(a)* in part-time employment or *(b)* in full-time employment.

Mr. Scott: Information on the employment status of the fund's beneficiaries is not available. However, I understand from the fund that only a small number of beneficiaries is working full or part-time.

Residential Homes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what directions have been given by his Department to local social security offices with regard to the publication of local statistics on the numbers of claimants in residential care or nursing homes in receipt of income support payments.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Statistics which show the characteristics of income support recipients are not generally made available from individual local offices but collated and published centrally in a way consistent with uniformity, the reliability of the data concerned and economical practice. Following recent requests to local offices for information of varying scope and detail about people in homes, local offices have been advised not to respond but to refer them if necessary to headquarters for consideration. Responses to all the referrals so far received have been made.

SCOTLAND

Rents to Mortgages

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if a survey has been conducted of the average incomes of individuals or families who have made inquiries or applications for participation in the rents to mortgages scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Scottish Homes conducted a postal survey in April 1990 of 118 applicants for rents to mortgages. Details of income levels of those who responded are given in the tables. A further, larger survey is being undertaken, the results of which are expected to be available this autumn.

Table 1

Net Weekly Income of Applicant	Number	Percentage
Under £50	1	1·5
£51-100	5	7·7
£101-150	32	48·4
£151-200	20	30·3
£201-250	6	9·1
£251-300	0	0·0
Over £301	2	3·0

Table 2

Net Weekly Household Income	Number	Percentage
£51-100	2	3·0
£101-150	21	31·3
£151-200	24	35·8
£201-250	11	16·4
£251-300	3	4·5
£301-400	4	6·0
Over £401	2	3·0

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average cost of a home purchased under the rents into mortgages scheme; what is the average discount expected on each home; and what is the geographical spread of inquiries/applications for participation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The data available are as yet insufficient to provide a meaningful average house value under the rents to mortgages (RTM) scheme. Scottish Homes' initial estimate of house prices, based on experience of right-to-buy sales indicates a market value of houses sold under RTM of £26,000 in the current year.

Scottish Homes' survey of early applicants suggests that the average discount entitlement in RTM house sales will be 31 per cent.

Inquiries and applications in respect of the RTM scheme have been received from all areas of Scotland but in particular from Lothians and Borders, Renfrew and Inverclyde, Glasgow and central Scotland.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the progress of Scottish Homes' rents into mortgages scheme.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Early experience of the rents to mortgages trial scheme is encouraging. More than 1,000 inquiries have been received from eligible tenants, with 154 applications in process and three sales having been completed.

The scheme is being closely monitored. Any modification or extension to the scheme which seems desirable in the light of experience will be introduced as soon as practicable.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received from tenants' groups in Scotland regarding the extension of Scottish Homes' rents into mortgages scheme.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Inquiries have been received from individual tenants about a possible extension to the scheme but no such representations have been submitted by tenant groups.

Protection of Birds

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those areas of special protection for birds as well as those Ramsar sites and areas with dual designation for the protection of birds.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The sites designated in Scotland thus far are:

Special Protection Areas
Rhum
Priest Island
Laggan Peninsula
Firth of Forth Islands
Abernethy Forest
Handa Island
Ailsa Craig

Ramsar
Loch an Duin

Combined Special Protection Areas and Ramsar Sites
Loch Druidbeg
Loch of Skene
Loch Gye
Gruinart Flats
Glean Na Muice Duibhe (Duich Moss)
Bridgend Flats
Gladhouse Reservoir
Din-Moss-Hoselaw Loch
Fala Flow
Glac na Criche
Feur Lochairn

Sheltered Housing

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide extra funds to local authorities to enable them to build more sheltered housing complexes; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 July 1990]:* Resources for housing capital expenditure in 1990-91 were allocated to local authorities in March on the basis of their relative housing needs and with reference to their capital programmes and housing plans. It is for local authorities to determine their own priorities for use of these allocations in the light of local circumstances, including the need for sheltered housing projects if this is seen as a priority in their area.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice he has received from the Nature Conservancy Council on the designation of extensive sites of special scientific interest as a means of protecting the natural environment in Caithness and Sutherland; and what response he has made.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 July 1990]:* The Nature Conservancy Council provided advice on the need to protect peatland areas of international significance in Caithness and Sutherland in its two publications: "Birds, Bogs and Forestry" and "The Flow Country". The council also gave detailed evidence to the Highland regional council working party on land use strategy in Caithness and Sutherland and set out a two-stage notification programme of SSSIs. The working party report listed the areas of actual and potential SSSI and recommended an indicative forestry strategy. My right hon. and learned Friend endorsed that report and in his announcement of 21 March 1989 encouraged the relevant public agencies to use it as a framework for land use change.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he will take to ensure that the recommendations of the Highland regional council working party report on land use strategy are followed by the Nature Conservancy Council in its proposed descriptions of sites of special scientific interest in Caithness and Sutherland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 July 1990]:* The Nature Conservancy Council was one of the bodies which gave unanimous support to the report produced by the Highland regional council on land use strategy in Caithness and Sutherland. I have no evidence to suggest that any of these bodies, including the Nature Conservancy Council, have taken any action contrary to the indicative forestry strategy recommended in the report and endorsed by my right hon. and learned Friend on 21 March 1989.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take steps to ensure that the 20,000 hectares of land in Caithness identified by the Highland regional council working party report on land use strategy as possible forestry area contained in stage 1 SSSI proposals are retained as a reservoir of plantable land eligible for assistance within the woodland grant scheme.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 July 1990]:* The Highland regional council working party report provides a framework within which relevant public agencies can exercise their statutory duties, whether in approving an application for grant under the woodland grant scheme or notifying an area as an SSSI. The total amount of land in the possible and preferable forestry areas, taking account of the whole of NCC's actual and intended notification programme, is greater than the area of land required to establish a viable forestry industry.

Mental Handicap

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide additional funds to Scottish local authorities to enable them to increase respite care provision for carers of profoundly mentally handicapped persons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 2 July 1990]:* It is for local authorities to decide on the allocation of funds to particular services for which they may be responsible. The revenue support grant settlements in recent years will have enabled local authorities to increase their support for carers of handicapped persons where this was deemed a priority.

A1 (Dual Carriageway)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he intends to incorporate a new Haddington bypass to his plans to extend the A1 dual carriageway from Tranent to Haddington; and if he will make a statement on the timetable for this project.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* Following the routes south of Edinburgh report on public consultation and the Government's decisions published in April, consultants are to be appointed to assess the feasibility of the various dualling options between Bankton (near Tranent) and Dunbar. The Government have concluded that the dualling of the section between Bankton and Haddington should be brought forward in the shorter term.

It is intended that the terminal point for the dualling to Haddington will be to the west of the town and it is envisaged that a new junction will be constructed at this location to cater for the very substantial flow to Haddington itself. It is estimated the total flow on the A1 will drop by one third at this point. At Haddington, several options will be available for the route of a dual carriageway and these will have to be considered so that a robust decision can be taken on the precise junction location west of the town. For this reason, the first report to be submitted under the feasibility study will include recommendations for both the section from Bankton to Haddington and the Haddington bypass. This report is programmed for completion by summer 1991, and it is not possible to give specific details on the termination of the initial dualling and the phasing of the bypass until the detailed engineering and economic evaluations are concluded. However, it is the intention to complete the necessary preparatory work to allow a start of the dualling by the mid-1990s.

RENAVAL Programme

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has received a response from the European Commission concerning the eligibility of Strathclyde region under the terms of the RENAVAL programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 29 June 1990]:* The Commission has not yet informed us of its decision on the eligibility application submitted in May 1989 on behalf of the shipbuilding areas of Strathclyde. On receipt of a favourable decision a programme of measures will be prepared and submitted to the Commission for approval.

EMPLOYMENT

Tourism

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action he intends to take to encourage tourist agencies, airlines and the Civil Aviation Authority to work together to stimulate new tourist trade by promoting new British destinations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The British Tourist Authority and the regional tourist boards are actively engaged with all interested parties in developing and promoting the tourism industry in all regions of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to encourage the tourist market from Japan to Britain.

Mr. Nicholls: The British Tourist Authority already actively promotes the United Kingdom as a tourist destination to the Japanese. In addition the BTA has established the "Britain Welcomes Japan" group under the chairmanship of Countess Spencer. This group is looking at ways of encouraging more tourism from this vitally important market, particularly by highlighting the steps the tourism industry needs to take to make Britain more attractive to Japanese visitors. An action plan with recommendations for the industry will be produced shortly.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action he intends to take to encourage air travel tourists to use regional entry points, rather than London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The British Tourist Authority promotes the advantages and benefits of using regional airports to foreign visitors and airlines. This is particularly important if we are to encourage overseas visitors to the regions and thereby spread the economic benefits that tourism brings.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the effect that the decline in the number of young travellers between the ages of 16 to 24 years as a proportion of all incoming tourists will have on the tourist market.

Mr. Nicholls: International passenger survey figures show that the number of young travellers between the ages of 16 to 24 years has remained broadly constant over the three years from 1986 to 1988, at about 17 per cent. of all visitors.

One of the key objectives of the European year of tourism is to encourage travel by younger people. It is recognised that the young traveller of today is the mature tourist of tomorrow.

The British Tourist Authority, through its promotion of the United Kingdom, encourages a broad spectrum of age groups to visit this country.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if his Department has any plans to further increase investment in the British Tourist Authority from next April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The British Tourist Authority will receive grant in aid amounting to £27·7 million in 1990-91, an increase of over 11 per cent. compared to 1989-90. Funding in subsequent years will be considered in the light of the Government's overall public expenditure plans.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his policy on encouraging airport and other tourist-related staff to learn European languages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: It is very important that all employees in the tourism industry should be encouraged to learn foreign languages. Foreign language competencies are an important element of the skills they need to welcome overseas visitors to this country. This is fully recognised in the British Tourist Authority's recent report "Lost for Words-Language Skills in the British Tourism Industry" and in its related European tourist year language campaign.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to encourage other British cities to follow Birmingham's worldwide promotion scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: The British Tourist Authority has been actively involved in the "Birmingham Invites You" overseas marketing campaign. A number of other cities have undertaken joint promotions overseas with BTA and the authority is always happy to consider proposals. I would welcome similar initiatives by British cities and recommend they make use of BTA's expertise in promoting Britain abroad.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to increase the accessibility of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland for the European tourist.

Mr. Nicholls: The British Tourist Authority is keen to spread tourists throughout Britain and widely promotes the attractions of the country worldwide.

The British Tourist Authority continually assesses transport links between all areas of the United Kingdom and points of entry, making appropriate representations to the responsible Government Departments, and potential transport operators.

Employment Credit

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the various employment credit schemes apart from action credit which his Department has been involved with since 1979; the areas where the schemes have run; and for how long.

Mr. Eggar: During the consideration of the action credit pilots, my Department was aware of a small number of "employment credit" schemes in various parts of the country. Officials were not involved with the schemes except to the extent of gaining some information about the way in which they were run and establishing that they complied with social security rules.

Health and Safety

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 16 May, *Official Report*, columns *435-36*, what proportion of the Health and Safety Executive factory inspectorate's resources each year is spent on the identification and inspection of unregistered workplaces.

Mr. Nicholls: Resources devoted to identifying and inspecting unregistered workplaces vary but between 1 April 1988 and 31 March 1989 the Health and Safety Executive's factory inspectorate spent 6·5 per cent. of its resources on this work.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his reply of 24 April, *Official Report*, column *170*, if he will give details of the cases prosecuted by the Health and Safety Executive which resulted in suspended custodial sentences; and what criteria were used by the Health and Safety Executive in deciding to prosecute.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 2 July 1990]:* Two suspended custodial sentences have been imposed. Both followed prosecutions for failing to comply with a prohibition notice.

In 1985 the managing director of an asbestos stripping company was prosecuted for failing to comply with a prohibition notice. He received fines and costs totalling £7,500 and a 28-day suspended sentence.

In 1987 a director of another asbestos stripping company received two suspended sentences of nine months to run consecutively, for contravening a prohibition notice.

The Health and Safety Executive will generally institute criminal proceedings in cases where the offence is of a flagrant, wilful or reckless nature which either has, or could have, resulted in serious injury.

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment in relation to local initiatives by Health and Safety Executive areas which have concentrated on premises within a particular geographical area or sector of economic activity, what proportion of premises inspected have been found to be unregistered with the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not centrally available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information the Health and Safety Executive's SHIELD database records about the registration of factory premises under section 137 of the Factories Act 1961; whether the information is available on the basis of Health and Safety Executive area by year; and at what cost in terms of person hours and computer time the information is compiled.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive's SHIELD database has the facility to record the following information upon receipt of a notice of occupation under section 137 of the Factories Act:

Establishment keyname
Full name and address
Postcode
Local authority code
Main economic activity code
Number employed
Telephone number
Enforcing authority area
Health and Safety Executive area
Date record opened
Ownership code

Information on the registration of factory premises under section 137 of the Factories Act 1961 by Health and Safety Executive area and the cost in terms of person hours and computer time is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what estimate by area the Health and Safety Executive has made of the approximate proportion of factory premises that are not registered with the Health

and Safety Executive; and what approximate proportion of the factory work force is believed to work in unregistered premises.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive has made no estimate of the number or proportion of unregistered factory premises or the number of employees who work in such premises.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give *(a)* the number of prosecutions and *(b)* the average fine under the Asbestos (Licensing) Regulations 1983 for each year from 1983 to 1989 inclusive.

Mr. Nicholls: The information is not available in the exact format requested in the question. However, the table shows the numbers of informations laid, the number of convictions and the average fine made under the Asbestos (Licensing) Regulations 1983 since they came into force on 1 August 1984.

Prosecution action taken under Asbestos (Licensing) Regulations 1983 by the HSE's Factory and Agricultural Inspectorates 1984 to 1988-89

Date of hearing	Number of informations laid	Convictions	Average fine on conviction £
1984	5	2	500
1985	82	73	423
1986[1]	15	7	293
1986-87[2]	45	40	350
1987-88[2]	35	30	328
1988-89[3]	14	13	217

[1] 1st quarter of year 1 January-31 March.
[2] Year commencing 1 April
[3] Provisional.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were *(a)* the numbers of prosecutions and *(b)* the average fine under the Asbestos Products (Safety) Regulations 1985 for each year from 1985 to 1989 inclusive.

Mr. Forth: I have been asked to reply.

According to the returns made by the enforcement authorities, the number of prosecutions and the fines paid for breaching the Asbestos Products (Safety) Regulations 1985, which came into force on 1 January 1986, as amended by the Asbestos Products (Safety) (Amendment) Regulations 1987, were as follows:

Year	Cases	Fine £
1986	Nil	—
1987	1	3,000
1988	1	500
1989	Nil	—

The regulations have been largely effective in eliminating the use of asbestos in consumer products, and I am not aware of any general problem.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the number of prosecutions resulting from a fatality within the construction industry for each year from 1974 to 1989.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many Health and Safety Executive field inspectors were *(a)* appointed, *(b)* resigned and *(c)* retired for each year from 1974 to 1989.

Mr. Nicholls: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 24 April at column *172*.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the date and location by borough of the deaths of construction workers in the London area between the dates of 1 April 1988 and 31 March 1990.

Mr. Nicholls: The available information for the year commencing 1 April 1988 is shown in the table. Data for subsequent years are not yet available. An analysis of fatal injuries by local authority district could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Fatal Injuries[1] to employed persons occurring in the construction industry in the Greater London area, 1988-89[2]

Date of accident	No. of fatal injuries	
	Employees	Self employed
April 1988	1	—
May 1988	—	—
June 1988	—	—
July 1988	—	—
August 1988	3	1
September 1988	—	1
October 1988	4	—
November 1988	3	1
December 1988	3	1
January 1989	2	1
February 1989	2	2
March 1989	1	—
Total	19	7

[1] Fatal injuries reported to HSE's Factory and Agricultural Inspectorates under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations, 1985 (RIDDOR).
[2] Provisional.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give *(a)* the number of prosecutions and *(b)* the average fine for offences under the Asbestos Regulations for each year from 1974 to 1989 inclusive.

Mr. Nicholls: The information is not available in the exact format requested in the question. However, the table shows the numbers of informations laid, convictions and the average fine made under the Asbestos Regulations 1969 from 1974 to 1988-89, and the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 1987 which revoked the 1969 regulations from 1 March 1988.

Prosecutions taken under the 1969 Asbestos Regulations and under the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 1987 by the HSE's Factory and Agricultural Inspectorates[3]

Date of hearing	Number of informations laid	Convictions	Average fine on conviction £
1974	45	39	—[1]
1975	32	22	79
1976	33	23	48
1977	94	87	265
1978	39	36	84
1979	16	7	23
1980	18	16	217
1981	11	8	150
1982	17	16	325
1983	60	55	257
1984	69	55	347

Date of hearing	Number of informations laid	Convictions	Average fine on conviction £
1985	30	25	482
1986[4]	7	7	647
1986-87[5]	20	14	414
1987-88[5]	14	8	256
1988-89[5]	5	4	313
Asbestos Regulations			
1988-89[2 5]	19	19	474
The Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations			

[1] Not available.
[2] Provisional.
[3] Prosecution action taken by the HSE's Factory Inspectorate only for the years 1974-82.
[4] 1st quarter of year 1 January to 31 March.
[5] Year commencing 1 April.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether the Health and Safety Executive has any plans to follow up the construction site blitzes; and whether an evaluation has been made of the effect of blitzes.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has no plans to mount another national construction site safety blitz campaign.

The HSE published a summary of the blitz campaign in a free magazine-style report entitled "Build Safety"—130,000 copies of which were distributed.

The HSE's evaluation of the campaign concluded that it was a success and as a result, smaller-scale local campaigns have since been undertaken in various parts of the country.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide an estimate of the proportion of *(a)* construction sites that are registered and *(b)* minor and major injuries that were reported to the Health and Safety Executive for 1988-89; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: It is not possible to provide an estimate of the proportion of construction sites which are registered with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). The HSE does not have information on the total number of sites which exist as notification is required only where work is expected to last for six weeks or more.

All fatal injuries in the course of construction activity are reported to the enforcement authorities. The proportion of other reportable injuries which are not reported is not known. It is estimated that non-reporting of such injuries for employees in all sectors is of the order of 50 per cent. Although there is no firm evidence that the problem is more acute in particular sectors there are indications which suggest the degree of under-reporting in the construction industry may be significantly higher.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is *(a)* the number of fines, *(b)* the average fine and *(c)* the number of (i) improvement and (ii) prohibition notices issued under the Control of Lead at Work Regulations 1980 for each of the years 1980 to 1989.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not available. However, the following table shows the number of improvement notices, prohibitions served, informations laid, convictions and the average fine per conviction made under the Control of Lead at Work Regulations 1980 since they came into force on 18 August 1981.

Enforcement notices issued under the Control of Lead at Work Regulations 1980 by the Health and Safety Executive's factory and agricultural inspectorates: 1981 to 1988-89

Year	Improvement notices	Prohibitions served	Number of informations laid	Convictions	Average fine on conviction £
1981	4	—	—	—	—
1982	23	5	2	2	500
1983	26	5	8	8	313
[1]1984	40	11	9	9	150
1985	37	11	26	24	563
[2]1986	9	2	2	2	100
[3]1986-87	41	9	16	12	135
[3]1987-88	36	6	8	7	457
[1 3]1988-89	34	3	10	7	507

[1] Provisional
[2] 1st quarter of year, 1 January to 31 March.
[3] Year commencing 1 April.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many licences were *(a)* issued and *(b)* withdrawn for each year from 1983 to 1989 under the Asbestos (Licensing) Regulations 1983.

Mr. Nicholls: The information is not available in the form requested. The table gives the number of licenses issued, renewed and revoked under the Asbestos (Licensing) Regulations 1983 by calendar year since they came into effect on 1 August 1984.

Number of licences issued, renewed and revoked under the Asbestos (Licensing) Regulations 1983

Year	Number of licences		
	New Issues	Renewals	Revocations
1984	1,313	—	—
1985	571	1,017	1
1986	328	608	2
1987	239	250	2
1988	163	919	1
1989	122	361	4

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Stretford, 24 April, *Official Report*, column *174*, for each of the years 1974 to 1989, inclusive, if he will give *(a)*

the number of Health and Safety Executive prosecutions passed to the Crown prosecution service for consideration and *(b)* the results of the prosecutions that were passed on.

Mr. Nicholls: Records are not kept of Health and Safety Executive (HSE) prosecutions passed to the Crown prosecution service for its consideration. Most health and safety prosecutions are undertaken by HSE inspectors.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the fatalities of construction workers which led to prosecution by the Health and Safety Executive under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act; under which section of the Act the prosecutions were taken; which of these prosecutions were against individual directors, managers or other employees, rather than against the company itself; and which of the deaths are still under investigation by the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Benefit Claimants

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate for 1988 and 1989 the number of claimants without paid jobs who (i) had not looked for work in the last week, (ii) had not looked for a job in the last four weeks, (iii) were not available for work within the next two weeks, (iv) were in categories (i) and (iii) and (v) were in categories (ii) and (iii) and in each case, were *(a)* looking after family/home, *(b)* long-term sick or disabled, *(c)* believed no jobs available, *(d)* retired, *(e)* studying and *(f)* other.

Mr. Nicholls: The information cannot be extracted from standard tabulations and is available only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many unemployed claimants in each month since 23 February have been *(a)* issued with warning letters for not actively seeking work, *(b)* had their claims referred to an adjudicating officer for not actively seeking work, *(c)* had their claims (i) allowed and (ii) disallowed, *(d)* where the claim has been disallowed, the numbers who were (i) successful or (ii) unsuccessful in claiming reduced income support, *(e)* where an adjudication decision is pending, the numbers who have been (i) successful, and (ii) unsuccessful in claiming reduced income support and *(f)* have been referred to an adjudication officer for refusing employment; how many of those in *(f)* have had their benefit disqualified; and if he will provide the figures for Great Britain, each region, and area adjudication sections in London.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 28 June 1990]:* The Employment Service became an executive agency on 2 April 1990. Mr. Mike Fogden, the Employment Service Agency's chief executive, will be replying in writing to the hon. Gentleman to parts *(a)*, *(b)*, *(c)* and *(f)*. Parts *(d)* and *(e)* are matters for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment using the labour force survey 1989, if he will estimate the number of claimants unemployed who would like work, were available for it and had sought it in the last four weeks, or were waiting to start a new job.

Mr. Nicholls: Information from the 1989 labour force survey indicates that there were 1,270,000 claimants without a paid job who were available for work, and had sought it in the last four weeks, or were waiting to start a job already obtained.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate, using the labour force survey 1989, the number of claimants unemployed who (i) would not like work and of these, the percentages with *(a)* care responsibilities, *(b)* long-term sick, disabled, *(c)* retired, *(d)* did not want or need work, *(e)* believed no jobs available and *(f)* studying, (ii) would like work but are not available in the next two weeks and, of these, the percentages *(a)* with care responsibilities, *(b)* long-term sick or disabled, *(c)* studying, *(d)* awaiting a job, *(e)* other and (iii) would like work and are available but have not sought work in the last four weeks, and the percentages *(a)* with care responsibilities, *(b)* thought no jobs available, *(c)* long-term sick or disabled, *(d)* not yet started to look, *(e)* retired and *(f)* other.

Mr. Nicholls: Available estimates from the preliminary results of the 1989 labour force survey are shown in the table:

Claimants (Aged 18 and Over) Not in Employment, Spring 1989

Great Britain, thousand

	(i) would not like work	*(ii) would like work but not available in next two weeks*	*(iii) would like work, available but not looked for work in the last four weeks*
All Persons (100 per cent.)	*130 per cent.*	*90 per cent.*	*110 per cent.*
—looking after family/home	32	14	13
—long term sick/disabled	18	11	9
—retired	14	[1]	[2]
—did not want/need work	14	[1]	[1]
—believes no jobs available	[2]	[1]	31
—studying	[2]	[2]	[1]
—awaiting a job	[1]	[2]	[1]
—not yet started looking	[1]	[1]	[2]
—other/no reason	[1]	64	35

[1] not requested.
[2] less than 10,000.

Notes: Figures are individually rounded to the nearest 10,000.
The reconciliation of the claimant count with the claimant figures obtained from the 1989 LFS has been affected by an improvement

in the design of the questionnaire and also by the change in benefit regulations for under 18 year olds in September 1988. As a result, the reconciliation has been restricted to claimants aged 18 and over.

Source: Derived with reference to both the claimant count and the 1989 Labour Force Survey results.

Training, St. Helens

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list in the *Official Report (a)* the number of 18 to 25-year-olds registered as unemployed in St. Helens over the past two years, *(b)* the proportion of male to female unemployment in the 18 to 25-year-old group, *(c)* the number of people in this age bracket on ET schemes, in St. Helens and nationally, *(d)* the average duration of unemployment for each year in the 18 to 25-year-old age group in St. Helens and *(e)* the number of YTS trainees both nationally and in St. Helens, and the proportion of these trainees who find jobs with the company or training agency at the completion of their training.

Mr. Nicholls: Unemployment by age is produced quarterly. The following two tables give the extent of the available information and show for the unemployed aged 18 to 24 years *(a)* the numbers in the St. Helens local authority district together with proportions of male and female unemployment and *(b)* the median duration of unemployment.

The information requested about employment training is not available.

At 31 March 1990, there were about 359,000 young people undertaking YTS training in Great Britain. The latest information shows that 66·7 per cent. of all YTS leavers go into a job within three months of leaving and very nearly half of these remain with the same employer. Corresponding figures for St. Helens are not available.

(a) Unadjusted unemployment aged 18 to 24 years in the St. Helens Local Authority District

	Male	*Proportion of total percentage*	*Female*	*Proportion of total percentage*	*Total*
1988					
April	2,376	69·0	1,067	31·0	3,443
July	2,249	69·3	998	30·7	3,247
October	2,157	68·2	1,004	31·8	3,161
1989					
January	2,183	70·2	925	29·8	3,108
April	2,024	70·6	844	29·4	2,868
July	1,844	69·0	827	31·0	2,671
October	1,788	67·0	881	33·0	2,669
1990					
January	1,818	69·1	812	30·9	2,630
April	1,733	69·5	762	30·5	2,495

(b) The median duration of unemployment (in weeks) in the St. Helens Local Authority District for claimants aged 18-24 years.

(weeks)

	Male	*Median*[1] *female*	*Total*
1988			
April	35·0	30·5	33·4
July	33·6	27·9	31·8
October	25·8	17·2	23·4
1989			
January	24·0	20·6	22·8
April	28·3	24·9	27·1
July	28·5	19·9	25·4
October	24·4	14·5	21·2
1990			
January	23·3	18·2	21·4
April	25·2	20·7	23·7

[1] The Median duration of unemployment is the length of time spent unemployed, which is exceeded by 50 per cent. of the unemployed.

Note:—Comparisons are slightly affected by the September 1988 change in benefit regulations for under 18 year olds.

European Social Fund

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment for what reason his Department has not yet submitted the operational programmes to the European Commission concerning United Kingdom European social fund objectives 3 and 4 operational programmes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My Department submitted the revised ESF operational programmes for objectives 3 and 4 to the European Commission on 15 June.

Pop Concerts

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he expects to receive the Health and Safety Executive's report by the working party on new guidelines at pop and rock concerts.

Mr. Nicholls: It is hoped that a first draft of the Health and Safety Executive's guidance on pop concerts and similar events will be available for consultation in early autumn 1990.

Youth Training

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has received any representations from professional football clubs about the future number of youth training places; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: I have had no direct representations from professional football clubs about the future number of youth training places. The Professional Footballers Association, which is the national managing agent for youth training in football, has recently signed a contract to deliver youth training in 1990-91.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the numbers of youth training places allocated to each professional football club for each of the last five years.

Mr. Nicholls: No. The information requested is commercial in confidence.

HEALTH

Health Authority Chairpersons

11. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received regarding the salary levels of health authority chairpersons.

62. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received regarding the salary levels of health authority chairpersons.

100. **Mr. Orme:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received regarding the salary levels of health authority chairpersons.

122. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received regarding the salary levels of health authority chairpersons.

Mr. Dorrell: We have received a few letters, but we believe that health authority chairmen carry heavy responsibilities and that the increases recently announced put their remunerations on a more realistic basis.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many expressions of interest in the formation of self-governing hospital trusts have so far been received.

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many expressions of interest have been made for hospitals opting out of existing arrangements within the national health service.

21. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last had discussions with the chairman of the Mersey region health authority; if the opting-out of hospitals on Merseyside was discussed; and if he will make a statement.

27. **Mr. Barry Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress he is making in setting up national health service trusts.

29. **Mr. Neil Hamilton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the implications for hospitals which choose to become national health service hospital trusts.

59. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on progress regarding self-governing trusts for hospitals.

71. **Mr. Bell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many expressions of interest in the formation of self-governing hospital trusts have so far been received.

111. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many expressions of interest in the formation of self-governing hospital trusts have so far been received.

96. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence of the views of community health councils regarding the formation of self-governing hospital trusts is available to his Department.

104. **Mr. Clay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence of the views of community health councils regarding the formation of self-governing hospital trusts is available to his Department.

117. **Mr. Cabom:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence of the views of community health councils regarding the formation of self-governing hospital trusts is available to his Department.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave my hon. Friends the Members for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson), for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo), and for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Franks) and the hon. Members for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes), for Wigan (Mr. Stott), for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell) and for Southport (Mr. Fearn) earlier today.

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether national health service trusts will have access to all his Department's guidance; and if they will be required to follow it.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: All current and future guidance to the national health service will be made available to national health service trusts. It will be for trusts as it is for health authorities to determine the extent to which they follow it. They will be expected to ensure that they take full account of all legal obligations, requirements of statutory bodies, hazard or safety notices, advice relating to patients, public or staff safety, personal privacy and patient confidentiality. The national health service and Community Care Act gives the Secretary of State for Health reserve powers to direct trusts to follow particular guidance should this be necessary.

113. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what additional funds he proposes to make available to hospitals considering trust status to undertake public consultation with local communities.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The relevant regional health authorities will be charged with carrying out public consultation on applications for national health service trust status. We are making available additional funds of £500,000 to be used for consultation on first wave applications for trust status.

67. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will make it his policy to refuse any application for self-governing status for Guy's hospital.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has no intention of prejudging any potential application for national health service trust status.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his Department's latest information on the total expenditure incurred to date on preparation for self-governing hospital trusts.

49. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his Department's latest information on the total expenditure incurred so far on preparation for self-governing hospital trusts.

106. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his Department's latest information on the total expenditure incurred so far on preparation for self-governing hospital trusts.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have made no estimate of the cost of preparing applications for trust status.

42. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospitals in Leicestershire have applied for trust status to date.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: None.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice has been issued by his Department regarding public consultation prior to the formation of self-governing hospital trusts.

33. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice has been issued by his Department regarding public consultation prior to the formation of self-governing hospital trusts.

36. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice has been issued by his Department regarding public consultation prior to the formation of self-governing hospital trusts.

52. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will announce the machinery of consultations that he intends to implement before hospitals can become self-governing trusts.

80. **Mr. Bidwell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice has been issued by his Department regarding public consultation prior to the formation of self-governing hospital trusts.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department issued guidance to NHS managers on procedures for consultation on applications for NHS trust status yesterday. Copies of this guidance have been placed in the Library.

Children Act

23. **Mr. David Young:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the progress made towards the implementation of the Children Act.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We are consulting on the regulations and guidance necessary to implement the Act in October 1991. New rules of court will be drafted for consultation in the autumn. A comprehensive training and dissemination programme is under way.

Junior Doctors

58. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he next intends to meet representatives of national health service junior doctors to discuss their terms and conditions of service.

64. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will bring forward proposals to reduce the hours worked by junior doctors in the national health service.

83. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will bring forward proposals to reduce the hours worked by junior doctors in the national health service.

102. **Sir Robert McCrindle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the progress of the working party investigating the conditions of junior hospital doctors.

108. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will bring forward proposals to reduce the hours worked by junior doctors in the national health service.

120. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will bring forward proposals to reduce the hours worked by junior doctors in the national health service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friend and the hon. Members to the reply I gave the hon. Members for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie) and for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond) earlier today.

NHS Inflation

25. **Mr. Leadbitter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the latest estimate for national health service inflation for the remainder of the current financial year.

74. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the latest estimate for national health service inflation for the remainder of the current financial year.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) earlier today.

Community Care

26. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations have been received from local authorities regarding the costs of implementing the Government's proposals on community care.

94. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations have been received from local authorities regarding he costs of implementing the Government's proposals on community care.

119. **Ms. Gordon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what communications have been received from local authorities regarding the costs of implementing the Government's proposals on community care.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) earlier today.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations his Department has received from local authorities regarding earmarked grants for community care.

54. **Mr. Cunliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations his Department has received from local authorities regarding earmarked grants for community care.

66. **Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations his Department has received from local authorities regarding earmarked grants for community care.

116. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations his Department has received from local authorities regarding earmarked grants for community care.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department has received many representations in correspondence and at regular meetings with local authority associations about all aspects of community care finance, including earmarked grants.

48. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his latest estimate of the proposed implementation date for the Government's proposals on community care.

50. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his latest estimate of the proposed implementation date for the Government's proposals on community care.

109. **Mr. Terry Fields:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his latest estimate of the proposed implementation date for the Government's proposals on community care.

123. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his latest estimate of the proposed implementation date for the Government's proposals on community care.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The proposed implementation date for the community care proposals is 1 April 1991.

34. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations he has received on his plans for community care.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received many representations both in correspondence and at regular meetings with organisations concerned with our plans for community care.

NHS Patients

28. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of in-patients being treated by the national health service.

40. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients in total are being treated by the national health service annually.

69. **Mr. Norris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many in-patients are being treated each year by the national health service.

105. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total number of patients being treated annually by the national health service.

Mr. Dorrell: The latest available information is contained in a statistical bulletin "NHS hospital activity statistics for England 1979-1988/89" reference 2/1/90, copies of which have been placed in the statistics section of the Library.

Child Care

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his Department's estimate of the number of statutory child care cases currently unsupervised because of the shortage of local authority social workers.

30. **Mrs. Heal:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his Department's estimate of the number of statutory child care cases currently unsupervised because of the shortage of local authority social workers.

55. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his Department's estimate of the number of statutory child care cases currently unsupervised because of the shortage of local authority social workers.

110. **Mr. Henderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his Department's estimate of the number of statutory child care cases currently unsupervised because of the shortage of local authority social workers.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not available centrally. The regional offices of the social services inspectorate will continue to monitor the situation within their areas.

Patient Care

31. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps are being taken to promote the quality of care for patients.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) on 5 June at column *584*.

NHS Nurses and Midwives

32. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the change in the pay and conditions of nurses and midwives employed by the national health service since 1979.

51. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the change in the pay and conditions of nurses and midwives in the national health service since 1979.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Pay for nursing and midwifery staff has risen by an average of 43 per cent. in real terms since 1979.

In 1983 the Government established an independent pay review body to recommend levels of pay for nursing and midwifery staff. All seven review body reports have been accepted in full, with staging in three cases.

Hours of work were reduced from 40 to 37½ a week during 1980-81 without loss of pay. This was equivalent to a 6·5 per cent. increase in pay.

New clinical and education grading structures were introduced in 1988 and 1989 respectively which provide better and more flexible career opportunities for those staff engaged in clinical and teaching practice. A new pay structure for senior nurse managers has recently been agreed in the nursing and midwifery staffs negotiating council.

Community Charge Capping

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment has been made by his Department of the implications of community charge capping for local authority social service provision.

35. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment has been made by his Department of the implications of community charge capping for local authority social service provision.

76. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment has been made by his Department of the implications of community charge capping for local authority social service provision.

112. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment has been made by his Department of the implications of community charge capping for local authority social service provision.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The charge capping which, if the House approves, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment intends to set, represents his view of what is reasonable and appropriate in all the circumstances of the authorities concerned. It will be for each of the authorities to decide how to restrain their excessive budgets to within the level of the cap.

Social Workers (Recruitment)

37. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to meet representatives of local authorities to discuss recruitment of social workers.

84. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to meet representatives of local authorities to discuss recruitment of social workers.

95. **Mr. McWilliam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to meet representatives of local authorities to discuss recruitment of social workers.

114. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to meet representatives of local authorities to discuss recruitment of social workers.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have regular meetings with local authority associations when they can raise this matter if they wish.

Cot Deaths

39. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what Government support is presently given to the study of sudden infant death syndrome; what plans he has to increase it; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department of Health and the Department of Trade and Industry have jointly accepted the responsibility for examining the claim that chemical emissions from cot mattresses may be a contributory factor in sudden infant death syndrome. The Department of Health has requested the Medical Research Council (MRC) to commission a critical review of the research literature on sudden infant death syndrome.

The MRC is the main agency through which the Government support biomedical and clinical research in the United Kingdom. The MRC receives its grant in aid from the Department of Education and Science. In 1988-89, the latest financial year for which figures are available, the MRC spent approximately £62,000 on research into sudden infant death syndrome. In the same year, the MRC spent a further £310,000 on other research which may contribute in part to an understanding of sudden infant death syndrome.

65. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress is being made on the appointment of a paediatric pathologist for each regional health authority to support cot death research.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information from regional health authority short-term plans for 1990-91 submitted last February shows that there is at least one paediatric pathologist in post in 10 regions: in two others there are vacant posts which are being advertised and in each of the remaining two regions the health authorities plan to introduce a funded post by April 1991.

Regional Health Authorities (Funding)

41. **Mr. Arbuthnot:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a further statement on funding for regional health authorities in 1990-91.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply my hon. Friend the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State gave my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) on 1 May at column *523*.

District Health Authorities (Deficits)

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his Department's current projection for the number of district health authorities that will be in deficit at the end of the financial year.

43. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his Department's current projection for the number of district health authorities that will be in deficit at the end of the financial year.

53. **Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his Department's current projection for the number of district health authorities that will be in deficit at the end of the financial year.

89. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his Department's current projection for the number of district health authorities that will be in deficit at the end of the financial year.

Mr. Dorrell: The national health service management executive is engaged in continuing discussions with regional health authorities. It is not yet possible to identify the number of district health authorities that will have an underlying deficit in 1990-91.

Oakham Hospitals (Ministerial Visit)

44. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he is now in a position to announce a date for the proposed visit to hospitals in Oakham, Rutland, of the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell).

Mr. Dorrell: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

District Health Authorities (Financial Year)

45. **Miss Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when is the beginning of the financial year for district health authorities.

Mr. Dorrell: The answer is 1 April.

Disabled People (Legislation)

46. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has completed his discussions with the local authority associations on sections 1, 2 and 3 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986.

97. **Mr. Alfred Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the progress of his

consultations on implementation of sections 1, 2 and 3 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986.

101. **Sir George Young:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will now implement sections 1, 2 and 3 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986.

121. **Mr. Hannam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made in consultation with local authorities on implementation of sections 1, 2 and 3 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer my hon. Friends and the right hon. Members to the reply I gave the hon. Members for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) and for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) on 28 June at column *309*.

Premature Deaths (Bootle)

47. **Mr. Carr:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps are being taken to combat the high incidence of premature deaths in Bootle caused by lung cancer and heart disease.

Mr. Dorrell: As the responsibility for health promotion and disease prevention services in Bootle is primarily for the health authority locally, the hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman of South Sefton health authority for details.

Local Authority Homes (Transfer)

57. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment has been made by his Department of the implications of the transfer of local authority homes into the independent sector.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The White Paper "Caring for People" made it clear that the Government see the future development of community care, including residential care, taking place in partnership between the private, voluntary and statutory sectors. Local authorities will continue to have a valuable role to play in provision. The transfer of some local authority homes to the independent sector may, however, provide more choice for users and also more competition between providers, leading to better value for money and a more cost-effective service.

Speech Therapists

60. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received regarding speech therapists in west Norfolk.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received a few letters on the subject.

Health Expenditure

61. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the real terms increase in health expenditure since June 1987.

Mr. Dorrell: Expenditure information is available only for financial years. Planned expenditure for the NHS (England) in 1990-91 is £23·5 billion. This will mean a real terms increase since 1987-88 of 9·7 per cent.

Patient Services (Collaboration)

63. **Mr. Maples:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the effect of collaboration between the national health service and the private sector on services to patients.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The independent health sector performs some 510,000 operations and treats 900,000 out-patients each year. It also provides 68,000 nursing home beds, mainly for long-stay elderly patients. This represents a significant additional input to national health care.

The Government's White Paper "Working for Patients" encourages increased collaboration with the independent sector. It is frequently mutually beneficial to share expensive resources, and there are numerous examples of NHS and independent units collaborating in the use of buildings, high-technology equipment, support services and key manpower. Such joint ventures increase the options available to NHS managers as well as to patients, and release or generate resources in the NHS for further improvement in health services for all. The independent sector also makes a useful contribution in helping to reduce waiting times.

107. **Mr. Fishburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what examples there are of partnerships between the national health service and the private sector currently operating.

Mr. Dorrell: A number of successful and cost-effective joint ventures are operating between the health service and independent sector which release NHS resources for further improvement to health services for all. Some examples are shown in the table.

Health Authority	*Provider*	*Nature of service*
Central Manchester	Nuffield Hospitals	Eye surgery
Coventry	Bioplan	Day surgery and Endoscopy
National Hospital for Nervous Diseases Special Health Authority	BUPA	Magnetic Resonance Imaging Scanner
West Lambeth	Churchill Clinic	ENT surgery
West Midlands Region	AMI Priory Hospital Birmingham	Lithotripsy

91. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on collaboration between the national health service and the private sector.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply my hon. Friend the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State gave my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman) on 1 May at column *517*.

GP Lists

68. **Mr. Leigh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the size of the average general practitioner's list.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply my hon. Friend the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State gave my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes) on 20 February at column *717*.

Sports Injuries

70. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to increase research and training into the treatment of sports injuries.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There are no plans to do so.

Hospital Closures

72. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospitals have been closed within the Trent region during the last five years.

Mr. Dorrell: The following table gives the numbers of hospitals/facilities which we are aware were approved for total closure in the last five years in the Trent region.

Hospital/ facilities closed		*Hospital/ facilities opened*		*In-patients treated*	*Out-patients treated*
Calendar year		*Financial year*			
1989	13	—	—	—	—
1988	9	1988-89	9	626,101	3,335,852
1987	4	1987-88	8	612,890	3,343,899
1986	7	1986	7	592,398	3,400,645
1985	1	1985	8	578,370	3,300,193

It is important to bear it in mind that closures are often balanced by new facilities or other reprovision and that the closure figures in themselves do not necessarily reflect any reduction in overall service provision.

Northwick Park Hospital

73. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has held discussions with interested parties recently on the future of Northwick Park hospital.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State announced in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr Hughes) on 9 March at column *898*, a steering group has been established to look at the implications of the proposed closure of the clinical research centre at Northwick Park hospital. The steering group is chaired by the Department of Health and has representatives from the health service and the Medical Research Council. The steering group will be making its first report to Ministers in the near future.

Eye Tests

75. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any proposals to commission a further survey into the impact of eyetest charges.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There are no plans to do so.

38. **Mr. John P. Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what further evidence has been made available to his Department regarding the effects of the introduction of charges on the number of eyesight checks undertaken.

81. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what further evidence has been made available to his Department regarding the effects of the introduction of charges on the numbers of eyesight checks undertaken.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received no new independent evidence on sight test demand since the publication of the independent NOP report earlier this month.

NHS Reforms

77. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will make a statement as to preparations for his reforms of the national health service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Royal Assent to the National Health Service and Community Care Act was received on 29 June. Preparations for implementation of the reforms from 1 April 1991 are proceeding according to plan.

Out-patient Services

78. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether any changes will be made to out-patient services as a result of the proposals in the National Health Service and Community Care Bill.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Out-patient departments, like others, will benefit from the emphasis on improved quality of care and efficiency in the delivery of services.

Hospital Doctors

79. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the percentage change in the number of hospital doctors in the national health service since 1979.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The number of hospital doctors in the national health service in England has risen from 39,859 at 30 September 1979 to 45,574 at 30 September 1988, an increase of 14 per cent.

These figures include permanent paid and honorary staff.

Royal Victoria Infirmary, Newcastle upon Tyne

82. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he next proposes to visit the new ward block now under construction at the Royal Victoria infirmary, Newcastle upon Tyne.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has no plans at present to visit the new ward block under construction at the Royal Victoria infirmary. I understand that he lay the foundation stone for the ward block, which at a cost of £30 million represents the Northern region's largest capital project to date, in October 1988.

Preventive Health Care

85. **Mr. Andrew Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to encourage preventive health care for older people.

Mr. Dorrell: The Government fund the Health Education Authority, which is committed to the promotion of good health in old age and ensure that all its relevant programmes address the health education needs of elderly people. In addition, the Department funds a number of voluntary organisations under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968, which in various ways promote the physical and mental well-being of the elderly.

Carers

86. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to be in a position to respond to the recommendations of the Social Services Select Committee report on carers.

98. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to be in a position to respond to the recommendations of the Social Services Select Committee report on carers.

115. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to be in a position to respond to the recommendations of the Social Services Select Committee report on carers.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In accordance with the accepted convention that responses should not be issued while Parliament is in recess we will publish our response when Parliament reconvenes in the autumn.

Residential and Nursing Care

87. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to increase the beds which will be needed in the residential and nursing care sectors for older people by the year 2000.

Mr. Dorrell: Our policy is to ensure diversity and choice in the provision of high quality services. Residential care may be directly provided by local authorities or secured through arrangements with the independent sector where this offers the best way of meeting care needs.

The provision of continuous residential health care is a responsibility of the health service. The overall level and type of provision are matters for individual health authorities to decide in the light of local circumstances and patients' needs.

General Practitioner Contracts

88. **Mr. Viggers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has recently received on the new form of contract for general practitioners.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Since 1 April we have received some 700 letters concerned with the general practitioners' new contract.

Hip and Knee Replacements

92. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the growth in numbers of hip replacement and knee replacement operations carried out in national health service hospitals over the last 10 years.

Mr. Dorrell: From 1979 to 1989 the number of hip replacement operations performed annually rose from 29,500 to 45,600, an increase of 55 per cent. Information on the number of knee replacement operations carried out in 1988-89 is not yet available, but preliminary figures indicate that there were around 10,000 compared with 3,100 in 1979—an increase of 200 per cent.

Health Authority Mergers

93. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what provision is being made to ensure fair and reasonable representation by constituent authorities on new health authorities when two or more are merged.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Proposals for health authorities to merge will be considered only where there is a compelling case for change. The non-executive members of any new authority which is formed as the result of a merger will be chosen solely on the basis of the individual contribution they can make to the new authority and not to represent the interests of any particular section of the population or area. Nevertheless, non-executive members will usually have some connection with the area served by the new authority and an understanding of the needs and issues of the whole district.

Mental Handicap Services

56. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he intends to introduce a specific grant earmarked for mental handicap services.

103. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he intends to introduce a specific grant earmarked for mental handicap services.

118. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he intends to introduce a specific grant earmarked for mental handicap services.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) earlier today.

Chiropractice

96. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about his policy towards the report of the Medical Research Council which recommends that chiropractice should be introduced into the national health service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: While we have noted the report with interest, there are no plans to introduce chiropractice into the NHS.

Consultants

99. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the cost of the appointment of the 100 additional consultants, announced in the White Paper "Working for Patients" will be.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) on 27 February at columns *125-26*. Once all 100 new consultants are in post, the annual cost of the scheme will be about £37 million.

Chiropody

124. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received about the future of the chiropody profession.

Mr. Dorrell: The only representations we have received concerning recognition of qualifications by the chiropody board are those made in my hon. Friend's recent letters. I have agreed to meet my hon. Friend to discuss the issue and my office will be contacting him shortly to arrange this.

Tobacco Advertising

125. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will extend the terms of reference for the Committee for Monitoring Agreements on Tobacco Advertising and Sponsorship; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The terms of reference of the committee were agreed by the Government and the tobacco industry as part of the voluntary agreement on tobacco products' advertising and promotion, and health warnings. We are satisfied that the current terms of reference allow the committee effectively to fulfil its role.

Kevin Keary Trust

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will provide financial assistance to the Kevin Keary Trust.

Mr. Dorrell: We have received no request for financial assistance from the Kevin Keary Trust direct. I suggest that the trust should consider approaching the local health authority in the first instance.

Greater Manchester Hospitals

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about staffing levels in hospitals in Greater Manchester and care of the elderly.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Staffing levels in hospitals and, in particular, the care of elderly people in Greater Manchester is a matter for the local health authorities, taking account of all the guidance and good practice available.

The North Western regional health authority has, in particular, issued guidance in a document entitled "Standards for Nursing Services", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Information Technology

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list those hospitals taking part in the national pilot scheme for information management and technology training; what are the terms of reference; when the pilot scheme will finish; when he expects to publish the results; and if he will indicate which of those hospitals taking part in the scheme have expressed an interest in trust status.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The National Health Service Training Authority (NHSTA) has responsibility for management of a joint Department of Health/NHSTA information management and technology (IMT) training strategy for England and Wales. There are at present two national pilot schemes in progress.

Project 05. This aims to identify IMT training needs and to produce open learning materials to meet these. The first stage of the pilot project should finish by October 1990 with the learning materials published shortly afterwards.

The sites involved are:

- Barnsley District General Hospital
- Bronglais Hospital Aberystwyth
- Doncaster Royal Infirmary[1]
- George Eliot Hospital Nuneaton
- Glenfield General Hospital Leicester
- Hope Hospital Salford
- Leighton Hospital Crewe[1]
- Northern General Hospital Sheffield[1]
- Riverside District Health Authority (Charing Cross and Westminster Hospitals, District Family and Community Services and Mental Health Units)
- St. Bartholomews Hospital London[1]

[1] Have expressed an interest in trust status.

Project 027 This pilot relates to district health authorities rather than to individual hospitals. It aims to set up the infrastructure for the delivery of IMT training. The pilot scheme is due to run from August 1990 to February 1991 with the results published shortly afterwards.

The district health authorities involved are:

- Cornwall and Isles of Scilly
- Leicestershire
- Macclesfield
- Plymouth
- Portsmouth
- South-East Kent
- West Dorset
- York

and one district chosen and financed by the Welsh Office yet to be decided.

The following interests in trust status have been expressed within the participating districts:

Cornwall and Isles of Scilly: Cornwall Mental Handicap Services, Cornwall Community Services, West Cornwall Acute Services.

Leicestershire: None.

Macclesfield: Community and Mental Handicap Services, District General Hospital Acute Services, Mental Health Services.

Plymouth: Acute Services.

Portsmouth: None.

South-East Kent: William Harvey and Buckland Hospital, District Community Services.

West Dorset: Acute Services, Mental Health Services, Community and General Services.

York: None.

Total Quality Management Initiative

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the hospitals that are taking part in the national pilot scheme for the total quality management initiative; when the pilot scheme will finish; when he expects to publish the results; and if he will indicate which of those hospitals taking part in the scheme have expressed an interest in trust status.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A total of £500,000 was made available in 1989-90 from central funds to assist 17 district health authorities implement total quality management. Funds for 1990-91 projects will be allocated shortly. Many of the existing projects have applied for continued funding, reflecting the long-term nature of implementation.

A first evaluation of the projects will commence this autumn. It is expected that early findings will be made available to the NHS next year.

Expressions of interest in trust status do not necessarily correspond with district-led initiatives on total quality management. Details of hospitals which have taken part in the scheme and also shown an interest in trust status are as follows:

Demonstration districts	*Expressions of interest*
Doncaster	Doncaster Royal Infirmary and the Montague Hospital
Waltham Forest	Waltham Forest (whole District)
Worthing	Worthing and Southlands Hospitals
Merton and Sutton	St. Helier and Sutton Hospitals
East Berkshire	East Berkshire Mental Handicap Unit
Mid Staffordshire	Mid Staffs Mental Health Unit Mid Staffs Community Unit
Liverpool	Liverpool Community Heath Services Liverpool Dental Hospital Liverpool Mental Health Services Liverpool Obstetrics and Gynaecology Services Broadgreen Hospital Royal Liverpool Hospital Royal Liverpool Children's Hospital
West Dorset	West Dorset Community Services West Dorset General Hospital (Acute Services) West Dorset Mental Health Services
Northallerton	Nil
York	Nil
South West Herts	Nil
Canterbury and Thanet	Nil
Milton Keynes	Nil
Cheltenham	Nil
South East Staffordshire	Nil
Trafford	Nil
Winchester	Nil

Worthing
Worthing and Southlands Hospitals

Merton and Sutton
St. Helier and Sutton Hospitals

East Berkshire
East Berkshire Mental Handicap Unit

Mid Staffordshire
Mid Staffordshire Mental Health Unit
Mid Staffordshire Community Unit

Liverpool
Liverpool Community Health Services
Liverpool Dental Hospital
Liverpool Mental Health Services
Liverpool Obstetrics and Gynaecology Services
Broadgreen Hospital
Royal Liverpool Hospital
Royal Liverpool Children's Hospital

West Dorset
West Dorset Community Services
West Dorset General Hospital (Acute Services)
West Dorset Mental Health Services

York Nil
Northallerton
South West Hertfordshire
Canterbury and Thanet
Milton Keynes
Cheltenham
South East Staffordshire
Trafford
Winchester

Elderly People

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what response he has made to the European Commission communication on aging (COM(90)80 FINAL).

Mr. Dorrell: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State presented an explanatory memorandum to Parliament on 29 June, copies of which are available in the Library and the Vote Office. We have made it clear that while we support the spirit of the communication, we believe that a number of the proposals are best considered in the context of national arrangements.

Weil's Disease

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what forms of protection are available in the United Kingdom against Weil's disease; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Although leptospirosis is a rare occupational disease, recently there has been increased public concern about the possible risk associated with water sports such as canoeing.

Advice on protection is aimed primarily at prevention. Clubs, local authorities and water companies provide water sports enthusiasts with a leaflet giving advice on how to reduce the risk of infection by taking simple precautions. Open wounds should be covered with waterproof dressing and injuries sustained during the activity should be washed thoroughly and a waterproof dressing applied. If symptoms develop, no matter how minor, medical opinion should be sought.

A vaccine is available in Japan, but it is not generally effective against the strains of the disease found in this country.

Lassa Fever

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of Lassa fever have been identified within the United Kingdom for each year since 1982.

Mr. Dorrell: Three cases have been identified in the United Kingdom during the period 1982-1989. One case occurred in 1982, one in 1984 and a third in 1985.

New Medical Practitioners

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has, by region, on the numbers and percentages of all newly registered medical practitioners entering *(a)* the hospital sector and *(b)* general practice, in each year since 1987.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Ethnic Minority Employees

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what information he has on the numbers of ethnic minority people employed in the *(a)* family practitioner committees and *(b)* community health service;

(2) what information he has on *(a)* the number and *(b)* the grades of ethnic minority people employed in management in the national health service.

Mr. Dorrell: We do not hold this information centrally.

Overseas Doctors Association

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many times he has met the Overseas Doctors Association; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Ministers and officials meet the association from time to time to discuss a wide range of issues.

Residential Homes

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of places in homes for mentally handicapped people in 1979 and for the latest year for which figures are available in each of the 14 health regions.

Mr. Dorrell: The information is given in the table.

The number of places in residential care homes for mentally handicapped people as at 31 March

	1979					1988				
Regional health authority	*Local authority*	*Staffed Voluntary*	*Private*	*Unstaffed Local authority*	*Total*	*Local authority*	*Staffed Voluntary*	*Private*	*Unstaffed Local authority*	*Total*
Northern	675	90	0	51	816	1,021	157	120	224	1,522
Yorkshire	839	13	4	33	889	1,265	199	383	326	2,173
Trent	932	134	42	96	1,204	1,195	310	568	410	2,483
East Anglia	308	127	227	66	728	351	164	678	242	1,435
North West Thames	760	121	0	64	945	1,162	452	35	197	1,846
North East Thames	750	95	66	29	940	1,009	349	180	158	1,696
South East Thames	764	321	931	53	2,069	745	473	1,047	141	2,406
South West Thames	465	283	84	26	858	757	504	259	60	1,580
Wessex	634	226	86	49	995	708	281	371	72	1,432
Oxford	513	32	0	128	673	785	303	226	179	1,493
South Western	540	242	46	74	902	789	973	1,213	186	3,161
West Midlands	1,189	177	80	93	1,539	1,791	638	631	235	3,295
Mersey	774	132	75	78	1,059	913	311	207	176	1,607
North Western	1,310	127	12	88	1,537	1,487	391	217	234	2,329
Total	10,453	2,120	1,653	928	15,154	13,978	5,505	6,135	2,840	28,458

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of places in homes for mentally ill people in 1979 and for the latest year for which figures are available in each of the 14 health regions.

Mr. Dorrell: The information is given in the table.

The number of places in residential care homes for mentally ill people as at 31 March

	1979					1988				
Regional Health Authority	*Local authority*	*Staffed Voluntary*	*Private*	*Unstaffed Local authority*	*Total*	*Local authority*	*Staffed Voluntary*	*Private*	*Unstaffed Local authority*	*Total*
Northern	218	0	0	81	299	189	75	152	128	544
Yorkshire	225	7	0	45	277	289	42	370	168	869
Trent	211	14	60	47	332	231	33	374	175	813
East Anglia	40	53	23	79	195	32	69	233	91	425
North West Thames	288	196	0	131	615	321	236	31	184	772
North East Thames	193	121	0	112	426	169	243	142	130	684
South East Thames	182	396	391	126	1,095	230	364	447	223	1,264
South West Thames	122	240	5	101	468	170	183	238	89	680
Wessex	65	174	0	100	339	63	188	133	101	485
Oxford	63	31	42	44	180	118	121	82	85	406
South Western	79	32	12	115	238	54	52	319	142	567
West Midlands	260	49	19	167	495	308	255	286	183	1,032
Mersey	182	47	33	47	309	188	116	87	75	466
North Western	182	0	70	87	339	299	89	229	121	738
Total	2,310	1,360	655	1,282	5,607	2,661	2,066	3,123	1,895	9,745

Perinatal Deaths

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of perinatal deaths per 1,000 births in 1979 and for the latest year for which figures are available in each of the 14 health regions.

Mr. Dorrell: The information is shown in the table.

Perinatal mortality number and rate (per 1,000 total births) by Regional Health Authorities (RHAs) in England, 1979 and 1989[1]

Area	*Year*			
	1979		*1989[1]*	
	Number	*Rate*	*Number*	*Rate*
England and Wales	9,432	14·7	5,751	8·3
England	8,839	14·6	5,424	8·3
RHA				
Northern	687	16·4	362	9·2

Area	Year 1979 Number	1979 Rate	1989[1] Number	1989[1] Rate
Yorkshire	775	16·6	423	8·5
Trent	856	14·6	524	8·5
East Anglian	311	13·0	174	6·7
North West Thames	624	13·2	414	8·3
North East Thames	675	13·5	468	8·3
South East Thames	629	14·1	433	8·4
South West Thames	467	13·3	274	7·0
Wessex	425	12·8	317	8·3
Oxford	371	11·6	258	7·2
South Western	505	13·3	273	6·7
West Midlands	1,155	16·8	712	9·7
Mersey	506	15·6	270	8·2
North Western	853	15·9	522	9·2

[1]Provisional.
Perinatal mortality: stillbirths, and deaths in the first week of life, rates per 1,000 live and still births.

Cataract Operations

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total number of cataract operations carried out in 1979 and in the latest year for which figures are available in each of the 14 health regions.

Mr. Dorrell: Health authorities in England reported the following figures for 1988-89. The figures for 1979 are extracted from the 1979 hospital in-patient inquiry.

Estimated number of cataract operations by health region

Region	[1]1979	[2]1988-89
Northern	3,400	4,800
Yorkshire	2,900	6,300
Trent	3,200	6,900
East Anglia	1,600	3,500
North West Thames	2,500	6,300
North East Thames	2,200	6,300
South East Thames	3,100	6,100
South West Thames	2,100	5,600
Wessex	2,500	5,800
Oxford	1,700	4,700
South Western	2,800	5,500
West Midlands	3,000	9,200
Mersey	1,600	3,700
North Western	4,600	7,000
Board of Governors (1979 only)	2,200	

[1] *Source*: 1979 hospital in-patient inquiry
[2] *Source*: July 1989 planning statements—1988-89 outturn.

Smoking

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will include nicotine tablets on a trial basis among the items available on general practitioners' prescriptions.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I assume that the hon. Gentleman is referring to Nicorette chewing gum. We do not intend to make this product available on NHS prescription as the advisory committee on borderline substances has consistently recommended that it has no therapeutic use in the treatment of disease.

Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will announce the chairman and deputy chairman of the new human fertilisation and embryology authority.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am pleased to announce that Professor Colin Campbell, vice-chancellor of Nottingham university and emeritus professor of jurisprudence at the Queen's university, Belfast and Lady Brittan JP, member of the Equal Opportunities Commission, have accepted appointment as respectively chairman and deputy chairman. As the human fertilisation and embryology authority cannot be set up until the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill has received Royal Assent, their acceptance is on a provisional basis until then.

The new authority will have a major task to prepare the way for operating the licensing and other powers for which the legislation provides and I think it right to make these appointments now so that this work can begin. The remaining membership of the authority will be announced later.

In the period before the new authority assumes its full powers, probably in the summer of 1991, I very much hope that the interim licensing authority will continue to perform the functions for which it was set up in 1985 by the Medical Research Council and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists with the same vigour and commitment as it has always shown.

NHS Staff

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give details of the total annual cost and the average annual cost of full-time posts in the National health service; and if he will break down the average cost for a full-time equivalent post into pay, national insurance superannuation, and other costs such as office space, heating, lighting etc., for 1979-80 and each subsequent year.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 21 May 1990]:* Information on salaries and wages costs derived from annual accounts and manpower returns submitted to the Department for the financial years 1979-80 to 1988-89 (the latest available) is shown in the table.

The format of the annual accounts of health authorities does not provide for office, other accommodation, heating, lighting and similar costs to be assigned between staff and patients. Similarly, comprehensive data to permit the derivation of annual figures for particular elements within the average total salaries and wages cost per whole-time equivalent are not available centrally.

	National Health Service (England)— Total salaries and wages costs £ Million (cash)	*Average total salaries and wages cost per whole time equivalent post[1] £ (cash)*
1979-80	3,971·8	5,160
1980-81	5,217·1	6,620
1981-82	5,706·7	6,970
1982-83	6,068·7	7,350
1983-84	6,405·4	7,760
1984-85	6,753·1	8,300
1985-86	7,100·0	8,800
1986-87	7,628·5	9,600
1987-88	8,353·7	10,600
1988-89	9,409·1	12,030

[1] Approximate.
Sources: (a) Annual accounts of regional and district health authorities, special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals, family practitioner committees, the Dental Estimates Board and the Prescription Pricing Authority. (b) Department of Health annual censuses of NHS medical and

non-medical manpower as at 30 September of each year.

Notes:

1. The figures are gross salaries and wages costs (including employers' national insurance and superannuation contributions) and relate to directly employed NHS staff. The costs of non-NHS staff (agency, etc), locums, and payments to contractors for family practitioner services are excluded.

2. The whole time equivalent figures used are not adjusted for the reduction in nurses' working hours during 1980-81 and exclude certain special health authorities and other NHS bodies such as the Health Education Authority. The comparatively small total whole time equivalent figures for such authorities and bodies were not collected until 1987 and thus for comparability all relevant other data have been excluded.

In-patients, Greater London

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the average number of in-patient cases treated per available bed in 1979 and in the latest year for which figures are available for each of the health districts lying within the Greater London area.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 26 June 1990]:* The information requested is given in the table.

Average daily available beds[1] and in-patient cases treated
National Health Service hospitals: 1979 and 1988-89

District health authority	*1979*			*1988-89*		
	Average daily available beds	*In-patient cases treated*	*In-patients per available bed*	*Average daily available beds*	*In-patient cases treated*	*In-patients per available bed*
North West Thames RHA						
Barnet	2,841	33,616	11·8	2,114	36,482	17·3
Harrow	908	24,082	26·5	802	25,486	31·8
Hillingdon	1,628	38,926	23·9	1,184	40,826	34·5
Hounslow and Spelthorne	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,208	38,176	31·6
Ealing	1,709	11,443	6·7	1,299	24,741	19·0
Riverside	n/a	n/a	n/a	2,702	51,066	18·9
Parkside	3,681	54,802	14·9	2,634	52,548	19·9
North East Thames RHA						
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	3,283	44,180	13·5	2,562	46,123	18·0
Hampstead	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,683	26,601	15·8
Bloomsbury	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,912	59,318	31·0
Islington	n/a	n/a	n/a	813	29,541	36·3
City and Hackney	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,477	37,322	25·3
Newham	941	20,471	21·8	785	21,909	27·9
Tower Hamlets	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,196	33,493	28·0
Enfield	1,234	20,528	16·6	977	23,191	23·7
Haringey	1,236	37,693	22·4	799	22,321	27·9
Redbridge	1,655	20,320	12·3	1,383	20,485	14·8
Waltham Forest	3,311	32,753	9·9	2,120	39,339	18·6
South East Thames RHA						
Bexley	1,653	16,601	10·0	1,108	21,407	19·3
Greenwich	1,777	39,803	22·4	1,150	34,554	30·0
Bromley	2,591	29,822	11·5	1,757	28,508	16·2
West Lambeth	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,537	32,736	21·3
Camberwell	1,432	35,266	24·6	1,147	35,883	31·3
Lewisham and North Southwark	2,336	54,467	23·3	1,657	54,154	32·7
South West Thames RHA						
Croydon	3,192	26,861	8·4	2,026	34,969	17·3
Kingston and Esher	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,242	24,189	19·5
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	n/a	n/a	n/a	684	16,739	24·5
Wandsworth	2,871	43,654	15·2	2,095	41,757	19·9
Merton and Sutton	2,687	32,195	12·0	1,921	36,691	19·1
Special Health Authorities						
The Hospitals for Sick Children	571	15,569	30·1	387	15,921	41·2
The National Hospitals for Nervous Diseases	357	6,349	17·8	304	5,794	19·0
Moorfields Eye Hospital	208	9,050	43·6	143	11,553	80·7
Bethlem Royal and Maudsley Hospitals	472	2,495	5·3	466	2,666	5·7
The National Heart and Chest Hospitals	603	13,068	21·7	359	17,627	49·1
The Royal Marsden Hospital	361	10,993	30·5	311	11,027	35·5
Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's	n/a	n/a	n/a	810	25,666	31·7
The Eastman Dental Hospital	n/a	n/a	n/a	12	687	57·3

Source: SH3 return 1979, KHO3 and SH3a returns 1988-89.

[1] Excluding neonatal cots on maternity units.

n/a Comparable data not available due to NHS restructuring in 1979.

Gynaecology and Obstetrics

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give for each district health authority within Greater London the most recent yearly totals for gynaecology and obstetric cases, expressed as *(a)* in-patient cases, *(b)* out-patient cases and *(c)* day cases.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 26 June 1990]:* The information requested is given in the tables.

Hospital activity, health authorities wholly or partly within the old GLC area—1988-89
Obstetrics

Health authority	In patient cases treated	Day case admissions	Ante-natal out patients New att.[1]	Ante-natal out patients Re att.[2]	Post-natal out patients New att.[1]	Post-natal out patients Re att.[2]
North West Thames Regional Health Authority						
Barnet	4,851	0	2,537	13,288	18	582
Harrow	4,134	0	3,320	18,018	0	384
Hillingdon	4,143	0	3,765	13,657	62	207
Hounslow and Spelthorne	5,133	0	4,340	18,792	0	780
Ealing	2,597	0	2,204	10,259	0	121
Riverside	3,371	0	2,825	19,565	2	1,021
Parkside	5,547	26	3,477	18,030	641	686
North East Thames Regional Health Authority						
Hampstead	2,076	0	4,489	9,485	21	477
Bloomsbury	4,685	24	3,050	15,318	0	0
Islington	4,404	1	3,623	21,844	0	802
City and Hackney	4,057	132	2,687	18,410	129	481
Newham	5,473	3	3,886	23,957	0	442
Tower Hamlets	4,127	2	3,197	15,458	25	241
Enfield	3,389	0	3,367	12,642	74	939
Haringey	3,810	37	2,272	7,764	138	889
Redbridge	4,404	0	3,290	18,944	0	856
Waltham Forest	5,807	0	4,038	18,744	0	522
South East Thames Regional Health Authority						
Bexley	5,065	0	3,652	17,067	200	0
Greenwich	4,741	234	3,516	9,619	848	0
Bromley	4,772	3	3,997	14,411	76	464
West Lambeth	4,083	0	2,040	9,874	0	0
Camberwell	5,083	5	4,205	17,987	128	442
Lewisham and North Southwark	6,751	0	5,393	30,151	396	0
South West Thames Regional Health Authority						
Croydon	7,819	47	4,286	15,524	28	543
Kingston and Esher	2,968	88	2,487	12,144	590	0
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	1,664	20	992	6,042	0	49
Wandsworth	4,442	184	2,640	14,520	363	701
Merton and Sutton	4,914	1	3,812	19,390	0	378
Special Health Authorities						
Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's	7,549	1	6,201	57,500	0	0

[1] Attendances arising from referrals, principally from General Practitioners.
[2] Consultant initiated attendances.
Sources: SH3a, KP70 and KHO9 returns.

Hospital activity, Health Authorities wholly or partly within the old GLC area, 1988-89
Gynaecology

Health Authority	In-patient cases treated	Day case admissions	Out-patients New att.[1]	Out-patients Re att.[2]
North West Thames Regional Health Authority				
Barnet	3,044	1,416	4,343	7,885
Harrow	1,818	347	2,029	6,038
Hillingdon	2,771	891	3,407	5,262
Hounslow and Spelthorne	4,531	328	4,405	9,598
Ealing	2,014	483	2,026	2,825
Riverside	3,681	1,070	5,998	10,847
Parkside	4,990	2,997	5,014	14,763
North East Thames Regional Health Authority				
Hampstead	3,206	548	3,915	8,053
Bloomsbury	5,713	1,044	9,262	25,009
Islington	3,727	845	5,817	10,923
City and Hackney	3,133	1,837	5,261	8,474
Newham	2,150	1,762	3,781	8,232
Tower Hamlets	2,729	1,076	4,533	6,539
Enfield	2,207	321	2,310	3,976
Haringey	2,332	282	1,863	3,768

Health Authority	In-patient cases treated	Day case admissions	Out-patients	
			New att.[1]	Re att.[2]
Redbridge	1,768	649	2,210	5,900
Waltham Forest	3,970	137	3,426	9,750
South East Thames Regional Health Authority				
Bexley	1,813	621	2,135	4,359
Greenwich	3,914	236	3,510	7,712
Bromley	2,213	1,387	4,232	7,841
West Lambeth	2,307	1,449	3,399	8,870
Camberwell	2,949	986	5,720	12,921
Lewisham and North Southwark	4,054	826	5,165	8,014
South West Thames Regional Health Authority				
Croydon	4,210	1,354	3,855	6,342
Kingston and Esher	2,362	1,605	2,464	6,125
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	1,759	397	1,384	3,343
Wandsworth	3,635	1,752	3,525	10,394
Merton and Sutton	2,359	898	3,665	6,720
Special Health Authorities				
Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's	4,022	269	4,992	34,500

[1] Attendances arising from referrals, principally from General Practitioners.
[2] Consultant initiated attendances.
Sources: SH3a, KP70 and KHO9 returns.

National Health Service Manpower, Greater London

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give for each district health authority within Greater London the most recent manpower figures expressed as whole-time equivalents for *(a)* nurses and midwives, *(b)* doctors and dentists and *(c)* professional and technical staff.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 26 June 1990]:* The requested information is shown in the table. September 1988 are the latest available data broken down to this level of detail.

National Health Service nursing and midwifery, medical and dental and professional and technical staff in post for each district within Greater London as at 30 September 1988

Districts within Regional Health Authorities	Whole-time equivalent[1]		
	Nursing and midwifery[2]	Medical and dental[3]	Professional and technical
North West Thames Regional Health Authority			
Barnet	2,870	180	460
Harrow	1,430	140	350
Hillingdon	2,060	190	450
Hounslow and Spelthorne	2,030	150	390
Ealing	1,760	130	270
Parkside	4,060	460	800
Riverside	3,750	500	1,000
North East Thames Regional Health Authority			
Hampstead	2,120	310	600
Bloomsbury	3,210	540	1,040
Islington	1,510	160	340
City and Hackney	2,620	360	720
Newham	1,410	140	260
Tower Hamlets	2,390	330	610
Enfield	1,500	100	240
Haringey	1,350	110	310
Redbridge	1,520	90	210
Waltham Forest	2,660	140	380
South East Thames Regional Health Authority			
Bexley	1,580	90	240
Greenwich	2,050	180	450
Bromley	2,180	170	370
West Lambeth	2,370	340	550
Camberwell	2,310	350	580
Lewisham and North Southwark	3,550	530	930
South West Thames Regional Health Authority			
Croydon	2,300	140	410
Kingston and Esher	1,550	110	250
Richmond and Twickenham	1,260	80	290
Wandsworth	2,940	400	570
Merton and Sutton	2,590	180	520

Districts within Regional Health Authorities	Whole-time equivalent[1] Nursing and midwifery[2]	Medical and dental[3]	Professional and technical
London Postgraduate Special Health Authorities	4,910	1,210	1,500

[1] All figures are independently rounded to the nearest ten (10) whole-time equivalents.
[2] Includes agency.
[3] Includes Permanent Paid, Honorary and Locum Staff. Excludes Consultants and Senior Registrars in Non-Teaching District Health Authorities and Senior Registrars in Teaching District Health Authorities. These staff have their contracts with the Regional Health Authority and are included with the Regional total. North West Thames Region excludes 80 (whole-time equivalents) Hospital consultants because of insufficient information.

Source: Department of Health (SMI3) Annual Censuses of National Health Service Medical and Non-Medical Manpower.

Listeria

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish the number of cases of listeria for each of the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 28 June 1990]:* The number of cases by month for the past 12 months of listeriosis, derived from reports to the communicable disease surveillance centre and to the division of microbiological reagents and quality control at the central public health laboratory, Colindale were as follows:

	Number
1989	
June	26
July	44
August	21
September	14
October	9
November	9
December	3
1990	
January	7
February	6
March	11
April	9
May	[1]10

[1] Provisional figure.

In the first quarter of 1990 there were 24 cases of listeriosis reported, compared with 67 in the corresponding period of 1989. In 1989 there was a decline in cases reported in the final two quarters of the year for the first time since surveillance began more than 20 years ago. Previously there has always been an increase in summer and autumn.

Public Record Office

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of and how many documents in 1989 he estimates were *(a)* passed on to the Public Record Office intact, *(b)* passed on to the Public Record Office in censored form, *(c)* retained by his Department in full, *(d)* retained by his Department in part, *(e)* destroyed, *(f)* otherwise disposed of and *(g)* otherwise unaccounted for.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 2 July 1990]:* No document falls due for selection and transfer to the Public Record Office until it is at least 30 years old. A document's suitability for permanent preservation under the terms of the Public Records Act 1958 will be reviewed during that period. The Act does not require statistics to be kept in the form requested and to do so would inevitably incur disproportionate cost. However, in order to comply with their duties under the Act, Departments are obliged to ensure that all documentary records are properly preserved with a view to possible transfer to the Public Record Office and eventual release to the public. The general criteria under which the Department may retain documents over 30 years old are set out in section 3(4) of the Public Records Act.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what criteria he uses when deciding which documents to pass on to the Public Record Office.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 2 July 1990]:* The Department complies with the guidelines issued by the Public Record Office on the selection of documents for permanent preservation. Decisions on which documents are transferred to the Public Record Office for this purpose are taken in consultation with PRO inspecting officers.

Departmental Documents

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what system he employs to classify, log and otherwise record each document generated by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 2 July 1990]:* The Department receives and generates many millions of documents in the course of its business, and it would be impracticable, and disproportionately costly, to record these individually. However, the vast majority are placed, with related documents, on registered files in accordance with well-established registry practices.

Hospitals (Air Emissions)

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to ensure that every precaution is taken in hospitals to prevent release of halons in the atmosphere; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 2 July 1990]:* The June 1990 issue of *Health Service Estate*, published by the Department, a copy of which is available in the Library, contained guidance on the problems and the safe use of chlorofluorocarbons and halons for building.

Regional supplies officers have also been asked to seek alternatives to products which contain halons and CFCs.

Further advice will be issued as necessary.

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the need to protect the environment from the emission of dangerous substances used in hospitals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 2 July 1990]:* The effects produced by emissions from hospitals are well understood

throughout the national health service. Hospitals are required to comply with the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act and the Clean Air Act. The removal of Crown immunity will require the national health service to comply with impending comprehensive legislation on environmental protection.

NHS Dentists

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of the total fees paid to national health service dentists for work relating to dentures is related to the cost of laboratory work; and if such a specific percentage is taken into account by the dental rates study group in arriving at fee assessments.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 2 July 1990]:* In the current scale of fees for national health service dental treatment, which came into effect on 1 October 1989, approximately 52 per cent. of the total fees available to dentists for the provision and fitting of dentures is attributable to dental laboratory work. The fee for each item of treatment involving laboratory work is, however, calculated separately by the dental rates study group, using a representative sample of current industry catalogues to indicate the cost of the laboratory work involved.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 4 July 1990

TRANSPORT

Oil Spillage, West Coast

59. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what emergency provisions have been made to cover the event of an oil spillage off the west coast of Scotland.

Mr. McLoughlin: Because it is impossible to predict where or when a tanker accident may occur, the marine pollution control unit's (MPCU) contingency plan consists of highly mobile resources on short-notice standby positioned at various locations around the United Kingdom, from where they can be deployed quickly to the west coast of Scotland or any other part of the United Kingdom that may be threatened by a major oil spillage.

Local authorities on the west coast of Scotland all have their own contingency plans for dealing with coastal pollution and can call on advice and assistance from the MPCU, which in a major spillage would co-ordinate onshore clean-up operations as well as directing offshore activities. This is to ensure a fully integrated response.

The MPCU is this year holding its annual major counter-pollution exercise off the west coast of Scotland to test the effectiveness of plans to deal with an oil spillage in that area. The exercise will take place on 4 and 5 July in the North Minch and will involve local authorities in both the Isle of Lewis and the Scottish mainland.

Disability

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state what steps he intends to take following the report of the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee on access for disabled people to buses and coaches; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The committee worked closely with my Department in drawing up its "Recommended Specification for Buses Used to Operate Local Services", published in June 1988. This includes features such as lower steps, textured and colour-contrasted handrails, bus stopping signs, step edge markings, and bell pushes which can be reached by seated passengers.

Among other initiatives to promote the use of the specification, my Department has produced a video, "Welcome Aboard", illustrating the features recommended by the committee and demonstrating the benefits to passengers with disabilities.

The main DPTAC recommendations have also been proposed by my Department for inclusion in a draft EC directive on bus and coach construction.

Motorway Construction

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many miles of motorway are *(a)* being planned and *(b)* under construction for the Greater Manchester county.

Mr. Atkins: A total of 31 miles of new motorway are being planned. In addition we plan to widen 25 miles of existing motorway. No new motorways are currently under construction in Greater Manchester.

Roads, Devon

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) when the South Molton information signs will be erected on the north Devon link road;

(2) if he will visit north Devon to inspect the north Devon link road one year after completion;

(3) when the 60 mph restriction signs will be erected on the north Devon link road; and if he will make a statement upon the provision of emergency telephones along this road.

Mr. Atkins: The application for information signs on the link road near South Molton is being considered, but the road safety implications of additional signs are a cause for concern.

I have no plans to visit the link road. Nor have I any plans to install 60 mph speed limit signs on the road. The national speed limits already apply: there are reminder posters about the limits at the picnic areas, and reminder signs in the laybys.

New-style emergency phones are being installed by the RAC and AA (with a contribution from the Department). I understand that these will be operational very shortly.

ENVIRONMENT

Ozone-depleting Chemicals

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those chemicals which he has assessed to be safe substitutes for ozone-depleting chemicals.

Mr. Trippier: Discussions are taking place today and tomorrow in Brussels on the package of tests which will be necessary for the assessment of the substitutes for ozone-depleting chemicals.

Recycling

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any proposals to encourage and support small businesses to establish a door-to-door collection service for the recycling of metal cans; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Environmental Protection Bill contains a range of measures which will assist and promote the segregation of waste for recycling. Collection authorities will have a duty to draw up recycling plans and when doing so be required to liaise with all relevant organisations in their areas, including private sector companies. Waste disposal authorities will be required to pass to collection authorities the savings that accrue because refuse has been recycled rather than passed to

them for disposal—and this may be passed on to benefit both voluntary groups and small businesses. Other provisions of the Bill will allow authorities to specify environmentally favourable options for waste disposal, such as recycling, even if they are not the cheapest in financial terms. Stricter controls on waste disposal by landfill and other means will increase their costs and so make recycling more attractive. The forthcoming White Paper on the environment will set out our further plans for recycling.

The Government are also working with local authorities to develop projects like recycling city in Sheffield and Cardiff where segregated collection systems are being carried out on a trial basis and which can, when fully evaluated, be used as models for future practice. We shall be providing comprehensive advice to local authorities to assist them in the development of recycling projects.

National Rivers Authority

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the level of funding of the National Rivers Authority.

Mr. Trippier: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 5 June to the hon. Member for Dewbury (Mrs. Taylor) at column *489*.

Letting of Rooms

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received about the statutory provisions applying to residents who wish to let out a room or rooms in their home; and if he has any plans to reform the law.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Department receives the occasional letter from hon. Members and the public about the statutory provisions applying to residents who wish to let out a room or rooms in their home. Changes were made in the Housing Act 1988 which completely deregulated such lettings. We have no plans to make any further changes to the legislation.

House Purchase Incentive Scheme

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Department first made available £200,000 to Lambeth council for the cash incentive scheme for tenants wishing to buy properties in the private sector.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My officials wrote to Lambeth on 27 March 1990 giving approval in principle to a cash incentive scheme in 1990-91 for which £200,000 in supplementary credit approvals will be available as part of the Government's homeless initiative. The supplementary credit approvals will be issued as grants are actually paid out.

Warrington and Runcorn Development Corporation

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which contracts were awarded by Warrington and Runcorn development corporation to business ventures on the basis of competitive tendering.

Mr. Chope: No contracts were awarded by Warrington and Runcorn development corporation to business ventures on the basis of competitive tendering.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 27 June to the hon. Member for Warrington, North, how the value of services provided to Warrington and Runcorn development corporation by business ventures was assessed in order for the corporation to make appropriate reductions for the use of its property; how the rentable value of that property was assessed by Warrington and Runcorn development corporation; and which business ventures made use of Warrington and Runcorn development corporation property for 30 months.

Mr. Chope: The basis of the fees paid to business ventures by Warrington and Runcorn development corporation was that they should not exceed the costs which the corporation would have had to bear if the function had remained in-house. The fees payable were initially based on payroll costs and direct expenses and were exclusive of accommodation costs. Thereafter, as the business ventures began to undertake work for other clients, the corporation reduced its fee payments to reflect the use made of its accommodation in providing these services. The engineering business venture, involving a merger with Rendel Palmer and Tritton, made use of corporation accommodation for 30 months.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answers to the hon. Member for Warrington, North of 27 June, what were the three largest redundancy payments made to Warrington and Runcorn development corporation staff who joined business ventures employed by the corporation; and to which officials they were paid.

Mr. Chope: The three largest redundancy payments made to staff of Warrington and Runcorn development corporation who joined business ventures were as follows:

	£
Chief Estates Officer (Runcorn)	45,328
Chief Engineer	44,264
Chief Legal Officer	43,507

World Cup Hooliganism

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations his Department has received on the subject of deportations from Italy for alleged hooliganism at the World Cup tournament; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: As of 3 July my Department had received 12 representations concerning the sending home of British citizens during the World Cup.

Waste Collection

Mr. Boscawen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how he intends that local authorities should charge for waste collected from mixed domestic and commercial property; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Collection and Disposal of Waste Regulations 1988 for simplicity define all waste arising from mixed hereditaments (now known as composite hereditaments)—that is, properties which are partly residential and partly used for trade or business—as commercial waste. Waste collection authorities do not

charge for the collection of domestic waste, but may make a reasonable charge for commercial waste. However, circular 13/88 suggests that authorities, in setting the level of their charges, should recognise that some waste arises from the residential part of a composite property. We consider that all authorities should, once they have received a request to collect commercial waste from such properties, collect or empty free of charge at least one refuse sack or dustbin per week per property and should be prepared to consider alternative or additional arrangements on an individual basis.

Water Metering

Mr. Hague: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the results of the national water metering trials to be available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The second interim report on the national metering trials has been published by the water industry today and I have placed a copy in the Library.

Use of rateable values as a basis for water charges ceases to be lawful from April 2000. Water companies will have to decide what alternative method of charging to adopt for the future; and metering—which is being adopted for many new properties, which do not have a rateable value—is one of the options being considered. Because it relates the size of a customer's bill to the amount of water used, it has been seen as potentially the fairest way of charging. But general metering will involve considerable expenditure, as the report demonstrates.

The trials have now been under way for about 18 months and, in the majority of cases, customers have been charged on their consumption of water for about a year. The full results will not be known until the trials have been completed in about two years' time. In the meantime a considerable amount of information has been collected about the costs and problems of installing meters and this has been assembled in the second interim report.

The report provides valuable information which will contribute to the debate on what future methods of charging the industry should adopt. This will be carried forward by the consultation paper which the Director General of Water Services intends to issue later this year.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) on 25 June, *Official Report*, columns *44-46*, if he will detail the specific grants given to Bradford, Wandsworth and Westminster.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 2 July 1990]:* The information, as given on the local authorities' 1990-91 budget returns, is as follows:

Specific Grants 1990-91

	Bradford (£000)	*Wandsworth (£000)*	*Westminster (£000)*
Rent Allowance Grant	13,201	12,273	17,600
Mandatory Student Awards Grant	9,593	7,807	1,700
Community Charge Benefit Grant	12,121	5,160	4,780
In-Service Teacher Training	1,507	484	347
Education Support	733	511	246
Training Agency (TVEI)	1,877	102	50
Work Related Further Education	0	586	350
Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council	0	601	0
Social Services Training	0	80	95
Aids and HIV	0	39	0
Magistrates' Courts	1,929	0	0
Probation	2,483	0	0
Civil Defence	0	6	2
Commonwealth Immigrants	6,553	2,241	1,642
Housing Benefit Administration	1,250	1,165	860
Home Insulation Grant	7	2	0
Improvement Grants and Area Improvement Grants	7,420	7,344	4,294
Urban Programme	2,541	1,220	138
Expenses of Rent Officers	0	0	972
Careers Service Strengthening	241	73	50
Sheltered Employment	168	114	39
European Community Grants	0	5	0
Transitional Relief Grant	2,911	1	20
Transitional Relief Preparatory Costs Grant	8	0	0
Transitional Relief Administration Costs Grant	89	64	0
Other	0	0	331
Total	64,632	39,878	33,516

Football (Arrests)

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list the 92 Football League clubs together with the total season's attendance for Football League matches, total number of arrests made at such matches and the number of arrests as a percentage of the total attendance, for the seasons 1987-88 and 1989-90;

(2) if he will publish a table showing the total attendance at Football League matches in England and Wales, the total number of arrests at such matches, and the number of arrests as a percentage of the total attendance, accurate to four decimal places, for the seasons 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[pursuant to his reply, 19 June 1990, c. 483]:* The Association of Chief Police Officers is today publishing figures supplied by individual police forces relating to attendances and arrests at Football League matches in England and Wales during the season 1989-90.

These figures are some guide to the level of offences committed at such football matches. The figures do not record the outcome or seriousness of the cases involved. Figures for individual clubs relate to arrests at the home ground in question, involving supporters of any club.

Total figures for the last three seasons are:

	1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
Attendances	17,968,965	18,366,143	19,360,194
Arrests	6,106	6,185	5,945
Arrests as percentage of attendance	0·0340	0·0337	0·0307

This indicates a 5·4 per cent. rise in attendances and a 3·9 per cent. fall in arrests between 1988-89 and 1989-90: overall a reduction of 8·9 per cent. in arrests as a proportion of attendances.

Figures for individual clubs over the last three seasons are:

Season 1989-90

	Attendances	*Number of arrests*	*Arrest as percentage of attendances*
Aldershot	46,537	36	0·07
Arsenal	639,763	143	0·02
Aston Villa	485,356	215	0·04
Barnsley	207,389	54	0·03
Birmingham	195,242	152	0·07
Blackburn	221,054	51	0·02
Blackpool	93,527	107	0·11
Bolton	167,770	73	0·04
Bournemouth	171,432	213	0·12
Bradford	199,041	69	0·03
Brentford	130,189	25	0·02
Brighton	198,105	55	0·03
Bristol City	262,037	114	0·04
Bristol Rovers	142,791	50	0·03
Burnley	142,967	47	0·03
Bury	79,210	27	0·03
Cambridge	45,349	1	0·00
Cardiff	84,302	32	0·04
Carlisle	107,959	15	0·01
Charlton	204,503	64	0·03
Chelsea	415,239	236	0·05
Chester	55,914	46	0·08
Chesterfield	98,265	54	0·05
Colchester	70,940	17	0·02
Coventry	271,543	192	0·07
Crewe	93,156	11	0·01
Crystal Palace	323,792	76	0·02
Derby County	329,912	89	0·02
Doncaster	62,255	51	0·08
Everton	494,766	68	0·01
Exeter	112,634	19	0·01
Fulham	103,321	67	0·06
Gillingham	88,421	7	0·01
Grimsby	137,623	49	0·03
Halifax	38,637	47	0·12
Hartlepool	56,988	16	0·03
Hereford	61,981	49	0·08
Huddersfield	129,549	25	0·02
Hull City	144,198	57	0·04
Ipswich	293,597	30	0·01
Leeds United	635,833	168	0·02
Leicester	269,387	115	0·04
Leyton Orient	100,385	20	0·01
Lincoln	93,629	116	0·12
Liverpool	700,908	84	0·01
Luton	186,451	9	0·01
Maidstone	55,912	20	0·03
Manchester City	531,541	57	0·01
Manchester United	740,476	60	0·01
Mansfield	71,933	10	0·01
Middlesbrough	378,249	36	0·01
Millwall	236,009	108	0·04
Newcastle	505,840	215	0·04
Northampton	73,564	1	0·00
Norwich	318,052	49	0·01
Notts County	141,438	46	0·03
Notts Forest	391,014	84	0·02
Oldham	223,557	8	0·00
Oxford	133,822	51	0·04
Peterborough	110,777	12	0·01
Plymouth	200,720	22	0·01
Portsmouth	209,644	42	0·02
Port Vale	206,485	96	0·05
Preston	145,189	114	0·08
QPR	249,760	70	0·03
Reading	93,974	21	0·02
Rochdale	47,510	28	0·06
Rotherham	127,692	48	0·04
Scarborough	53,204	31	0·06
Scunthorpe	81,007	15	0·02
Sheffield United	388,677	97	0·02
Sheffield Wednesday	397,615	87	0·02
Shrewsbury	81,283	18	0·02
Southampton	313,222	73	0·02
Southend	83,880	10	0·01
Stockport	89,758	25	0·03
Stoke City	286,368	49	0·01
Sunderland	401,098	85	0·02
Swansea	88,396	48	0·05
Swindon	216,463	30	0·01
Torquay	49,484	27	0·05
Tottenham	502,830	73	0·01
Tranmere	171,200	27	0·01
Walsall	93,765	55	0·06
Watford	238,074	40	0·02
West Bromwich	259,724	116	0·04
West Ham	465,873	182	0·04
Wigan	63,486	14	0·02
Wimbledon	145,380	20	0·01
Wolverhampton	392,031	322	0·08
Wrexham	54,974	3	0·01
York	59,395	39	0·06

Season 1988-89

	Attendances	*Number of arrests*	*Arrests as percentage of attendances*
Aldershot	60,249	65	0·12
Arsenal	676,267	167	0·02
Aston Villa	443,362	344	0·08
Barnsley	166,129	21	0·01
Birmingham	144,577	65	0·04
Blackburn	191,379	37	0·02
Blackpool	88,701	66	0·07
Bolton	124,626	40	0·03
Bournemouth	186,002	35	0·02
Bradford	242,007	85	0·03
Brentford	129,296	50	0·04
Brighton	208,022	47	0·02
Bristol City	186,371	73	0·04
Bristol Rovers	121,856	67	0·05
Burnley	162,583	47	0·03
Bury	77,346	27	0·03
Cambridge	59,655	17	0·03
Cardiff	100,643	16	0·01
Carlisle	73,696	17	0·02
Charlton	177,760	47	0·03
Chelsea	371,685	304	0·08
Chester	70,119	20	0·03
Chesterfield	86,746	44	0·05
Colchester	66,421	7	0·01
Coventry	302,902	190	0·06
Crewe	74,202	30	0·04
Crystal Palace	245,342	71	0·03

	Attendances	Number of arrests	Arrests as percentage of attendances
Darlington	53,278	26	0·05
Derby County	335,964	132	0·04
Doncaster	49,796	20	0·04
Everton	521,444	80	0·01
Exeter	59,832	12	0·02
Fulham	113,580	126	0·11
Gillingham	84,907	23	0·02
Grimsby	98,949	79	0·08
Halifax	43,577	62	0·14
Hartlepool	46,921	21	0·04
Hereford	49,619	28	0·05
Huddersfield	133,989	34	0·02
Hull City	135,915	18	0·01
Ipswich	288,319	31	0·01
Leeds United	500,906	159	0·03
Leicester	239,357	95	0·04
Leyton Orient	87,340	8	0·01
Lincoln	90,051	19	0·02
Liverpool	734,902	132	0·02
Luton	176,681	7	0·00
Manchester City	540,476	39	0·01
Manchester United	693,257	60	0·01
Mansfield	92,033	40	0·04
Middlesbrough	378,210	86	0·02
Millwall	293,926	160	0·05
Newcastle	433,487	166	0·04
Northampton	91,030	3	0·00
Norwich	318,844	86	0·03
Notts County	130,654	49	0·04
Nottingham Forest	394,911	66	0·02
Oldham	160,325	12	0·01
Oxford	145,788	36	0·02
Peterborough	74,469	14	0·02
Plymouth	198,443	19	0·01
Portsmouth	233,980	162	0·07
Port Vale	154,426	79	0·05
Preston	163,703	51	0·03
QPR	235,018	95	0·04
Reading	117,613	25	0·02
Rochdale	45,127	47	0·10
Rotherham	116,279	31	0·02
Scarborough	66,895	51	0·07
Scunthorpe	104,588	55	0·05
Sheffield United	280,315	50	0·02
Sheffield Wednesday	380,807	80	0·02
Shrewsbury	108,100	37	0·03
Southampton	296,047	146	0·05
Southend	84,479	30	0·03
Stockport	64,061	53	0·08
Stoke City	214,979	44	0·02
Sunderland	342,217	49	0·01
Swansea	112,895	51	0·04
Swindon	198,881	44	0·02
Torquay	53,852	16	0·03
Tottenham	464,876	127	0·03
Tranmere	121,830	20	0·02
Walsall	140,495	148	0·11
Watford	279,446	44	0·01
West Bromwich	290,683	145	0·05
West Ham	394,126	201	0·05
Wigan	72,263	4	0·01
Wimbledon	148,169	17	0·01
Wolverhampton	330,699	192	0·05
Wrexham	61,051	12	0·02
York	59,119	132	0·22

Season 1987-88

	Attendances	Number of arrests	Arrest as percentage of attendances
Aldershot	70,642	39	0·06
Arsenal	598,059	153	0·03
Aston Villa	403,836	308	0·08
Barnsley	168,339	55	0·03
Birmingham	188,722	101	0·05
Blackburn	211,120	79	0·04
Blackpool	96,935	36	0·04
Bolton	114,778	21	0·02
Bournmouth	168,757	149	0·09
Bradford	285,509	197	0·07
Brentford	105,430	72	0·07
Brighton	205,263	34	0·02
Bristol City	225,861	21	0·01
Bristol Rovers	84,753	18	0·02
Burnley	144,770	90	0·06
Bury	58,997	5	0·01
Cambridge	52,896	29	0·05
Cardiff	101,752	43	0·04
Carlisle	51,282	27	0·05
Charlton	173,629	14	0·01
Chelsea	408,538	271	0·07
Chester	580,096	22	0·04
Chesterfield	61,239	21	0·03
Colchester	40,607	0	0·00
Coventry	350,165	194	0·06
Crewe	51,828	21	0·04
Crystal Palace	215,496	78	0·04
Darlington	50,374	5	0·01
Derby County	343,107	86	0·03
Doncaster	43,223	28	0·06
Everton	555,692	24	0·00
Exeter	56,264	83	0·15
Fulham	116,454	99	0·09
Gillingham	106,260	32	0·03
Grimsby	76,541	66	0·09
Halifax	39,358	38	0·10
Hartlepool	48,972	21	0·02
Hereford	50,712	28	0·06
Huddersfield	150,334	126	0·08
Hull City	157,507	38	0·02
Ipswich	258,037	99	0·04
Leeds Utd	443,094	184	0·04
Leicester	223,049	31	0·01
Leyton Orient	90,322	8	0·01
Liverpool	791,977	33	0·00
Luton	161,884	1	0·00
Manchester City	428,655	35	0·01
Manchester United	783,099	38	0·00
Mansfield	90,894	21	0·02
Middlesbrough	321,219	110	0·03
Millwall	185,165	44	0·02
Newcastle	419,742	149	0·04
Newport	40,261	35	0·09
Northampton	126,578	11	0·01
Norwich	313,904	32	0·01
Notts County	144,824	56	0·04
Notts Forest	384,648	130	0·03
Oldham	147,995	19	0·01
Oxford	218,632	105	0·05
Peterborough	71,881	15	0·02
Plymouth	226,152	29	0·01
Portsmouth	324,780	282	0·09
Port Vale	88,126	22	0·02
Preston	139,998	20	0·01
QPR	265,813	91	0·03
Reading	150,352	20	0·01
Rochdale	44,903	32	0·07
Rotherham	84,107	47	0·05
Scarborough	70,504	146	0·21
Scunthorpe	74,405	46	0·06
Sheffield United	223,960	60	0·03
Sheffield Wednesday	395,519	90	0·02
Shrewsbury	108,202	68	0·06
Southampton	290,617	208	0·07
Southend	79,320	3	0·00
Stockport	52,154	17	0·03
Stoke City	211,234	57	0·03
Sunderland	400,760	80	0·02

	Attendances	Number of arrests	Arrest as percentage of attendances
Swansea	100,957	10	0·01
Swindon	209,800	67	0·03
Torquay	67,434	21	0·03
Tottenham	517,970	74	0·01
Tranmere	76,847	53	0·07
Walsall	128,153	47	0·04
Watford	291,464	43	0·01
West Bromwich	222,261	132	0·06
West Ham	396,473	149	0·04
Wigan	86,776	4	0·01
Wimbledon	159,691	49	0·03
Wolverhampton	226,964	132	0·06
Wrexham	51,539	17	0·03
York	62,902	62	0·10

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Rural Schools

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what special funding he proposes to small rural schools to assist delivery of the national curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: We are giving local education authorities specific grant support for the introduction of the national curriculum. There will be support for some £120 million expenditure this financial year, rising to nearly £170 million expenditure next financial year. This is in addition to the general revenue support grant funding which local authorities receive in support of spending. It is for authorities to decide how much to spend to help small rural schools to deliver the national curriculum.

Technical and Vocational Education Initiative

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from Lancashire about the extent to which schools in the county will be affected by plans to extend the technical and vocational education initiative.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has received no representations about this.

Teachers' Pay

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has reached any conclusions on the future composition and organisation of the pay negotiating body; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend is now considering the responses of the teacher unions and employers to his proposals for new permanent pay negotiation machinery. He will announce his conclusions in due course.

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he next expects to meet representatives of teachers' trade unions regarding pay and conditions of service; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has met representatives of the teacher unions on a number of occasions, and would expect to hold similar meetings in the future.

LEA Staff

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many *(a)* teaching staff and *(b)* non-teaching staff were employed by local education authorities in each of the years 1960, 1965, 1970, 1975, 1980, 1985 and the latest date for which figures are available; and what was the number of pupils on roll in each year listed.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Figures are given in the table. Information prior to 1970 is not readily available.

Full-time equivalents of teacher staff and pupils on roll in nursery, primary and secondary schools maintained by local education authorities in England in January 1970-1989

Thousands

	Teacher numbers	Pupil numbers	[1]Non-teaching staff
1970	328·7	7,514·2	n/a
1975	417·6	8,458·1	409·4
1980	438·1	8,183·1	400·0
1985	405·3	7,201·6	361·8
1989	397·4	6,761·7	381·3

n/a Not available.

[1] Figures in this column relate to all non-teaching education staff employed by local authorities in England, not to nursery, primary and secondary schools alone. All figures relate to March of each year.

Local Management of Schools

Sir David Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a list of education authorities with the percentage of their budget which is allocated in 1990-91 for local management of schools and the percentage retained as a centrally retained resource overhead.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) on 5 February 1990 at column *451*.

School Meals

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish the latest figures showing how many children take *(a)* school meals and *(b)* free school meals broken down into primary, secondary and special schools; and what proportion of children present they make up in each case.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The information requested for maintained schools in England for January 1989 is as follows:

	Total number of school meals provided	As a percentage of all pupils on roll	Total meals provided free	As a percentage of all pupils on roll
Primary[1]	1,835,516	46	515,395	13
Secondary	1,104,875	38	235,270	8
Special	66,319	71	28,466	31

[1] Includes nursery schools.

Schools Budget (Administration)

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science for each county council local education authority, what percentage of the total schools budget, excluding capital expenditure, is spent on administration.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend is still receiving budget statements prepared under section 42 of the Education Reform Act from local education authorities. As soon as he receives the great majority of returns the information requested will be published.

Postgraduate Grants

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he expects existing differentials in postgraduate studentship rates to continue; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: During the current academic year the main studentship rate set by the research councils under the schemes which they run has been £600 higher than that under the state studentship scheme run on my behalf by the British Academy. Following representations from the British Academy and others I have today agreed that the rates under the state studentship scheme should be increased for the coming academic year to bring them in line with those currently available under the research councils' schemes. I have also today accepted advice from the Advisory Board for the Research Councils, that some of the as yet unallocated funds within the science budget for 1991-92 should be allocated to help finance a £400 increase in the main studentship rate with effect from April 1991. I have invited the board's advice on how the planned increases in postgraduate awards fit within an overall strategy for postgraduate training and on the quantitative evidence about applications, enrolments, wastage and completion on which the strategies of the individual councils are based. So that scarce resources can be directed to areas of greatest need, I have informed the board that I would expect the councils to consider possibilities for the differentiation in future of studentship award rates, by year of study, by subject or type of training, or by geographical areas. I have invited the British Academy to proceed in the same fashion in relation to any further increase over and above that approved today.

Art and Music

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he intends to set up working groups to recommend attainment targets and programmes of study for art and music within the national curriculum for England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I are today establishing working groups for art and music. The members of the groups are:

Art Working Group

Chairman:	
Professor Colin Renfrew	Master of Jesus College, Cambridge; Professor of Archaeology, Cambridge
Members:	
Giles Auty	Art Critic, The Spectator
Gilroy Brown	Head Teacher, Foundry JMI School, Birmingham
Robert Clement	Adviser for Art and Design, Devon County Council
David Derrick	Head Teacher, St. Clement Dane's C of E Primary School, Westminster
Gillian Figg	Lecturer in Art Education, West Glamorgan Institute of Higher Education
Toby Jackson	Head of Education, Tate Gallery, Liverpool
Professor Leslie R. Perry	Emeritus Professor, University of London Institute of Education, formerly Professor of the Philosophy of Education at Kings College, London
Peter Riches	Head of Faculty of Creative Studies, Eggbuckland School, Plymouth
Ray Smith	Practising artist
Merrick Taylor	Managing Director, Motor Panels (Coventry) Ltd.
Lady Marina Vaizey	Member of Fine Arts Advisory Committee, British Council; member of Crafts Council; art critic, Sunday Times. Broadcaster

Music Working Group

Chairman:	
Sir John Manduell CBE	Principal, Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester
Members:	
David Adams	Head of Music, Sawston Village College, Cambridge
Dr. Kevin Adams	Head of Music, Maesteg Comprehensive School, Mid Glamorgan
Michael Batt	Freelance musician and composer
Michael Brewer	Director of Music, Chetham's (independent Specialist music) School, Manchester
Philip Jones CBE	Principal, Trinity College of Music
Gillian Moore	Education Officer, London Sinfonietta
Professor George Pratt	Head of Music Department, Huddersfield Polytechnic
Mrs. L. Read	Head of Infant Department, Elburton Primary School, Devon
Julian Smith	Director, W. H. Smith & Sons Ltd.
John Stephens	ex-LEA Senior Staff Inspector for music, and ex-HMI. Director of Education, Trinity College of Music from September 1990
Christine Wood	Lovely Music, Tadcaster (specialist suppliers of music to schools)

The groups will advise on the attainment targets and programmes of study for art and music to be included within the national curriculum in England and Wales. We are grateful to the chairmen and members for having agreed to serve on the groups. An announcement on a working group for physical education will be made very shortly.

Copies of the terms of reference for the art and music working groups have been placed in the Library. These make clear that the attainment targets and programmes of study will not be prescribed in as much detail as for other foundation subjects.

NATIONAL FINANCE

VAT

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about value added tax on fuel consumed by vessels plying the United Kingdom coast and continental ports.

Mr. Ryder: The Government have received a few representations about the change in VAT liability of fuel which takes effect on 1 July 1990 and the possibility of VAT stores relief for fishing and other vessels after that date.

Civil Service Pensions

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what adjustments were made for each of the years from 1960 onwards to the negotiated pay in the home civil service for pension benefits.

Mr. Major: Civil service pay is determined within what is affordable according to the need to recruit, retain and motivate staff. A number of factors including pensions are taken into account in the pay negotiations.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has had from regional bodies on public expenditure in the current year.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Friend receives many representations on a variety of subjects.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the public spending planning total for 1990-91.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The public expenditure planning total for 1990-91 published in the "Financial Statement and Budget Report" is £179 billion.

Retail Prices Index

Mr. Forman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington, 20 December 1989, *Official Report*, column *242*, whether he has now received a report from the Retail Prices Index Advisory Committee.

Mr. Major: I have today received a report from the RPI Advisory Committee. It examines how to incorporate the price of holidays into the RPI and certain other issues in its work programme. On the price of holidays the report recommends that the CSO should collect data and examine a new methodology which will have to be subjected to further scrutiny before it could be incorporated into the RPI. I will present the report to Parliament and announce the Government's decision on the recommendations in due course.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Cambodia

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he now has plans for direct British aid to Cambodia.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) on 18 June.

WALES

Corlan Housing Association

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the directors of the Corlan housing association,.

Mr. Grist: The present members of the committee of management of Corlan housing association were appointed recently by Housing for Wales under the provisions of section 17 of the Housing Associations Act 1985. They are:

Mr. N. Bacon
(Deputy Chief Executive, National Agriculture Centre Rural Trust)
Mr. T. Blanch
(Director, Rhondda Housing Association)
Mr. R. Head
(Director, Family Care Housing Association)
Mr. M. Savage
(Solicitor)
Mr. A. Shewring
(Chartered Accountant)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what purchases of land were made by the Corlan housing association and at what price, over the last five years.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is not readily available. The affairs of Corlan housing association are the subject of an investigation instituted by Housing for Wales under the provisions of section 28 of the Housing Associations Act 1985.

Food Safety Bill

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what additional funds his Department is to earmark for local authority implementation of the Food Safety Bill, and additional local authority current costs as a result of the Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: In the annual round of consultations leading to the 1991-92 local authority revenue settlement, the local authority associations have assessed the costs necessary to implement the food Bill in that year at £1·35 million. This will be taken into account in determining the revenue support grant 1991-92. I expect that Government support for implementation of this Bill will be via unhypothecated grant, which will give councils the flexibility to direct resources in the light of local circumstances and priorities.

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Committee

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will consider giving financial assistance to the myalgic encephalomyelitis committee in Wales.

Mr. Grist: The association received £5,000 grant aid from the Department in 1988-89 and £7,500 in 1989-90, but returned £2,500 of the latter following the resignation of the officer whose post had been supported. No formal application for further grant has been received, but any future applications would be carefully considered.

Gwynedd Health Authority

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the report by consultants on the financial position and performance of Gwynedd health authority, which has been recently submitted to him; and what steps his Department intends taking in the light of this report.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend and I look forward to receiving the authority's procurement and business plan and its related proposals for restoring financial balance.

When the proposals have been submitted, we will meet the chairman and other representatives to discuss them. I shall not be in a position to comment on the way ahead until that meeting has taken place.

Community Health Councils

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will arrange a conference of community health council and area health authority chairmen to discuss his plans for community health councils in Wales.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so. A wide-ranging consultation exercise has been completed, with both community health councils and district health authorities, among many others, commenting fully on the proposals.

My right hon. Friend hopes to announce a decision on the future structure of the community health councils in Wales shortly.

Clwyd Health Councils

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will visit *(a)* Clwyd South community health council and *(b)* Clwyd North community health council to discuss his plans to merge community health councils.

Mr. Grist: A wide-ranging consultation exercise has been completed on the review of community health councils in Wales. Clwyd South and Clwyd North community health councils have taken the opportunity to comment fully on the proposals and my right hon. Friend and I are well acquainted with their views.

My right hon. Friend hopes to announce a decision on the future structure of the community health councils in Wales shortly.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many community health councils he has visited in Wales; and which community health councils he plans to meet before October.

Mr. Grist: None.

War Memorial Hospital, Wrexham

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the previous cases in Wales heard by that inspector who decided application number WRR 16029 relating to the decision to allow demolition of the War Memorial hospital at Wrexham.

Mr. Grist: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Flat Ownership

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General when the Lord Chancellor intends to make a statement on changes in the law of the ownership of flats.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) on 18 June 1990 at column *389*.

Plastic Bullets

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Attorney-General how many cases in 1989 involving persons injured by plastic bullets in Northern Ireland have been considered by the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland; and what action was taken in each case.

The Attorney-General: Figures for cases considered during 1989 by the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland involving persons killed or injured by the alleged use of baton rounds are as follows:

	Number
Cases	12
Persons injured	14
Persons killed	1
Prosecutions directed	0
No prosecution directed	12

Legal Aid

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Attorney-General if interest accruing when the statutory charge is postponed by virtue of regulation 97 of the Civil Legal Aid (General) Regulations 1989 is chargeable before the Legal Aid Board has paid the assisted person's legal advisers; if the board has the discretion to waive or postpone such interest until the time for payment to the legal advisers; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The position set out in regulation 97 of the Civil Legal Aid (General) Regulations 1989 is that interest is payable from the date the charge is registered. The Legal Aid Board does not have a discretion to waive or postpone the interest due from that date.

Offences, Northern Ireland

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Attorney-General how many cases concerning scheduled offences were referred to the Northern Ireland Court of Appeal in 1989; and in how many of these referred cases the original conviction has been *(a)* quashed and *(b)* upheld.

The Attorney-General: In 1989 a total of 103 cases concerning scheduled offences were referred to the Northern Ireland Court of Appeal. Of these 103 cases, convictions were quashed in three: the sentence was varied in six; 55 appeals were dismissed and 39 appeals abandoned.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Attorney-General how many applications for bail by those held on remand for scheduled, non-scheduled offences, and both together, were refused bail in 1989.

The Attorney-General: In 1989 the number of High Court bail applications by those held on remand for scheduled offence cases were refused was 560.

The number of High Court bail applications by those on remand for non-scheduled offence cases, which were refused, was 197.

Information is not available in relation to unsuccessful applications in this category in the magistrates courts.

PRIME MINISTER

Fission Products

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to her answer to the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), *Official Report*, 28 June, columns *484-85*, if she will give a full breakdown of the costs for the disposal of the fission products of nuclear power; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The costs of disposing of the products of nuclear generation can be expressed in purely monetary terms since the technology of waste disposal is sufficiently developed. These have been quantified, for example, in the 1988-89 accounts of the CEGB by provisions for reprocessing of spent fuel and associated waste management, and disposal costs amount to £6·4 billion at 31 March 1989. The costs of dealing with the effects of global warming as the result of the emission of greenhouse gases are not known, but could be extremely large.

Japanese Fishing

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make representations to the Japanese Government in respect of *(a)* their policy of scientific whaling, *(b)* their overfishing of smaller cetaceans and *(c)* their use of monofilament nets.

The Prime Minister: We have already made known to the Japanese, through the International Whaling Commission, our firm view that whaling for research should not be conducted unless the research can be fully justified scientifically. The research would have to provide vital information which could not be obtained by non-lethal means, and would not endanger the relevant whale stocks. We shall be following this policy at the meeting of the IWC currently taking place in the Netherlands.

We have already raised the matter of the killing of small cetaceans with the Japanese Government. In 1989 the Japanese Government introduced new regulations which will reduce the number of Dall's porpoises caught.

We fully share the concern about large-scale indiscriminate drift net fishing practised by the Japanese in the South Pacific. The nations concerned were able to agree last year to a United Nations resolution which calls for an end to large-scale drift net fishing in the South Pacific by 30 June 1991 and, unless scientifically proved unnecessary, a global moratorium by 30 June 1992. The United Kingdom with its EC partners was able to play a major and constructive role in these discussions.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Association of Chief Police Officers

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether his Department has received any correspondence from the Association of Chief Police Officers.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Home Department receives correspondence from the Association of Chief Police Officers on a variety of subjects on a regular basis.

AIDS (Prisons)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what advice in the form of booklets or medical instruction is given to prison officers who, in the course of their duties, may come into contact with inmates who have AIDS.

Mr. Mellor: The staff training package "AIDS Inside", which has been in use since August 1987, includes a video film and a leaflet prepared by a committee of medical and other experts for the information of all prison service staff. For health care staff the most recent source of advice on safe practice is "Guidance for Clinical Health Care Workers: Protection Against Infection with HIV and Hepatitis Viruses" issued by the United Kingdom health departments in January this year. Such staff also receive training, where appropriate, in the clinical management and care of patients with AIDS and AIDS-related illness.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the known numbers of AIDS inmates held in prisons in England and Wales on 25 June.

Mr. Mellor: On the date mentioned the prison population of England and Wales included 56 prisoners reported by medical officers as having been identified as HIV antibody positive. AIDS had been diagnosed in two of these cases.

Prison Officers, London

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for each of the London prisons the amount of prison officer accommodation that is available for officers serving at London prisons to occupy and the present number of quarters that are empty.

Mr. Mellor: The latest available information, as at 1 April 1990, is as follows:

Total number of quarters available

Prison	*Number*	*Empty*
Brixton	221	(3)
Holloway	152	(3)
Pentonville	111	(1)
Wandsworth	187	(5)
Wormwood Scrubs	212	(None)

Trevi Group

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what discussions the Trevi group of Ministers has had about arranging exchanges with officials from EEC states in order to obtain information on law enforcement, legal systems and innovations in technology;

(2) what discussions the Trevi group of Ministers has had about introducing uniform legal provisions in the relevant parts of domestic law in each member state of the EEC;

(3) what discussions the Trevi group of Ministers has had about EEC co-operation at frontiers and borders in relation to *(a)* problems of illegal immigration, *(b)* crossing common land when following suspects of serious crime and *(c)* the possibility of a new treaty to deal with these problems.

Mr. Waddington: The position reached by Trevi in discussing matters of police co-operation among

European Community member states is recorded in the programme of action approved in Dublin on 15 June, a copy of which is in the Library. Problems of illegal immigration are primarily a matter for the EC ad hoc immigration working group, which is currently considering a draft convention on the crossing of external frontiers of the Community.

Police (Ethnic Minorities)

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to how many black and ethnic minority employees the Metropolitan police employs in its civilian staff above the grade of executive officer.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Commissioner has told me that in August 1989, the latest date for which the information is available, there were 36 civilian staff from ethnic minority communities of higher executive officer grade and above in the Metropolitan police service as well as 127 executive officers. This does not include traffic wardens and industrial grades.

Nuclear Emergency Centres

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many nuclear emergency centres there are in the United Kingdom; how many are currently inoperative; and for what reasons.

Mr. John Patten: Information on the most recently reported position in respect of local authority emergency centres, including the most common shortcomings found in those which were not operational, was given in "A Report on Implementation of the Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) Regulations 1983 in England and Wales at 30 September 1989". The report was published in May and a copy is in the Library.

Prison Staff

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of staff in each prison establishment in each of the last 10 years with less than two years total experience in the prison service.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women being held on remand in prisons in England and Wales on Monday 25 June.

Mr. Mellor: At the end of May, the latest date for which the information is available, 9,495 male and 347 female untried and convicted unsentenced prisoners were held in prison service establishments or in police cells.

Criminal Verdicts

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of criminal verdicts of manslaughter or murder and the relevant verdict at the inquest for each of the years 1974 to 1989, inclusive.

Mr. Waddington: The number of criminal verdicts is given in table 4.2 of the Command Paper "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales", and the number of inquest verdicts is given in table 5 of the Home Office statistical bulletin "Statistics of Deaths reported to Coroners, England and Wales". Copies of both these publications are in the Library.

The inquest verdicts exclude cases where court proceedings have been instituted. In these cases a coroner will not resume an inquest which he has adjourned, to avoid the need for two tribunals to consider the same evidence.

Deaths (Records)

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will establish a national register of persons who have died and whose next of kin cannot be ascertained to enable next of kin to identify their relatives; and whether he will make the register open to the public.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. All deaths are registered locally by the registrar of births and deaths and subsequently notified to the Registrar-General who maintains a central record. We are currently considering the establishment of a national "missing persons" register which would assist in identifying bodies which are found without any form of identification and relatives could make inquiries of the register via the police.

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what records are kept on the number of persons found dead each year where no relatives can be traced by the responsible authorities; and how many there are for the latest year available;

(2) after what period of time those responsible for ascertaining and informing the next of kin terminate their inquiries;

(3) what procedures are followed in order to ascertain the next of kin of a person found dead;

(4) who is responsible for locating and contacting next of kin once death has been confirmed.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There are no central records of persons found dead where no relations can be traced, nor is there any statutory requirement for an individual or authority to report a death to the next of kin. In practice, responsibility for notification is normally assumed by whoever has the duty of care at the time of death; there are no time limits on their inquiries. There are no set procedures to follow, but the identification of the dead person must be known before relatives can be traced. If the person's identity is known or can be established, the amount of time needed to trace the next of kin depends on the circumstances of each case, for example the available documentation on the body. Where identity cannot be established, the police will arrange for details to be circulated to other forces and to New Scotland Yard to check against their missing persons records. There is no predetermined time limit for each case.

Television Company Franchises

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning negative bidding for television company franchises; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning negative bidding for television company franchises; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: A few responses to the broadcasting White Paper suggested the possibility of negative bidding for regional Channel 3 licences.

Prisoners

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy on the accommodation of prisoners as close as possible to their families, taking into account considerations of security and accommodation.

Mr. Mellor: Four main principles govern the allocation of sentenced prisoners to training establishments: the needs of security, the needs of control, the needs of the individual prisoners and the need to make the best use of accommodation.

In applying these considerations, we of course recognise that it is in the interests of most prisoners to be located as near to their home area as is practicable, to ease visiting arrangements for families and friends and to help prisoners in the last part of their sentence in preparation for release.

Prisoners held in prison service custody on remand are generally held in those establishments which are nearest to their courts of remand or trial.

Proportional Representation

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will bring forward a Bill to introduce an electoral system based on proportional representation.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No.

World Cup (Deportations)

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations his Department has received on the subject of deportations from Italy for alleged hooliganism at the World Cup tournament; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Home Department has received three representations relating to refusal of leave to enter Italy.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Auditing

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby on 19 March, *Official Report*, column *429*, he is yet in a position to announce his Department's actions relating to Lonrho plc's non-compliance with schedule 7, paragraph 9 to the Companies Act 1985.

Mr. Redwood: Lonrho plc has informed my Department that it employs fewer than 250 persons, and is therefore not subject to the provisions of paragraph 9 of schedule 7 to the Companies Act 1985.

Glamorgan Building Society

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby on 9 March, *Official Report*, column *883*, whether any partner from the firm of Mr. Anton was criticised by the joint disciplinary committee in its report on Glamorgan Building Society.

Mr. Redwood: Yes. An individual who was a partner in the Cardiff office of Deloitte Haskins and Sells at the relevant time was the subject of criticism by a committee of inquiry appointed by the executive committee of the joint disciplinary scheme in relation to matters arising in connection with Glamorgan Building Society. He is no longer a partner in Mr. Anton's firm which, following a merger with Coopers and Lybrand, is now known as Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby on 19 March, *Official Report*, column *429*, he will introduce legislation to require the auditor's letter of engagement to be communicated to shareholders by being read at the annual general meeting.

Mr. Redwood: No.

Condoms

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the annual production figure in the United Kingdom of condoms and how many were for sale in the United Kingdom in each of the last five years; and what is the estimate for each of the next five years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information is not available.

Link Schemes

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the proportion of outturn expenditure on each link scheme met by industrial and private sector sponsorship.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A total of 24 link programmes have been announced so far. The financial arrangements for link programmes are standard in that Government outturn expenditure in all cases is 50 per cent. of gross incurred project costs.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will list the programmed and outturn expenditure for each link scheme in each year of operation;

(2) what is the programmed public expenditure provision for link schemes in each full year the scheme has existed, together with the actual outturn expenditure in each year; and what is the second figure as a percentage of the first.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Whilst 24 link programmes have been announced, most of the 65 current research projects under way have become active only within the last 12 months. For example, on 6 April 1989 there were only 12 active research projects, whereas by 29 May 1990 the number had risen to 65. In addition, on 29 May 1990 a further 57 were through all stages of technical approval and were awaiting final financial clearance, or the

Department was waiting for the industrial partners satisfactorily to conclude crucial collaborative agreements. Two other factors complicate providing detailed outturn expenditure figures for the two financial years April 1988 to March 1989 and April 1989 to March 1990. First, there are now six Government Departments and four research councils funding link programmes and they all have their own procedures and protocols. Secondly, industrial grants are paid in arrears, that is, after costs have been incurred, and particularly in the early days of a project claims may not be submitted for up to 12 months after the work has taken place. The outturn for the financial year 1988-89 was therefore a nominal figure. The outturn for the financial year 1989-90 has been provisionally estimated at £7 million, and was announced at a link press briefing on June 13 1990. It is not considered practical to provide detailed outturn figures for each link programme until the end of the financial year 1990-91.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list all link schemes so far established, together with the participating companies and academic institutions.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The first five link programmes were announced on 3 February 1988. Since then a further 19 programmes have been launched. The programmes are listed in the table:

Molecular Electronics
Advanced Semiconductor Materials
Industrial Measurement Systems
Eukaryotic Genetic Engineering
Nanotechnology
Biotransformations
Personal Communications
Selective Drug Delivery and Targeting
Construction Maintenance and Refurbishment
Food Processing Sciences
Ventilation, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration
Optoelectronic Systems
Design of High Speed Machinery
Structural Composites
Protein Engineering
Biochemical Engineering
New Catalysts and Catalytic Processes
Power Electronic Devices and Derived Systems
Control of Plant Metabolism
Molecular Sensors
Technology for Analytical and Physical Measurement
Transport Infrastructure and Operations
Asymmetric Synthesis
Crops for Industrial Use

A total of 140 companies are now involved in the 65 research projects already active and of these 37 are small or medium-sized companies (indicated in the list by an asterisk). Following the list of companies involved in link projects are lists of the 40 scientific institutes involved.

AB Electronics
Advanced Ultrasonics Technologies Ltd.*
AEA Technology
Aerial Facilities
Aircraft Research Association
Air-Log
Allied Breweries
ALMA Enterprises*
Amersham International
AMT RI
APV
ASEA-Brown Boveri
Austin Rover
BAe Dynamics Ltd.
BAFF
Banbdley Chipware*
BASS
Beaconsfield Instruments*
Beecham
Boots
Brewing Research Foundation
British Aerospace
British Biotechnology*
British Petroleum
British Telecom Research Laboratories
Campden FDRA*
Camtex
Cannon Electronics*
Celltech*
Chell*
Chloride Power Electronic
Ciba-Geigy
CMB
Cortina Electric Co.*
Courtaulds
CPS Ltd.*
Cray Instruments
Customs Interconnect Ltd.
Davis Decade Ltd.
DCL
De Beers Industrial Diamonds
Design Technologies Ltd.
Dynamic Imaging
Edwards HV Ltd.
Eli Lilly
Ensignma Ltd.*
Enzymatix*
Express Foods
Farnell Instruments
FMBRA*
Fords
Foxboro Ltd.
Framatome
GEC-Marconi Research Ltd.
GEC-Plessey Telecommunications Ltd.
GKN Technology Ltd.
Glaxo
Guinness
Harwell Ltd.
Heinz
IBM (UK) Ltd.
ICI
ICL Material Research Centre
IFTEL Automation
International Biosynthetics
International Rectifier (GB) Ltd.
Ledatech Ltd.*
LEE Courtran Ltd.
Logitek Ltd.*
Lucas Aerospace Ltd.
Lucas Automotive AEC
Lyons Bakeries
Lyons-Tetley
M4 Data Ltd.
Manor Bakeries
Marks and Spencer
Marling Lighting*
MK Electric Ltd.
Neotronics Ltd.*
Orbitel Oxford Applied Research*
Oxford Lasers Ltd.*
Palmer Environmental Service Ltd.*
Pedifree Petfoods
PERA*
Pfizer
PG Associates*
Philips
Pilkington plc
Polkinghorne
Queensgate Instruments*
Quest International*
Rank Cintel
Rank Hovis McDougall
Rank Taylor Hobson
Reckitt and Coleman
REOSC
Rhone-Poulenc

Rosita
Royal Mint
Sandvick Ltd.
SB Electronics Ltd.*
SBP
Schlumberger
SCIMAT
Sealant Manufacturers Consortium
Securis Ltd.*
Semilab Ltd.*
Shell
SIFAM*
Simon Containers Ltd.
Smiths Industries
Solid State Induction Ltd.*
Sonomatic Ltd.
Spillers
Spriex Sarco
STC
Strand Lighting
T & N Technology Ltd.
Taywood Engineering Ltd.
Tealgate
Texas Instruments Ltd.
Thorn-EMI
Thurlby-Thander Ltd.*
Toshiba (JAPAN)
Transfer Technology*
UK Corrugated Ltd.
UK Dairy Industry Research Policy Committee
UKDIRPAC
Unilever Research
Valemite Ltd.
Verson HME Ltd.
Vesper Thornycroft Ltd.
VG Analytical
VG Ionex
Vickers Defence System Ltd.
Vickers Laboratories
Vision Dynamics
Watney Mann & Truman
Wellcome
Westland Aerostructures
Westland Defence Systems Ltd.
Whitbread
York Ltd.*
Universities
Bath
Birmingham
Bradford
Bristol
Brunel
Dundee
Durham
Edinburgh
Exeter
Glasgow
Heriot-Watt
Hull
Imperial College, London
Kent
Kings College, London
Lancaster
Leeds
Leicester
Liverpool
Loughborough
Manchester
Newcastle
Nottingham
Oxford
Salford
Southampton
Strathclyde
Surrey
Sussex
Swansea
UMIST
UWIST
Wales
Warwick

Science Base (other)
AFRC Institute of Food Research (Reading)
AFRC Institute of Food Research (Norwich)
Cranfield Institute of Technology
ERA Technology Ltd
Kingston Polytechnic
Leicester Royal Infirmary
Oxford Polytechnic

Domestic Waste (Recycling)

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the total identifiable expenditure on research into developing technology aimed at recycling domestic waste in each year since 1979.

Mr. Forth: This information is available only at disproportionate cost.

Director General of Fair Trading

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he intends to publish the report by the Director General of Fair Trading for 1989.

Mr. Forth: The 16th annual report by the Director General of Fair Trading has been published today. It covers the period from 1 January 1989 to 31 December 1989. Copies of the report have been laid before Parliament.

ENERGY

Sizewell B

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will separate *(a)* any *(b)* all of the costs of the Sizewell B power station from the non-fossil fuel levy at any future date.

Mr. Baldry: No.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the estimated date of commissioning of Sizewell B; and what definition of commissioning is to be used.

Mr. Wakeham: This is a matter for Nuclear Electric. However, the company informs me that it is committed to a timetable for the Sizewell B project that will lead to fuel loading in August 1994 and full commercial output in February 1995. The project is currently well ahead of that programme. Commissioning is complete at the time of full commercial output.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 14 June, *Official Report*, column *332*, if he will state in detail what measures he has introduced to record cattle breeding records.

Mr. Maclean: I have today placed in the Library of the House a copy of the consultation document which details the proposed measures.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has made an

assessment of the implications of the discontinuation of the use of chemical solvents by the meat rendering industry for the spread of BSE and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: An assessment is being made of the changes in rendering practices in the 1970s and early 1980s to determine what part this might have played in the emergence of BSE.

Canthaxanthin

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received concerning the use of Canthaxanthin in animal feedstuffs; and if he has any proposals to restrict its use.

Mr. Maclean: Canthaxanthin is permitted in poultry and fish feedingstuffs under EC directive 70/524 for the purpose of enhancing the colour of egg yolks and fish flesh. It is mandatory for all member states to allow canthaxanthin to be freely marketed and used in such feedingstuffs according to the limits laid down in the directive. Representations for and against these uses have been received.

In the United Kingdom, the use of the colourant canthaxanthin in poultry and fish feed is under review and I understand the EC Commission has also asked its Scientific Committee for Food and Scientific Committee for Animal Nutrition to do the same.

Research

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total identifiable expenditure on research by his Department in each year since 1979; what proportion was awarded on a customer-contractor basis; and what proportion of his total departmental budget was expended on research for each year.

Mr. Curry: All research and development which the Department funds, with the exception of research funded by the MAFF grant in aid at the royal botanic gardens, is on a customer-contractor basis. The detailed information requested is as follows:

Financial Year	*MAFF Expenditure on Research and Development (£ million)*	*Percentage of Research and Development awarded on Customer/ Contractor Basis*	*Percentage of Total MAFF Budget Expended on Research and Development*
1979-80	66·2	97·4	17·7
1980-81	83·0	97·3	15·5
1981-82	106·8	96·7	19·9
1982-83	113·9	97·5	19·6
1983-84	118·6	97·6	22·2
1984-85	119·4	96·6	21·8
1985-86	118·4	96·3	22·3
1986-87	118·3	95·09	22·7
1987-88	113·8	95·3	25·8
[1]1988-89	115·0	95·0	23·9
[1]1989-90	114·0	94·8	22·0

[1] Provisional.

Departmental budget is net expenditure, as published in the appropriation account, for which the Minister is the accounting officer.

Whaling

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his position in respect of the review of the moratorium on commercial whaling to be carried out by the International Whaling Commission in July.

Mr. Gummer: The history of whaling has been one of consistent over-exploitation of one species of whale after another. The moratorium on commercial whaling which should have operated since 1986 has in fact been fully respected only for the last two years. I am determined that whale species should not again be placed at risk by a hasty resumption of whaling.

At the International Whaling Commission we will be carefully studying the work of the scientific committee and if there is any doubt at all about the capacity of any whale stock to bear a resumption of whaling we will firmly oppose any suggestion that whaling recommence. In any case we will insist that the International Whaling Commission must adopt a revised management procedure which will ensure that all whale stocks remain at healthy levels even if whaling is resumed in the future. I am determine that the history of over-exploitation of whale stocks must never be repeated.

Veterinary Products

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food under what circumstances products yet to pass the required tests of safety and efficacy are allowed to be sold for public consumption; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Except for certain products prepared to a veterinary surgeon's order, no veterinary medicinal product may be sold in this country unless it has a product licence issued under the Medicines Act.

HEALTH

Management Consultants

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will oblige health authorities to itemise separately in their accounts the amount spent on management consultancy;

(2) what is his Department's estimate for the total amount spent by health authorities on management consultancies for the last full year for which an estimate is available.

Mr. Dorrell: The employment of management consultants is a matter for individual health authorities. Information on the expenditure incurred or on which to base an estimate of the total involved is not routinely collected centrally.

We do not intend to oblige health authorities to itemise separately any such information in their accounts as the amount paid to individual consultants is subject to commercial confidentiality.

Infectious Diseases

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he intends to publish an analysis of responses to the "Review of Law on Infectious Disease Control" published in October 1989.

Mr. Dorrell: More than 500 organisations and individuals have submitted responses to the consultation document "Review of Law on Infectious Disease Control". It is clear that very careful and comprehensive consideration has been given to the options on which views were invited and we need to consider in detail the comments before deciding what action to take.

Immunodeficiency Viruses

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in which directly funded Government facilities research into AIDS, HIV and related viruses is being carried out; and what was the cost of this research in the last full year.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The majority of Government-funded research into AIDS, HIV and related viruses is commissioned by the Medical Research Council (MRC) as part of its "Directed Programme" for AIDS research. Details of this work are contained in the MRC publication "AIDS Research 1990", a copy of which is available in the Library. A total of £6 million was devoted to the programme in 1989-90.

In addition, the public health laboratory service and the National Institute for Biological Standards and Control undertake such research; funding for 1989-90 was £1·1 million and £440,000 respectively.

Cryptosporidiosis

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action his Department is taking to reduce the number of cases of cryptosporidiosis caused by a waterborne parasite; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) on 29 June at columns *363-64*.

Smoking

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average cost to the national health service of each smoker.

Mr. Dorrell: It is not possible to estimate the cost of smoking to the NHS accurately, but it may be of the order of £500 million each year. It is not meaningful to apportion this cost among individual smokers, as the amount involved will depend on the nature of each individual's habit and whether it leads to sickness or death in any particular year. An estimated 110,000 deaths per year are caused by smoking-related diseases.

Health Promotion Clinics

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what criteria he has established for what constitutes a health promotion clinic.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In order to qualify for a sessional payment, health promotion clinics must meet the criteria laid down in paragraph 30 of the GPs' "Statement of Fees and Allowances" (a copy of which is held in the Library). The main requirements are *(a)* the purpose of the clinic is approved by the family practitioner committee, *(b)* each clinic normally attracts a minimum of 10 patients and *(c)* it lasts for a minimum of one hour.

In-patient Statistics

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many in-patient cases were treated per available bed in 1979 and for the latest year for which figures are available in each of the 14 health regions.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested is given in the table:

Average daily available beds[1] and in-patient cases treated, NHS hospitals, by regional health authority, 1979 and 1988-89

Regional health authority	1979			1988-89		
	Average daily available beds	In-patient cases treated	In-patients per available bed	Average daily available beds	In-patient cases treated	In-patients per available bed
Northern	25,305	368,578	14·6	21,520	461,033	21·4
Yorkshire	29,946	433,783	14·5	22,765	551,458	24·2
Trent	31,712	464,917	14·7	25,992	626,102	24·1
East Anglian	13,094	201,867	15·4	11,827	269,637	22·8
North West Thames[2]	27,905	403,264	14·5	20,145	416,153	20·7
North East Thames[2]	29,443	455,851	15·5	23,285	521,291	22·4
South East Thames[2]	28,408	438,889	15·4	19,574	487,815	24·9
South West Thames[2]	26,242	312,264	11·9	19,066	344,259	18·1
Wessex	19,021	302,772	15·9	14,824	391,376	26·4
Oxford	13,664	251,898	18·4	11,024	296,433	26·9
South Western	24,456	338,890	13·9	19,166	451,586	23·6
West Midlands	36,263	547,773	15·1	28,784	689,457	24·0
Mersey	21,982	282,629	12·9	15,776	347,893	22·1
North Western	30,812	509,049	16·5	26,409	640,548	24·3
Special Health Authorities[2]	3,419	87,696	25·7	2,780	90,941	32·7
England	361,670	5,400,120	14·9	282,937	6,585,982	23·3

Source: SH3 return 1979, HKo3 and SH3a returns 1988-89.

[1] Excludes neonatal cots on maternity units, also beds on wards open during the day only.

[2] Figures are not directly comparable over the period, due to NHS restructuring in 1982.

Operations

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total number of hip replacement operations carried out in 1979 and in the latest year for which figures are available in each of the 14 health regions.

Mr. Dorrell: Health authorities in England reported the following figures for 1988-89. The figures for 1979 are extracted from the 1979 hospital in-patient inquiry.

Estimated number of hip replacement operations by health regions

Region	*1979*[1]	*1988-89*[2]
Northern	1,780	2,800
Yorkshire	1,860	2,900
Trent	2,200	3,700
East Anglia	1,410	1,900
North West Thames	1,740	3,300
North East Thames	2,330	3,700
South East Thames	2,810	3,600
South West Thames	2,320	3,600
Wessex	2,220	2,700
Oxford	1,810	2,600
South Western	2,220	5,600
West Midlands	3,070	3,700
Mersey	850	2,100
North Western	2,600	3,500
Board of Governors	400	—

[1] Source: 1979 Hospital In-Patient Inquiry.
[2] Source: July 1989 Planning Statements—1988-89 Outturn.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list by county, and by year for the last five years, the number of cases of cryptosporidiosis reported.

Mr. Dorrell: Information on laboratory reports of cryptosporidium in England and Wales is available on a regional health authority basis only, as shown in the table:

Cryptosporidium laboratory reports
Regional totals

Region	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*[1]
Northern	5	16	130	38	132
Yorkshire	76	146	125	148	670
Trent	237	398	221	325	531
East Anglia	37	87	26	22	165
North West Thames	30	53	60	57	221
North East Thames	53	116	61	43	223
South East Thames	119	247	143	99	653
South West Thames	170	274	182	105	563
Wessex	143	284	315	347	894
Oxford	19	139	109	105	587
South Western	107	460	469	450	795
West Midlands	245	477	449	346	848
Mersey	98	133	144	70	126
North Western	464	604	554	400	884
Wales	71	126	289	195	476
Total[2]	1,874	3,560	3,277	2,750	7,768

[1] Provisional.
[2] England and Wales only.
Source: Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre.

Condoms

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether his Department proposes any action to increase the production of condoms in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department does not seek to influence commercial decisions.

However, Government information about condoms, and their effectiveness in reducing the risks of infectious diseases, may increase public demand and lead to increases in production.

Pharmacists

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the remuneration of community pharmacists.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Negotiations with the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee (PSNC) on the remuneration of community pharmacists for the year beginning 1 April began last December. Since then my officials have held numerous discussions with the PSNC and I have myself met the chairman of the PSNC on two occasions, once accompanied by members of his committee and once alone. I am disappointed that after months of negotiations, during which we have made significant concessions, the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee was unable to agree what I regard as a fair and reasonable offer, and has declared a state of dispute. I am not prepared to see negotiations drag on indefinitely, depriving the smaller independent pharmacies in particular of the increases due to them. I have therefore reluctantly decided to implement new fee scales from 1 August, backdated to 1 April. I have written today to the chairman of the PSNC informing him of this decision.

The settlement to be implemented is for a global target sum of £555·5 million, giving an increase in remuneration of 7·5 per cent. over the target for 1989-90. The increase in professional fees, the main element of remuneration, will be 7·5 per cent. over 1989-90 levels. Following a discount inquiry last year, a new discount scale of 9·67 per cent. will be implemented at the same time. My officials have today written to the PSNC seeking its urgent final comments on the detailed fee and discount recovery scales proposed within the global total, to enable them to be published in time to take effect from 1 August. Both scales will be backdated to 1 April, and to avoid hardship I propose to make interim payments based on estimates of the backpay due at the same time as the new rates are paid on 30 October. Adjustments in payments due following detailed recalculation will be made in payments due on 1 January. As part of the settlement I will honour two further concessions made in negotiation, that there should be a mechanism for collecting any over- or under-payment against the target for the year during the following year, triggered by variations greater than £250,000; and the establishment of a joint working party on the role of pharmacists, to reflect the wider definition of pharmaceutical services made possible by the National Health Service and Community Care Act.

In declaring a state of dispute, the PSNC also made a reference to the pharmacists' review panel. The PSNC has already made it clear that its long-term aim is to establish a review body and reference to the pharmacists' review panel would be a step towards this. That is something I cannot accept. In my view the terms of the reference by the PSNC would represent a significant departure from the way in which the pharmacists' review panel has previously operated, and it would not be appropriate for it to accept the reference. Should it do so, my Department will of course co-operate fully and I will study any view reached by the panel, but only as background to discussions on remuneration in future years.

Tampons

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has as to the number of deaths over the last five years arising from fulminating staphylococcal toxic shock syndrome related to using tampons.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) on 22 February at columns *874-75*.

District Nurses

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the number of district nurse training places which are currently unfilled.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I understand from the English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting that in England in 1989-90 824 people undertook district nurse training courses and 406 people undertook district enrolled nurse training courses. The total numbers of training places approved by the board were 1,014 for district nurse training and 495 for district enrolled nurse training.

Juvenile Muscular Degeneration

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of juvenile muscular degeneration are known to his Department; and approximately how many new cases are reported each year.

Mr. Dorrell: Information in this form is not held centrally. I am advised that there are many degenerative diseases of either the central nervous system or muscle which affect children and are mostly of genetic origin. The most common is muscular dystrophy which affects about one in 3,500 boys from early childhood onwards. At the current birth rate we would expect there to be about 100 new cases reported each year.

Registration of Births

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the position of those persons wishing to register the birth of their child through the medium of Welsh if they are *(a)* domiciled in Wales but their child is born in England, *(b)* domiciled in England and the child is born in Wales, *(c)* domiciled in England and the child is born in England or *(d)* domiciled in Wales and the child is born in Wales.

Mr. Dorrell: In England and Wales the law requires that a birth must be registered by the registrar for the registration of sub-district in which it occurs, regardless of the domicile of the parents. An informant wishing to register the birth of a child through the medium of Welsh may do so provided that the informant can speak and understand Welsh and the registrar to whom the information is given can also understand Welsh. The particulars required to be entered in the register in respect of a birth in Wales may be recorded in both English and Welsh provided these conditions are met and the information is given in both lauguages to a registrar in Wales who can write Welsh. However, the birth entry of a child born in England will contain particulars recorded in English only.

Medicines Resource Centre

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health who will carry legal responsibility for the information carried by the medicines resource centre.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 26 June 1990]:* Under the present administrative arrangements, legal responsibility for the information published by the medicines resource centre lies with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Departmental Research (Expenditure)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total identifiable expenditure on research by his Department in each year since 1979; what proportion was awarded on a customer-contractor basis; and what proportion of his total departmental budget was expended on research for each year.

Mr. Cope: The information is as follows:

Year	*Expenditure on R and D (£ million)*	*Percentage of Budget (per cent.)*
1979-80	11·0	0·442
1980-81	14·5	0·503
1981-82	9·7	0·302
1982-83	9·4	0·267
1983-84	14·3	0·380
1984-85	11·5	0·287
1985-86	13·8	0·326
1986-87	17·0	0·381
1987-88	16·8	0·351
[1]1988-89	19·4	0·359

[1] (Provisional).

With the exception of the science base, all Government R and D is now awarded on a customer-contractor basis. Disaggregation for the years 1983-84 onwards are published in the annual review of Government-funded R and D.

Rural Regeneration

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the composition of the interdepartmental committee on rural regeneration which commenced its work in January.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The interdepartmental committee on rural development is chaired by the permanent secretary of the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland. Its members are drawn from the six Northern Ireland Government Departments and from other statutory agencies with an interest in rural matters including the Industrial Development Board, the Local Enterprise Development Unit, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the Northern Ireland tourist board.

Primary Schools, Portadown

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the capital expenditure on developments over the last five years and projected expenditure on

approved developments at Bocombra primary school, Moyallon primary school, Seagoe primary school an Edenderry primary school, Portadown; and what is the expected expenditure from public funds involved in the proposed integrated school at Kernan, Portadown.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is as follows:

	Last five years £	*Projected* £
i. Bocombra Primary School	19,800	Nil
Moyallon Primary School	7,200	500,000
Seagoe Primary School	6,900	900
Edenderry Primary School	59,700	Nil

ii. Grants in respect of capital expenditure at the grant-maintained integrated school at Kernan in Portadown will not be payable until the school has demonstrated its viability

Security Statistics

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the security statistics for 1989 are now available together with details of persons charged with terrorist-type offences and convictions for scheduled offences for the year.

Mr. Cope: The statistics for 1989 are as follows (statistics for earlier years can be obtained from the Library):—

Statistics on Security (January—December 1989)
Part I—Statistics of terrorist activity

	Number
Shooting incident[2]	(160) 406
Explosions	224
Bombs neutralised	196
Weight of explosives in lbs[1]	12,114
Explosions neutralised in lbs[1]	13,662
Armed robberies	541
Amount stolen	£1,079,399
Malicious fires	307
Deaths:	
Civilian	39
Army/UDR	14
RUC/RUC'R'	9
Injuries:	
Civilian	606
Army/UDR	190
RUC/RUC'R'	163

[1] Estimated weight only.
[2] Figures in ( ) refers to shots heard only and are not included in the total.

Part II—Statistics of Security Forces' activity

Dwellings searched	*Army*	*RUC*
Occupied	726	—
Unoccupied	177	—
Derelict	207	—
Total	1,110	3,027

Note: Searches of dwellings frequently involve both the Army and RUC and are registered in their respective records. The totals therefore should not be aggregated and are shown separately to avoid an element of double counting.

Finds	
Weapons	327
Ammunition (rounds)	37,687
Explosives (lbs)	3,037

Persons charged with terrorist-type offences

	Numbers
Murder	31
Attempted murder	48
Firearms offences	130
Explosives offences	24
Theft act	41
Other	159
Total	433

Part III—Convictions and sentences for scheduled offences

Notes on the tables
1. The offence classifications are based on those used by the Crown Court in their annual return.
2. The tables relate to persons convicted at the Belfast Crown Court. This covers all scheduled offences tried on indictment.
3. Some jury trials are included in cases where the Attorney-General certified out of the scheduled mode of trial, ie non-terrorist serious offences.
4. Where a person has been convicted of more than one offence only the most serious or that which received the longest sentence is recorded in the statistics.

Convictions and sentences for scheduled offences

Offence	*Number convicted 1989*	*Sentence (January to December 1989)*								
		Non-custodial sentence	*Young offenders centre training schools*	*Less than 5 years*	*5 years and less than 7 years*	*7 years and less than 10 years*	*10 years and less than 15 years*	*15 years and less than 20 years*	*20 years and over*	*Life*
Murder	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11
Attempted murder	8	1	0	0	0	1	0	4	2	0
Conspiracy to murder	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Manslaughter	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wounding with intent to do grievous bodily harm	10	3	0	3	0	0	2	2	0	0
Causing grievous bodily harm	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Assault occasioning actual bodily harm	6	5	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Causing explosion	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Placing explosives	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Possessing explosives with intent	29	5	0	0	3	6	12	3	0	0

Offence	Number convicted 1989	Sentence (January to December 1989)								
		Non-custodial sentence	Young offenders centre training schools	Less than 5 years	5 years and less than 7 years	7 years and less than 10 years	10 years and less than 15 years	15 years and less than 20 years	20 years and over	Life
Other explosives offences	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Possessing a firearm with intent	51	15	3	11	5	6	11	0	0	0
Possessing a firearm	20	11	2	6	1	0	0	0	0	0
Carrying a firearm with intent	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other major firearms offences	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Minor firearms offences	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Robbery	130	43	11	39	22	13	2	0	0	0
Aggravated robbery	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Membership of an illegal organisation	5	2	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0
Attempted robbery	15	8	0	3	3	1	0	0	0	0
Soliciting support for proscribed organisation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unlawful collection of information	3	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Illegal training	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kidnapping and false imprisonment	6	0	0	1	3	1	0	1	0	0
Blackmail	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Contributing to resources of a proscribed organisation	4	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Burglary	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Aggravated burglary	7	2	1	1	1	2	0	0	0	0
Hijacking	23	17	4	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Attempted hijacking	6	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Arson	35	14	14	5	2	0	0	0	0	0
Possession of an offensive weapon	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Petrol bomb offences	13	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Escape offences	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Criminal damage	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Intimidation	4	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Assisting offenders	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Withholding information	9	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Possessing prohibited articles	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Conspiracy to arm terrorists	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Common law riot affray	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rape	3	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0
Handling	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Making property available	5	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	414	176	35	75	44	31	30	10	2	11

Female Prisoners

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many strip searches were made of female prisoners in Her Majesty's prison, Maghaberry, in each month since January; if he will give the number of persons involved and the number of times each person was searched; whether any prison contraband, smuggled item or illegal correspondence was discovered in any search, indicating which items; in how many cases prisoners refused to be searched and had to be restrained while the search was being conducted; and if he will indicate the reasons for the search, namely, making a remand appearance at court, attending trial, inter-prison visit or other reasons.

Mr. Cope: Details of the number of, and reasons for strip searches of female prisoners in Her Majesty's prison Maghaberry, from July 1989 to November 1989 were provided on 18 December 1989 (Vol. 164, No. 20, Col. 14-16). The statistics from December 1989 to May 1990 are as follows:

Number of searches	*December 1989*	*January 1990*	*February 1990*	*March 1990*	*April 1990*	*May 1990*
Total number of searches carried out	24	15	21	31	21	37
Total number of inmates searched	19	12	15	18	17	24
Number of prisoners searched once	14	9	9	8	15	13
Number of prisoners searched twice	5	3	6	9	1	10
Number of prisoners searched more than twice	Nil	Nil	Nil	1	1	1
First Admission on Remand/Awaiting Trial	9	5	2	4	6	8
First Admission on Sentence/Final Discharge	5	8	13	16	6	14
Attending Remand Court	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	1	2
Attending Trial	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Inter-Prison Visit	1	Nil	2	1	3	5
Pre-Release Home Leave	8	2	3	10	5	6
Compassionate Home Leave	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Visits to Outside Hospital	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Returning from Bail Application	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Attendance at Court for Bail	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Fines Paid	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Working Out Scheme	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Bail Granted	1	Nil	1	Nil	Nil	2

No prohibited article was found during these searches and no prisoner refused to be searched.

Offences

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons were proceeded against for scheduled offences in Northern Ireland in 1989; and how many persons pleaded guilty to the principal offence; and how many persons in such contested cases were found not guilty of the principal offence.

Mr. Cope: Four hundred and fifty-eight persons were proceeded against for scheduled offences, of whom 375 pleaded guilty. Of the remainder, 42 persons were subsequently found not guilty of the principal offence.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the cost of the Royal Ulster Constabulary in the financial years 1988-89 and 1989-90 giving separately figures for *(a)* salary and benefits, *(b)* transport and communication, *(c)* new construction, *(d)* other costs, *(e)* total gross expenditure and *(f)* total net expenditure after deduction of receipts.

Mr. Cope: The information requested is contained in the Police Authority for Northern Ireland annual statement of account, which is published and presented to the House each year. The cost of the Royal Ulster Constabulary in 1988-89 is as follows. The statement of account for 1989-90 has not yet been published; however, the estimated outturn is as follows:

	1988-89 £ million	[1]*1989-90 £ million*
Salaries and benefits	320·89	353·96
Transport and communication	14·74	16·75
New construction	19·68	22·30
Other costs	46·12	47·64
Total gross expenditure	401·43	440·65
Total net expenditure after deduction of receipts	383·50	420·85

[1]Estimated.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details of the manpower strength of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and its reserve as between full-time, part-time, male and female operatives as at 31 December 1989.

Mr. Cope: The information is as follows:

Strength of the RUC and RUC Reserve as at 31 December 1989

	Male	*Female*	*Total*
RUC	7,571	688	8,259
RUC Reserve (Full time)	2,980	38	3,018
RUC Reserve (Part time)	1,219	387	1,606

Security Staff Premium

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the amount of the security staff premium paid by the Government in each of the fiscal years since 1984-85.

Mr. Cope: The following amounts were paid under the security staff grant scheme:

Year	*Grant paid (£ thousand)*
1984-85	1,299
1985-86	1,100
1986-87	1,255
1987-88	153
1988-89	221
1989-90	245

The decrease from 1987-88 reflects a decision to limit payments to passenger ferry companies only.

Compensation Payments

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the amount of compensation payments made under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1973 in 1989.

Mr. Cope: No payments under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1973 have been made since 1978 because of the repeal of the compensation provisions of that Act by the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978.

Northern Ireland Subvention

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish the amount of the direct subvention by the British Exchequer to Northern Ireland in the financial year 1989-90 as well as amounts budgeted for in future periods.

Mr. Cope: The information requested is as follows:—

	Subvention Provisional Outturn (£ million)
1989-90	1,721

This figure excludes a payment of £265 million in connection with Shorts plc.

Figures are not available for future years.

Compensation Payments

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table giving the amounts in the fiscal years 1989-90 of payments made to *(a)* civilians under the Criminal Injuries Compensation (Northern Ireland) Order 1977 *(b)* members of the security forces under the Criminal Injuries Compensation (Northern Ireland) Order 1977 *(c)* compensation payments made under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978 *(d)* compensation payments under the Criminal Damage (Compensation) (Northern Ireland) Order 1977 and subsequent legislation.

Mr. Cope: The information is as follows:

	1989-90 £
Compensation payments to civilians under the Criminal Injuries (Compensation) (NI) Order 1977	[1]13,001,515
Compensation payments to members of the security forces under the Criminal Injuries (Compensation) (NI) Order 1977	[2]3,424,485
Compensation payments under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978	1,149,435
Compensation payments under the criminal damage (Compensation) (NI) Order 1977 and earlier legislation[3]	22,124,107

[1] Includes £1,594,353 paid under the Criminal Injuries (Compensation) (NI) Order 1988.
[2] Includes £1,087,647 paid under the Criminal Injuries (Compensation) (NI) Order 1988.
[3] The current criminal damage legislation is the Criminal Damage (Compensation) (NI) Order 1977.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much was invested in improving the energy efficiency of his Department in the latest available year.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* In 1989-90, £25,000 was spent on new energy efficiency measures in the Northern Ireland Government office estate.

It is not possible to disaggregate costs for the Northern Ireland Office in London.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will provide figures updating those contained in his answer to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) on 2 May, *Official Report*, columns *557-58*; and if he will expand upon the difference in administrative arrangements to which he refers.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 3 July 1990]:* Up to 1 June 1990, just over 6,700 unemployed claimants in Northern Ireland were interviewed specifically about their efforts to find work. As a result, 100 claims were referred to the adjudication officer, and of these 28 were allowed and 72 disallowed. In addition, a further 13 claims were referred to the adjudication officer on grounds of refusing employment and, of these, five were disallowed.

Whereas in Great Britain the Department of Employment is responsible for the payment of benefit to the unemployed, in Northern Ireland all social security benefits, including unemployment benefit, are paid by the Department of Health and Social Services. Employment matters are the responsibility of the Department of Economic Development.

Friendly Societies

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will publish the names of the directors of the Foyle Co-op in the *Official Report*;

(2) if he will publish the names of the directors of *(a)* the Derry Community Workshop and *(b)* the North West Centre for Learning and Development.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 3 July 1990]:* The information requested is held by the Registrar of Friendly Societies at 64 Chichester street, Belfast, and the registrar is required to make it available to the public, during office hours, on payment of a fee.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Parliamentary Questions

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy that replies to written parliamentary questions will continue to be published in full in the *Official Report* following the move towards agency status of parts of his Department.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's reply to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 6 June at col. *615*.

Pensioners' Christmas Bonus

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any plans to increase the Christmas bonus for pensioners in December.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We have no plans to do so.

Families (Benefits)

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate how many families with children in low-paid work have *(a)* gained, *(b)* lost and *(c)* experienced no change of income from the implementation of the Social Security Act 1986, including both the changes to family credit and housing benefit.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Illustrative information is set out in the publication "Impact of the reformed structure of Income Related Benefits" (October 1987), copies of which are available in the Library.

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportions of *(a)* lone parents and *(b)* couples with children are reliant on income support.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: It is estimated that income support contributes to the household incomes of around two in three lone parents and just under one in 10 families with dependants.[1]

[1] The term "dependants" has been used as not all dependants fall within the strict definition of children, i.e. that they are aged under 16.

Retirement Pension

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much retirement pension would be for *(a)* a single person and *(b)* a couple if it had been uprated by earnings or inflation, whichever was the higher, since 1980.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: At April 1990 the retirement pension would have been £58·65 for a single person and £94·05 for a couple, had the retirement pension been raised by the higher of the movement in earnings or prices since 1980.

It should be noted that any such cost would attract consequent increase in the national insurance contribution. It is estimated that the necessary increase in contribution rate to support the additional cost in 1990 would be 1·25 per cent. and 1·45 per cent. on the basic rate of employees' and employers' contributions respectively, increasing them to 10·25 per cent. and 11·9 per cent. respectively. This would have meant, for example, a contribution increase for an employee on average earnings of £3·18 per week, together with an additional contribution of £4·35 per week for his employer.

SCOTLAND

Flue Gas Desulphurisation

15. **Mr. Eadie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information his Department has on the progress of installation of flue gas desulphurisation equipment in Scotland, and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I understand there are no plans at present to install flue gas desulphurisation equipment in combustion plants in Scotland.

The level of emissions from power stations in Scotland is already very low in comparison with the major base-load coal-fired stations in England and Wales.

Youth Training

16. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the percentage change in both actual and real terms between the sum spent on the YTS in Orkney and Shetland in 1989-90 and the proposed sum to be spent on youth training in the two islands areas in 1990-91.

Mr. Lang: Reflecting changing need, funding of youth training in Orkney has been reduced by 15·5 per cent. in cash terms and 20·7 per cent. in real terms, and in Shetland by 23 per cent. in cash terms and 27·5 per cent. in real terms.

Acute Services, Lanarkshire

17. **Mr. Ingram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has received the acute services strategy submission from Lanarkshire health board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The board is preparing an approval in principle submission for its preferred option. I shall consider this carefully once it is submitted to me.

Labour Statistics

18. **Mr. Allan Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his latest estimate of the number of self-employed in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Self-employment in Scotland is at its highest ever recorded level. The number, estimated to be 242,000 in December 1989, has grown by more than 50 per cent. in the last decade. This is an excellent reflection of the spirit of enterprise in Scotland.

Roads, Borders Region

19. **Sir David Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will indicate a timetable for future road developments in the Borders region following his appointment of consultants.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The A68 Dalkeith bypass is being progressed as the most important immediate improvement to serve the Borders and it is hoped that this scheme will commence late next year. Consultants are also to be appointed to confirm that an environmentally acceptable dualling of the A7 in the longer term from Edinburgh to the Borders can be defined. In the short term, work will commence on the package of accident remedial measures on the A1, A7, A68 and A702 and on the programme of smaller improvement schemes on the A1 and A7 south of Hawick.

Steel Industry

20. **Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when was the last time he met the chief executive of the Scottish Council (Development and Industry) to discuss the steel industry.

Mr. Lang: I met the chief executive two days ago, when we discussed a number of matters, including the steel industry.

23. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he has made of the effect of the closure of Ravenscraig on the local economy.

Mr. Lang: British Steel has confirmed that its undertaking to continue steel-making at Ravenscraig until at least 1994 still stands. In the light, however, of its proposals for the hot strip mill my right hon. and learned Friend has asked his officials and the Scottish Development Agency to consider, on a contingency basis, what could be done to encourage new employment and investment in Lanarkshire in the event of closure of the hot strip mill.

46. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet the chairman of British Steel to discuss the future of the steel industry in Scotland.

Dr. Bray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his efforts to procure information from British Steel on its reasons for the closure of the Ravenscraig strip mill.

Mr. Lang: I refer the hon. Members to the reply my right hon. and learned Friend gave to the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) earlier today.

Local Government Finance

21. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his latest estimate of the total amount of poll tax unpaid in Scotland for 1989-90; and if he will express this as a percentage of the total amount of poll tax payable for that year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I understand that around 87 per cent. of budgeted revenue has been collected by local authorities to date.

57. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will make a statement about his consideration of proposed changes in the poll tax legislation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend and I and colleagues are looking at a number of aspects of the existing community charge arrangements. We have made it clear that we are prepared to make changes if they are required.

A1

22. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration he has given to the implications for road safety of the proposal that a new dual carriageway section of the A1 should end at the border.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: An A1 steering group has been formed to monitor traffic growth and to develop an appropriate programme of route improvements and accident remedial schemes between Newcastle and Edinburgh. Following the inaugural meeting of the group on 21 June, the Scottish Development Department and Department of Transport agreed to look at the possibility of further improvement to the existing road immediately north of the Marshall Meadows dualling scheme, for which a public inquiry is likely to be held later this year.

Eye Tests

24. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many national health service sight tests were conducted between *(a)* April 1988-89 and *(b)* April 1989-90.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The figures are 1,168,610 and 475,479 respectively.

36. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the total number of people taking sight tests in 1987, 1988, and 1989 and 1990 to date.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information about the total number of people taking sight tests in Scotland is not available centrally.

Housing Associations

25. **Mr. Michael J. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will next meet the chairman of Scottish Homes to discuss housing associations; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend and I meet Sir James Mellon, chairman of Scottish Homes, and his board members as required. No meeting is presently scheduled to discuss housing associations.

Road and Rail Services

26. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received in the current year about investment in road and rail infrastructure in the north-east of Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has received representations in 1990 from a number of organisations and individuals, including Members of Parliament, on the electrification of the east coast main line between Edinburgh and Aberdeen, capital allocations for local roads and transport, improvements to the A96, road links to the channel tunnel and road safety.

Self-governing Hospitals

27. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has had from consultants concerning self-governing hospitals.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Representations have been made on behalf of consultants on a number of aspects relating to self-governing hospitals. Four expressions of interest are currently being pursued.

54. **Mr. Buchan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the precise method and scope for consultation before a hospital can become self-governing.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Applications must be routed through health boards which, before conveying their views to the Secretary of State, are required to consult all interested parties, including potential customers, staff interests and local health councils.

Small Businesses

28. **Mr. McLeish:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of Britain's small businesses is located in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The statistical coverage of small businesses in Scotland is less comprehensive than that of the United Kingdom as a whole. Nevertheless, the Department of Employment has estimated that of the 1,574,000 United Kingdom businesses registered for VAT at the end of 1988, some 6·9 per cent. were in Scotland. The overwhelming majority of these will be relatively small businesses.

Disabled People

29. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the legal quota for the employment of registered disabled people in his Department; what is the current figure employed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: My Department, in common with other Government Departments, accepts the same responsibilities for employment of the disabled as other employers of 20 or more staff. We work to a target of 3 per cent. of total staff for the total of registered disabled people. Currently the Scottish Office and associated Departments employ 82 registered disabled staff—1·4 per cent. of the total work force.

Channel Tunnel (Rail Link)

30. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what studies his Department has commissioned into the effect on the Scottish economy of a fast link from the channel tunnel to London.

Mr. Lang: My Department has not commissioned any such studies. However, a study on the impact of the channel tunnel on the Scottish economy was commissioned by the Scottish Development Agency from Planning, Industrial and Economic Development Advisers and was completed in 1988.

Community Care

31. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with the chairmen of regional health boards in Scotland and with COSLA on proposals for community care.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I hold regular meetings with Scottish health board chairmen and my hon. Friend the Minister of State met COSLA on 15 May 1990 to discuss the Government's community care proposals.

50. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress he is making in implementing the Government's plans for the reform of community care.

Mr. Lang: Three consultation papers have already been issued, in regard to my right hon. and learned Friend's proposals, for the inspection of residential care homes, community care plans and the payment of a specific grant to local authorities with social work responsibilities for mental illness projects. Responses to these papers are currently under consideration with a view to the preparation of formal guidance for local authorities. There will be consultations on further matters including the assessment of community care needs, co-operation between housing authorities and local authorities and arrangements for purchase by local authorities of services from private and voluntary sector agencies.

58. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent discussions he has had with regional and island authorities regarding community care; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I have had two meetings on this subject with representatives of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities social work committee—one on 8 September and the other on 15 May 1990. Both these discussions were useful and constructive. The more recent one served in particular to confirm that local authorities share fully in the positive response to the proposals in the White Paper "Caring for People".

Crafts Industry

32. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he anticipates announcing his proposals for future support of the crafts industry in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: I expect to take decisions shortly.

European Regional Development Fund

33. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total value of grants that Scotland has received from the European regional development fund since its inception.

Mr. Lang: Awards totalled £869 million between 1975 and 1989.

Fishing Vessels (Decommissioning)

34. **Mr. Buchanan-Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals the Commission of the European Economic Community is making to revise the fishing vessels decommissioning scheme; if his Department is participating in discussions on this; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: The Commission has made a number of proposals for amending the existing fleet structure regulations (EEC No. 4028/86). The main proposals involve:

— extending to smaller fishing vessels the availability of Community financial aid for restructuring and renewal, modernisation and adjustment of capacity;
— greater incentives for exploratory fishing and joint ventures through higher grant assistance;
— the introduction of redeployment operations: the exploitation of non-Community fishery resources with a view to supplying the Community market;
— new rates of grant for decommissioning.

Under the proposals Community reimbursement for decommissioning would be increased to 70 per cent. of eligible expenditure where vessels are scrapped; and remain at 50 per cent. for withdrawal for purposes other than fishing or for permanent export to third countries. Levels of eligible expenditure would vary depending on age and tonnage of the vessel concerned.

All member states and their respective industries have been invited to comment on the proposals and the Government have submitted a number of points to the Commission. Given the level of overcapacity in the Community fleet generally, we have questioned the extension of grant aid to the construction of smaller fishing vessels, and have taken the view that the additional measures should be accommodated within the existing financial provisions for these activities. As far as the capacity of the United Kingdom fleet is concerned the Government remain of the view that a decommissioning grant scheme does not provide value for money and this view has been reinforced by the proposal to increase rates of grant.

Hospital Services, Forth Valley

35. **Mr. Harry Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has yet received from Forth Valley health board its proposals for the future of hospital services arising from option appraisal study.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No.

Nuclear Waste Dumps

37. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when was the last time he met the convenor of Highland regional council to discuss the siting of nuclear waste dumps.

38. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when was the last time he met the convenor of Highland regional council to discuss the siting of nuclear waste dumps.

44. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when was the last time he met the convenor of Highland regional council to discuss the siting of nuclear waste dumps.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has not met the convenor of Highland regional council to discuss this matter.

Unemployment Trends

39. **Sir Hector Monro:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last discussed unemployment trends with the Scottish Development Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I have had no recent discussions with the SDA about unemployment trends. However, my hon. Friend will welcome the continued fall in levels of unemployment in Scotland. In the year to May 1990, unemployment rates in both Scotland and the Dumfries travel-to-work area (TTWA) fell by around 16 per cent., faster than in the United Kingdom as a whole. The rate of unemployment is now down to 5 per cent. in the Dumfries TTWA. This is below both the Scottish and United Kingdom averages (unadjusted).

Child Abuse

40. **Sir Russell Johnston:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will institute an appeal mechanism in association with the administrative system of compiling the at risk register of children established by his Department in conjunction with the regional authorities and the health boards.

Mr. Lang: Child protection registers are an essential component in the arrangements for protecting children from abuse or from risk of abuse. A child's name is normally entered on the register when a multi-disciplinary case conference concludes after assessing all the available information that an inter-agency plan is required for the care and protection of the child. We see no need to introduce a formal right of appeal against the administrative decision to register a child. Parents have full statutory rights of appeal to the sheriff court, against any decision made subsequently by the children's hearing to impose compulsory measures of care for a child.

Law Reform

41. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to meet representatives of the Law Society of Scotland to discuss progress on the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has at present no plans to do so, although he always values the Law Society's contributions to debates on the issues covered in the Bill.

Police Staffing

42. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration is being given to increase the complement of new police officers available to the Lothian and Borders police force; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Lothian and Borders police board has submitted an application to the Scottish Home and Health Department for an increase of 50 police constables in the authorised police establishment, together with an increase of 20 in the civilian establishment. In accordance with the usual practice, this application is being considered in consultation with Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary. The Scottish Home and Health Department expects to be in a position to respond to the board in the near future.

Speech Therapy

43. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what further plans he has to develop the speech therapy service in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Quotas on the intake of students have been lifted, refresher courses are being organised and a new manpower planning steering group has been established.

Football Hooligans

45. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the incidence of football hooliganism at Scottish football grounds.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I am encouraged by a continuing decline in hooliganism at Scottish football grounds. Since the Government took powers under the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980 to ban alcohol at designated sporting events, there has been a 55 per cent. reduction in arrests at Scottish football grounds, despite a 70 per cent. increase in attendances over the same period. Scottish football supporters also continue to behave well abroad and I note that with approximately 20,000 Scottish supporters in Italy for the World Cup there were no incidents and no arrests involving Scottish supporters.

Multi-fibre Arrangement

47. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to meet representatives of the knitwear, lace-making and textile industries in Scotland to discuss the effects of the multi-fibre arrangement.

Mr. Lang: I met the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun, and representatives of the knitwear, lace-making and textile industries' interests.

Scottish Government

48. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to introduce any democratic reforms into the arrangements for governing Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Government have no plans for making any alterations in the arrangements

for the government of Scotland which, they believe, provide for Scotland to take its rightful place in the United Kingdom.

Fatal Accident Inquiries

51. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the number of fatal accident inquiries arising from road accidents within the Clydesdale constituency each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: These statistics are not centrally held and cannot be obtained except at disproportionate cost.

53. **Mr. Lambie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next hopes to meet the procurator fiscal in Kilmarnock to discuss the procedures for fatal accident inquiries.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate meets procurators fiscal from time to time. He has no immediate plans to meet the procurator fiscal at Kilmarnock.

Hospital Services, Lothian

55. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the future of hospital services in Lothian.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Lothian health board announced on 24 May proposals for the rationalisation of acute services which are currently subject to public consultation.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current waiting list length and average waiting time in Lothian region for *(a)* cervical screening, *(b)* breast screening, *(c)* cervical treatment, *(d)* breast treatment, *(e)* hip replacement surgery, *(f)* gynaecology operations, *(g)* plastic surgery, *(h)* geriatric assessment, *(i)* geriatric long-stay hospital accommodation and *(j)* psychogeriatric hospital accommodation.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The latest available information for Lothian health board is set out in the table:

	Waiting list at 30 September 1989	*Median wait (in days) at December 1988*
Cervical Screening	[1]	[1]
Breast Screening	[1]	[1]
Cervical Treatment	[1]	23
Breast Treatment	[1]	16
Hip Replacement Surgery	[1]	90
Gynaecology Operations	[1]	21
Plastic Surgery	1,008	70·5
Geriatric Assessment	48	3
Geriatric Longstay	160	[1]
Psychogeriatric	125	[1]

[1] Information not held centrally.

National Health Service

52. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet the chairmen of the area health boards to discuss the national health service in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I meet the chairmen regularly. The last meeting was on 29 June.

CBI

56. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the Confederation of British Industry in Scotland; and whether economic growth in Scotland was discussed.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend and I are in frequent touch with the Confederation of British Industry in Scotland on a range of matters concerning the Scottish economy. I am sure the CBI shares our satisfaction that economic growth in Scotland in 1988 was at its highest level for 15 years, and is expected to outpace growth in the United Kingdom economy in 1989 and 1990.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

USSR (EC Aid)

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on European Community economic aid to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Mr. Maude: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the House on 28 June on the Dublin European Council which addressed the question of EC aid to the Soviet Union.

Children's Rights

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has yet set a timetable for ratification of the United Nations convention on the rights of the child; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) on 9 May.

Eastern Europe

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to support the aspirations of some east European states to join the EEC; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: We were the first to advocate association agreements for the emerging democracies of central and eastern Europe seeking a bridge to the Community. This is now established EC policy and the Commission should soon begin discussions with Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

Vietnam

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on British policy towards Vietnam.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have normal diplomatic relations with the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. On 17 May, my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Overseas Development announced a package of humanitarian assistance for Vietnam. We now expect Vietnam to respect its obligations under international law and accept back all its citizens who are not refugees, which remains an obstacle to the development of our relations.

Antarctica

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the Australian Government on the future of Antarctica.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 13 June to the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells).

Soviet Union

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met his counterpart from the Soviet Union; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs last met Mr. Shevardnadze at the two-plus-four talks on 22 June, when they discussed that meeting and related security issues.

Political Co-operation

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet other EEC Ministers to discuss political co-operation.

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet other European Economic Community Ministers to discuss political co-operation.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs will be meeting our EC colleagues on 16 July in Brussels when there will be discussion of political co-operation matters.

Sri Lanka

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether his Department has made any representations to the Government of *(a)* Sri Lanka and *(b)* India concerning the recent escalation of violence in Sri Lanka; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The British High Commission in Colombo is in regular contact with the Sri Lankan Government, and we have also made contact with the Indian Government. We are deeply concerned by the renewed fighting in Sri Lanka and by the suffering and loss of life that this is causing. We are dismayed by the decision of the Tamil Tigers to break off negotiations with the Sri Lankan Government and to resume fighting.

Irish Terrorism

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what level of co-operation exists with the authorities in the Netherlands in the fight against Irish terrorism; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We are co-operating fully with the authorities in the Netherlands and will continue to do so.

Soviet Nuclear Testing

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has expressed any views to the Soviet authorities concerning the closure of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site and the concentration of Soviet nuclear testing at Novaya Zemlya.

Mr. Waldegrave: No.

Libya and Iraq (Component Sales)

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has been in contact with his EEC counterparts in regard to the halting of sales of components that could aid Libya and Iraq in their respective programmes to produce nuclear weapons.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. However, these issues are regularly discussed in the framework of European political co-operation in the working group on non-proliferation.

Belize

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with a view to facilitating the long-term security of Belize without necessarily a United Kingdom military presence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The United Kingdom is an additional participant in the Belize-Guatemala joint commission and has supported the efforts being made to reach a negotiated settlement between Belize and Guatemala. Such a settlement would contribute significantly to the long-term security of Belize.

World Cup (Deportations)

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many representations his Department has received on the subject of deportations from Italy for alleged hooliganism at the World Cup tournament; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Sixty of those persons removed from Italy have so far approached the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for assistance in recovering their personal possessions from Italy.

In addition, I received a call on 2 July from the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell).

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he proposes to take to recover the belongings of innocent British citizens deported from Italy for alleged hooliganism at the World Cup tournament.

Mr. Sainsbury: British consular officials are helping the Italian authorities to identify and locate the personal possessions left in Italy by British nationals who were removed following recent disturbances at Rimini. To assist in this exercise, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has written to all those who gave proper addresses to the Italian police.

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations his Department has made to the Italian authorities over the deportation of innocent British citizens from Italy for alleged hooliganism at the World Cup tournament.

Mr. Sainsbury: None. We have not received any evidence about the circumstances of the removal of the British citizens from Italy which would justify representations.

Specialist Advisers

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether external specialist advisers to his Department or the Overseas Development Administration are required to declare their pecuniary interests before appointment.

Mr. Sainsbury: Special advisers, as employees of the Crown, are asked to declare their pecuniary interests before appointment.

Lockerbie Air Disaster

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 14 June, *Official Report*, column *399*, whether he has asked the Government of Syria to help in connection with the investigation of the Lockerbie air disaster.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. We would expect Governments to volunteer information in their possession of relevance to the international investigation.

Somalia

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he is having with those local authorities which are giving help to refugees from Somalia now living in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have been asked to reply. The Home Office is, together with other relevant departments, considering the present arrangements for asylum seekers, including those from Somalia, to see whether any changes are necessary. Local authority associations will be involved as appropriate in future, but no discussions are taking place with them at the present time.

EMPLOYMENT

Advisory Committee on Toxic Substances

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment for each of the dates since 1982 on which the Advisory Committee on Toxic Substances met, which members of the committee representing which organisations were present, and what main items of business were discussed.

Mr. Nicholls: I have placed details of the information requested in the Library.

Employment Service

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) whether his Department's report into the attractiveness of employment credit schemes for the long-term unemployed is to be published; and if he will make a statement on its findings;

(2) if he will list the number of unemployed claimants whose unemployment benefit or income support has been suspended arising from doubts about their availability for work in the six months prior to the enactment of the Social Security Act 1989 and, in the subsequent six months, the numbers of suspensions, and the proportion of suspensions upheld by subsequent adjudication, arising from doubts about whether the claimant is actively seeking work for *(a)* Great Britain, *(b)* the south-west region and *(c)* Avon.

Mr. Eggar: The Employment Service became an executive agency on 2 April 1990. Mr. Mike Fogden, the Employment Service chief executive, will be replying in writing to the hon. Lady.

Tourism

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to seek to amend the Development of Tourism Act 1969, to enable the Wales tourist board to promote itself overseas; and if he will make a statemer.

Mr. Nicholls: There are no such plans.

Health and Safety

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Stretford, 24 April, *Official Report*, columns *170-1*, if he will list *(a)* the number of trainees as part of the total number of inspectors within the Health and Safety Executive and *(b)* as a proportion of all inspectors for 1974-1989, inclusive.

Mr. Nicholls: The table shows *(a)* total inspectors within HSE and *(b)* trainee inspectors included in the total, for each year since 1977. For earlier years, figures for trainees could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Only two grades of staff in the Health and Safety Executive are designated as training grades: factory inspectors class II (for their first two years) and assistant agricultural inspectors (first three years). There are no trainee grades for mines, quarries, nuclear or specialist inspectors, who are recruited for their specialist knowledge and whose initial training varies according to their needs. Accordingly it would not be meaningful to express trainees as a proportion of total inspectors.

	(a) Total inspectors within HSE[2]	*(b) Of which trainee inspectors*[3]
[4]1977	1349·5	213
1978	1392·5	179
1979	1388·5	114
1980	1441·5	140
1981	1405·5	101
1982	1331·5	29
1983	1281·0	—
1984	1247·0	—
1985	1237·0	45
1986	1231·5	91
[1]1987	1241·0	117
1988	1170·5	102
1989	1188·0	99

[1] The Industrial Air Pollution Inspectorate transferred to the Department of the Environment on 1 April 1987.

[2] The total number of HSE inspectors includes those working outside inspectorates eg contributing to policy, standards work etc.

[3] The figure for 1977 includes trainee factory inspectors at 1 April. The figure for 1987 includes trainee factory inspectors at 31 March.

[4] 1 March.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment for each of the years 1974 to 1989 inclusive if he will give *(a)* the number of prosecutions passed on from the Health and Safety Executive to the Crown prosecution service and *(b)* the results of these prosecutions.

Mr. Nicholls: Records are not kept of Health and Safety Executive (HSE) prosecutions passed to the Crown prosecution service for its consideration. Most health and safety prosecutions are undertaken by HSE inspectors.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* female and *(b)* male employees were covered by the Control of Lead at Work Regulations 1980; and what was the number of *(a)* and *(b)* suspended because of high blood lead levels for each year 1980 to 1989.

Mr. Nicholls: There is no requirement for employers to notify the number of persons in their employ covered by the Control of Lead at Work Regulations. However, the number of workers under medical surveillance under the regulations from 1982 onwards are available and are given in the table. Additionally, the table gives details of the number of persons suspended under the regulations from 1982.

Year	*Workers under medical surveillance*		*Suspension from work with lead*	
	Male	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
1982	20,948	1,269	258	33
1983	22,121	1,333	198	20
1984	22,771	1,651	254	62
1985	23,382	1,550	183	37
1986[1]	23,002	1,543	351	57
1987-88[2]	22,132	1,423	388	33
1988-89[2]	23,246	1,313	340	12

[1] In 1986 there was a reduction in the maximum blood lead levels for suspension for work with lead.
[2] Year commencing 1 April.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of *(a)* industrial deaths, *(b)* HSE prosecutions, *(c)* the fines for these deaths and *(d)* the verdicts at an inquest for each of the years 1974 to 1989, inclusive.

Mr. Nicholls: The number of industrial deaths for the years 1975 to 1988-89 is shown in the table. The other information requested is not readily available and can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Fatal injuries arising from work activity reported[1] to HSC/E enforcing authorities—Great Britain

Year	*Number of fatal injuries*		
	Employees	*Self employed*	*Non-employed*
1974	651	..	..
1975	620	..	..
1976	584	..	..
1977	524	..	..
1978	[2]622	..	..
1979	[2]615	..	..
1980	[2]579	..	..
1981	441	54	71
1982	472	48	83
1983	448	65	85
1984	438	60	105
1985	400	71	159
1986-87[3]	355	52	92
1987-88[3]	360	84	113
1988-89p[3]	[4]521	79	110

.. = not available.
p = provisional.
[1] Fatal injuries reported to enforcing authorities under various legislation eg the Factories Act 1961, Offices, Shops and Railway Premises Act 1963 for the years 1974 to 1980; under the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulation, 1980 (NADOR) for the years 1981 to 1985 and under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulation, 1985 (RIDDOR) for subsequent years.
[2] Includes a number of injuries to non-employees not covered by existing legislation but which were voluntarily reported to enforcing authorities.
[3] Year commencing 1 April.
[4] Includes the 167 fatal injuries arising from the Piper Alpha disaster.

Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate of expenditure on the sponsored placement scheme in each of the next five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: On Friday last, 29 June, the consultative document "Employment and Training for People with Disabilities" was published which contains proposals for a rebalancing of the sheltered employment programme, in favour of sheltered placements, over a transitional period of five years. There is to be a six-month period to allow interested parties to comment and at present I am therefore unable to estimate future expenditure on this aspect of the programme.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment on the latest available figures what was the number of registered unemployed aged *(a)* 16 years, *(b)* 17 years and *(c)* 18 years.

Mr. Nicholls: Unemployment by age is produced quarterly. The table shows in April 1990 the number of unemployed people in the United Kingdom aged 16, 17 and 18 years respectively:

Age	*April 1990 Total*
16	314
17	1,189
18	56,771

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many children have *(a)* one parent and *(b)* both parents who are unemployed.

Mr. Nicholls: The labour force survey cannot provide the information in the form requested. However, the LFS can provide data that show the number of families in which one or both parents are unemployed (using the ILO definition of unemployment).

In Great Britain in spring 1989, there were 6,532,000 families with one or more dependent children. Of these, 648,000 have one parent unemployed and 32,000 have both parents unemployed.

Skill Centres

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give details of the negotiations with the Lakin consortium for the purchase of four skill centres, listing significant dates.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The Lakin consortium's original bid for part of the STA was unsuccessful. However, the consortium contacted Deloittes on 14 February to register that it was interested in purchasing some of the skill centres which remained unsold following the announcement of the sale on 13 February. Negotiations then took place and the consortium's offer for the purchase of Cumbria, East Lancashire, Ipswich and St. Helens skill centres was accepted on 28 February.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the expenditure, income and surplus or deficit forecasts from the skill centre sold to *(a)* Astra Training Services Ltd., *(b)* Training Business Group Ltd., *(c)* METEL and *(d)* the Lakin consortium.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The income, expenditure and operational deficit for skill centres grouped by purchaser for the year 1989-90 were:

	Income £,000	*Expenditure* £,000	*Deficit* £,000
a. Astra Training	33,013	46,894	13,881
b. The Training Business	404	1,036	632
c. METEL	548	786	238
d. The Larkin Consortium	1,149	2,108	959

The expenditure figures relate to skill centres only and take no account of the contribution which skill centres were normally expected to make towards the cost of STA's head office and regional offices. They therefore understate the true deficit.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the sale price of Liverpool skill centre and the asset value of the site.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* No sale price was fixed in advance for this or other centres. Bids were invited for the training business and associated assets, and the ones that best met the Government's objectives for the sale were accepted. In the case of Liverpool this involved a payment to the Government of £65,000.

However, I am assured that the asset value given by the Government's advisers compares favourably with the value ascribed to it by the successful purchaser and was taken fully into account in arriving at the final consideration.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether the directors of Training Business Group Ltd. and purchasers had any previous experience of providing training prior to their bid for the Lambeth skill centre; what were the names of the predecessor companies to Business Training Group Ltd; and whether the accounts of these companies have been examined at Companies House.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The Training Business Group had experience of providing training prior to its bid for Lambeth skill centre.

My Department's advisers, Deloittes, investigated the standing of all purchasers including the Training Business. I have no knowledge of any predecessor companies.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what assessment was made of the potential purchasers of the skill centres before the recent privatisation;

(2) what assessment was made of the potential purchasers of the skill centres, with regard to *(a)* previous experience of training, *(b)* financial viability and *(c)* involvement with other companies.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* In assessing the final offers for Skills Training Agency training businesses, the Department's professional advisers, Deloittes, undertook an analysis of the individual bidders' background, viability, their business plans and their compatibility with the Government's objectives for the sale. This analysis formed part of Deloittes' final recommendation to the Secretary of State.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether companies or individuals who had unsuccessfully bid for any or all of the skill centres were contacted about the further sales of four skill centres which were subsequently transferred to the Lakin consortium.

Mr. Eggar: *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* Apart from the Lakin consortium, three companies which had put in final offers made inquiries about some of the four skill centres eventually sold to Lakin, but did not pursue this interest or put in a bid.

It was not judged necessary to approach bidders who had sought to purchase a large network of skill centres as during earlier negotiations it was apparent that they were interested only in purchasing large networks.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if any of the bidders for any of the skill centres was asked to resubmit bids after the final bids were received by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The final bids received by my Department were subject to some modifications during the negotiations.

After the announcement of the main sales on 13 February 1990, negotiations took place between my Department's advisers and some companies that had made unsuccessful bids, but that subsequently expressed interest in unsold centres.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total amount of employment training expenditure to the Skills Training Agency skill centres in 1988-89, the outturn expenditure for 1989-90 and the estimated expenditure for 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* When employment training was first introduced in September 1988 contracts for the provision of training were awarded by the Training Agency on the basis of free competition. Contracts won by Skills Training Agency skill centres resulted in expenditure in 1988-89 and 1989-90 by the Training Agency of £8·6 million and £16·8 million respectively. Contracts extant at the time of the sale were transferred to the purchasers of STA skill centres or

renegotiated, at which time they moved out of the public sector domain. Payments on contracts in 1990-91 for employment training still held by skill centres up to the date of sale and those not included in the sale to the private sector are expected to amount to £3·2 million. Unsold skill centres are to be wound up once their contract liabilities have been discharged; no expenditure is expected beyond the autumn of 1990.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if there were any positive cash amounts bid for any of the four skill centres subsequently transferred to the Lakin consortium.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* At the final offer stage a positive bid was received for one of the skill centres (East Lancashire skill centre) which were eventually purchased by the consortium headed by Mr. Lakin. This bid formed part of a network offer which was unsuccessful, and the potential purchasers were not prepared to buy the single skill centre alone. No other positive offers were received at the final offer stage of the sale.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list *(a)* meetings held with potential bidders for the skill centres and *(b)* the dates on which letters were sent to prospective bidders, about the privatisation of the skill centres, in the period 19 February 1988 to November 1990.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* I regret that the full information asked for can be obtained only at disproportionate cost, and some, including details of negotiations, must be regarded as commercially confidential. However, letters were sent to all bidders between 2 October 1989 and 27 October 1989, and also on 17 November 1989, 21 November 1989, 6 December 1989, 11 December 1989, 19 December 1989, 20 December 1989, 22 December 1989, 4 January 1990, 5 January 1990, 11 January 1990, 22 January 1990, 12 February 1990 and 13 February 1990.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the dates on which the bids from *(a)* Astra Training Services Ltd., *(b)* METEL, *(c)* Training Business Group Ltd. and *(d)* the Lakin consortium for the purchase of skill centres were accepted.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The offers from the successful bidders for STA training businesses were accepted on the following: Astra Training Services Ltd.—12 February; Merseyside Education Training Enterprise Ltd.—12 February; Training Business—2 March; the Lakin consortium—28 February.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment who were listed as shareholders of Astra Training Services Ltd. in its bid for the purchase of skill centres.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* Astra Training Services Ltd. set up a company prior to the indicative offer stage of the sale. It was formed solely as a vehicle to enable the management buy-out team to launch a bid and was called Vetin Ltd. The shareholders were listed as:

Stuart Bishell
Trevor Kent
Phillip Wells

The name of this company was later change to Astra Training Services Ltd.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations have been received from Edinburgh chamber of commerce concerning the Edinburgh skill centre; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* I have received one letter about the STA privatisation from the Edinburgh chamber of commerce and manufacturers.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the operating deficits of each of the skill training centres for each of the standard regions of Wales and Scotland.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* Provisional unaudited figures for 1989-90 indicate that the following operational deficits were incurred by skill centres in Wales and Scotland:

	£'000
Wales	
Cardiff	310
Gwent	302
West Glamorgan	65
Wrexham	323
Scotland	
Bellshill	329
Dundee	219
Dunfermline	344
Edinburgh	659
Hillington	611
Irvine	151

The figures relate to skill centres only and take no account of the contribution which skill centres were normally expected to make towards the cost of STA's head office and regional offices. The true deficit is therefore understated.

Skills Training Agency

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the total number of employees in the Skills Training Agency; *(a)* immediately prior to privatisation, *(b)* the number of redundancies announced since and *(c)* the current level of employment for the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* There were 2,363 staff employed in the Skills Training Agency immediately prior to privatisation. There are now 135 staff employed in the unsold units and the redundancies of 40 of these have been announced. A further 70 staff have been invited to apply for voluntary redundancy.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he will publish the 1989-90 accounts for the Skills Training Agency.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The STA trading account 1988-89 stated at note 18:

"Separate STA Trading Accounts will no longer be produced. Accounts for STA activities from 1989-90 onwards, to the date of transfer or disposal, will be included in the Training Agency White Paper Accounts."

This decision was taken with the agreement of the Treasury and National Audit Office.

The White Paper account 1989-90 for the Training Agency will be published by my Department before the end of 1990.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the £8·6 million described as an extraordinary item of expenditure in the 1988-89 accounts of the Skills Training Agency; and what this item of expenditure has been used for.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The extraordinary item of £8·6 million in the 1988-89 trading accounts of the Skills Training Agency represented the estimated cost involved in operating a voluntary early retirement scheme as a means of reducing STA staff numbers to a level compatible with the then anticipated future business activities. This is described in note 11 of the accounts.

In accordance with statements of standard accounting practice 2 and 17, and following normal commercial accounting conventions, STA management made provision for future early retirement and associated payments based on the best information then available. The £8·6 million represented the estimated cost of payments to be made in 1989-90 and in subsequent years.

Payments of £4·088 million were actually made in 1989-90. The balance will be expended as payments in lieu of pension until those in receipt reach the age of 60, when they will receive their civil service pension.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if the new guidelines prepared for the clawback of development gain as part of the privatisation of the Skills Training Agency were discussed with the National Audit Office.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The clawback arrangements on any development gain were not discussed with the National Audit Office as the responsibility for policy in this area does not lie with it. However, full account was taken of the NAO's views on clawback, as stated for example in the report by the Comptroller and Auditor General: "Ministry of Defence; Further Examination of the Sale of Royal Ordnance plc" (June 1989).

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will outline the role of Mr. Bishell, Mr. Kent and Mr. Wells in the Skills Training Agency between April 1989 and 19 February 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* Mr. Bishell was head of skill centre operations, Mr. Kent head of financial services and Mr. Wells head of product development. Throughout the period April 1989 to 19 February 1990 they continued in these posts, but because of their declared interest in bidding for the business, special arrangements were made from the start of April 1989 to ensure that they were not allowed to authorise expenditure, or instruct others to incur expenditure, on behalf of the agency, or to take decisions affecting personnel. In addition, every care was taken to ensure that they were insulated from any knowledge of the STA privatisation which was not available to other prospective purchasers.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total value of the building assets of the Skills Training Agency obtained in the period between the final accounts for 1988-89 and the preparation of the privatisation prospectus by Deloitte, Haskins and Sells.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The Skills Training Agency obtained no building assets in the period between the final accounts for 1988-89 and the preparation of the privatisation prospectus by Deloittes.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what approval was given in relation to the disposal of assets to bodies other than Government Departments at less than full market value in respect of the sale of the Skills Training Agency.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* In accordance with the Government's objectives for the sale, all parts of the Skills Training Agency were offered for sale by competitive tender as training businesses on a going-concern basis. Their assets were integral parts of those businesses. The bids received reflected the current market value of the businesses as a whole.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total expenditure involved in the privatisation of the Skills Training Agency for the most recent dates available.

Mr. Tim Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* Total expenditure directly attributable to the privatisation of the Skills Training Agency brought to account up to 31 May 1990 is £1·444 million. This figure covers fees paid to advisers and the departmental staff costs incurred up to that date.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total value of the equipment of the Skills Training Agency obtained in the period between the final accounts for 1988-89 and the preparation of the privatisation prospectus by Deloitte, Haskins and Sells.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The STA privatisation prospectus was prepared in September 1989. The total value of capital equipment obtained by the Skills Training Agency between 1 April 1989 and that date was £104,000.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if the clawback procedure covering development gain is written into the contract agreements with METEL, Astra Training Scheme Ltd., the Training Business Group Ltd. and the Lakin consortium for purchase of the Skills Training Agency.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* Clawback has been applied to all the freehold and long leasehold properties acquired by Astra Training Services Ltd. and is covered by contract. Clawback does not apply to METEL's purchase of Liverpool skill centre nor the Lakin consortium's purchase of Cumbria skill centre. The Government received professional advice that in each of these cases there was little or no potential for development gain so that clawback was inappropriate. The remaining Lakin acquisitions and the Training Business Group purchase of Lambeth skill centre involved short to medium-term leases and clawback was therefore inappropriate.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement as to the

expenditure of £8·6 million included as an extraordinary item in the 1988-89 accounts of the Skills Training Agency; how many early retirements were to be covered by this expenditure; and how much had been spent by 31 March 1989.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The extraordinary item of £8·6 million included in the STA accounts for 1988-89 was intended, in accordance with normal accounting practice, to make provision for anticipated early retirement costs as a result of a reduction in staff numbers to a level compatible with levels of business.

Out of the forecast surplus staff of 571, it was estimated that a reduction of 270 would be achieved by early retirement. No expenditure on these early retirements was incurred before 31 March 1989.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the total appropriations in aid, broken down by *(a)* fees from employers, *(b)* receipts from Government and *(c)* income from others for the Skills Training Agency for each of the years 1984-85 to 1988-89, including provision and outturn; and what is the estimated total appropriation in aid for 1989-90.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* I regret that information in the form requested can be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, I can give the following:

Income

Total STA income appearing in the trading account for years 1984-85 to 1988-89 and internal management accounts for 1989-90 is as follows:

£ million

	1984-85	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
Fees from employers[1]	4·6	5·6	8·3	11·1	16·5	20·2
Adult training from Government[2]	71·3	63·1	65·4	60·1	38·4	17·7
YTS[3]	3·8	1·6	1·5	1·4	1·4	1·4
Income from others[4]	2·0	2·1	2·8	3·4	3·7	1·9

[1] Covers fees from employers, ET placement providers, CITB and overseas customers.
[2] Covers adult training contracted by Training Agency. The figure for 1988-89 includes residual job training scheme for the whole year and employment training from September 1988.
[3] Covers YTS income from other managing agents and work placement providers in addition to the fees from Training Agency.
[4] Covers sublet of property, sale of non-capital items and non-training income from Training Agency.

The figures for 1989-90 are provisional and subject to audit.

Provision was shown in the published estimates for each year from 1984-85 to 1989-90 as follows:

£ million

	1984-85	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
Fees from employers[1]	4·1	7·7	11·5	12·0	8·7	11·8
Receipts from Government[2]	97·2	73·9	65·9	64·9	30·3	29·8
Income from others[3]	1·5	0·7	2·2	2·3	1·7	2·1

[1] Covers fees from employers and overseas customers, and youth training scheme receipts from employers and other managing agents but does not include employment training receipts from other training managers and placement providers.
[2] Covers adult training and youth training contracted by Training Agency, also employment training receipts from other managing agents and placement providers.
[3] Covers receipts from sublet of property, sale of non-capital items and non-training income from Training Agency.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total amount of income received from the sale of the Skills Training Agency for the most recent date for which information is available.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The most recent date of information is 31 May 1990, at which point the total income received amounted to £65,000. While the sale of the STA as training business is complete, there are property interests which are about to be marketed for sale.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total value of the land assets of the Skills Training Agency obtained in the period between the final accounts for 1988-89 and the preparation of the prospectus by Deloitte, Haskins and Sells.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The STA privatisation prospectus was prepared by Deloittes in September 1989. The only land asset obtained for the Skills Training Agency between 1 April 1989 and that date was the freehold interest in a leasehold site, at a cost of £297,000. The purchase of the freehold interest enabled the Department to avoid large expenditure on dilapidations on surrender of the lease.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on objective (III) contained in his Department's press notice dated 13 February entitled "Management Buyout of Skills Training Agency".

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The key objectives for the sale of the Skills Training Agency (STA) training businesses were that as much as possible of STA's training business should transfer to the private sector, and that the training businesses sold should have good prospects of viability. Objective (III) was to maximise the net proceeds of the sale, consistent with these objectives. I am satisfied that this has been achieved. The disposal of the remaining property of the STA will help bring a positive return for the sale as a whole.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate the total expenditure on the privatisation of the Skills Training Agency, inclusive of transfer of assets, financial assistance, administration costs and any other transfers of expenditure within the Department of Employment group budget.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* It is not possible to estimate the total expenditure on the privatisation of the Skills Training Agency as the process is not yet complete; the Government's remaining property interests, for example, have yet to be sold. However, the total expenditure to date is approximately £14·94 million. This includes the payments to Astra Training Services Ltd., the Lakin consortium and the Training Business Group; advisers' fees; help with unsuccessful management buy-out costs and staffing costs.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much was transferred from the employment training sub-head to cover the increase in expenditure and the reduction in income in the Skills Training Agency sub-head in the supply estimates between March 1989 and February 1990.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The spring supplementary estimates of the supply estimates class VII vote 1 published on 13 February 1990, introduction paragraph 3 (iii) stated:

"Transfer of provision from Section B1 (Employment Training) of £19,183,000 to Section G (Skills Training Agency) to cover excess expenditure on running costs and £19,227,000 to cover reduced income."

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total of *(a)* running costs, *(b)* capital expenditure and *(c)* expenditure on purchases of equipment, repairs etc. for the Skills Training Agency in each of the years 1984-85 to 1988-89, including both provision and outturn; and what is the estimated provision for 1989-90.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The totals of *(a)* running costs, *(b)* capital expenditure, *(c)* expenditure on purchases of equipment, repairs etc. for the Skills Training Agency in each of the years 1984-85 to 1988-89 and the expected outturn for 1989-90 are as follow:

	a £,000	*b* £,000	*c* £,000
1984-85	64,077	6,011	12,593
1985-86	61,655	8,363	10,781
1986-87	56,155	4,602	10-044
1987-88	57,173	3,247	9,283
1988-89	60,723	1,244	6,536
1989-90	49,161	909	6,586

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has received any representations from potential bidders and unsuccessful bidders about the process involved in the privatisation of the Skills Training Agency.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* Ministers received correspondence from a small number of potential bidders and unsuccessful bidders about the sale process involved in moving the Skills Training Agency to the private sector.

Technical and Vocational Education Initiative

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list, by local education authority, the amount of money made available or planned for the technical and vocational education initiative in 1989-90, 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Eggar *[pursuant to his reply, 18 June 1990, c. 464]:* I regret that the information given in my reply of 18 June 1990 was incomplete. The correct information is as follows.

Following is a table showing by local education authority the budgets available or planned for technical and vocational education initiative extension in 1989-90 and 1990-91.

The additional information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Extension budgets 1989-90

London

	£
Barking	233,433
Barnet	37,791
Bexley	223,125
Bromley	499,979
Croydon	675,951
Ealing	607,368
Enfield	826,948
Harrow	78,173
Havering	712,951
Kingston	56,285
Richmond	171,174
Total	4,123,283

South East

	£
Berkshire	1,888,050
Buckinghamshire	1,556,313
Essex	3,963,826
Hampshire	4,089,115
Hertfordshire	2,915,486
Isle of Wight	273,423
Kent	3,549,967
Oxfordshire	1,235,000
Surrey	1,463,191
East Sussex	1,817,018
West Sussex	1,511,363
Total	24,262,752

South West

	£
Cornwall	1,310,463
Devon	1,145,950
Gloucestershire	1,298,761
Somerset	1,192,075
Wiltshire	1,296,233
Total	6,243,482

East Midlands

	£
Bedfordshire	1,648,399
Cambridgeshire	1,114,039
Derbyshire	1,017,900
Leicestershire	2,994,284
Norfolk	1,818,302
Northamptonshire	1,677,071
Nottinghamshire	175,382
Suffolk	1,143,000
Total	11,588,377

West Midlands

	£
Birmingham	2,551,091
Coventry	1,018,000
Dudley	945,878
Hereford	2,293,950
Sandwell	754,630
Shropshire	851,000
Solihull	629,350
Staffordshire	4,475,150
Walsall	286,500
Warwickshire	1,586,291
Total	15,361,840

North West

	£
Bolton	755,425
Bury	479,751
Cheshire	1,289,000
Cumbria	789,146
Manchester	841,964
Rochdale	475,000
Salford	515,500
Stockport	825,125
Tameside	399,991
Wigan	635,700
Wirral	822,910
Total	7,829,512

Yorkshire and Humberside

	£
Bradford	1,990,934
Calderdale	510,000
North Yorkshire	1,845,205
Sheffield	271,030
Wakefield	541,400
Doncaster	91,680
Humberside	175,000
Total	5,425,249

Northern

	£
Cleveland	1,213,434
Durham	1,725,826
Gateshead	285,908
Newcastle	652,571
North Tyneside	504,592
Northumberland	1,106,328
South Tyneside	411,289
Sunderland	1,112,234
Total	7,012,182

Wales

	£
Clwyd	1,021,139
Dyfed	392,557
Mid Glamorgan	1,558,613
South Glamorgan	442,653
West Glamorgan	452,940
Gwent	712,013
Gwynedd	931,219
Powys	265,039
Total	5,776,193

Scotland

	£
Ayr	104,289
Borders	206,025
Central	9,500
Dumbarton	70,800
Dumfries	420,250
Fife	899,376
Glasgow	1,487,372
Lothian	2,883,473
Renfrew	1,188,631
Tayside	82,882
Total	7,352,598

Great Britain

	£
Great Britain total	94,975,448

Extension Budgets 1990-91
London

	£
Barking	366,973
Barnet	232,000
Bexley	341,685
Bromley	683,274
Croydon	732,384
Ealing	750,794
Enfield	826,620
Harrow	216,000
Havering	791,663
Hillingdon	230,000
Kingston	215,026
Merton	97,000
Newham	224,000
Redbridge	165,000
Richmond	298,905
Sutton	[1]—
Total	6,171,324

[1] Development funding 1990-91 only £150,000.

South East

	£
Berkshire	1,908,986
Buckinghamshire	1,892,778
Essex	4,992,371
Hampshire	4,274,138
Hertfordshire	2,724,450
Isle of Wight	323,289
Kent	4,712,424
Oxfordshire	1,340,700
Surrey	2,234,785
East Sussex	1,524,984
West Sussex	1,772,089
Total	27,700,994

South West

	£
Avon	910,000
Cornwall	1,343,225
Devon	2,458,501
Dorset	325,000
Gloucester	1,395,945
Somerset	1,392,574
Wiltshire	1,647,498
Total	9,472,745

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East Midlands/Eastern

	£
Bedfordshire	1,449,300
Cambridgeshire	1,946,225
Derbyshire	1,738,300
Leicestershire	2,853,760
Lincolnshire	433,000
Norfolk	2,123,000
Northamptonshire	1,715,939
Nottinghamshire	418,000
Suffolk	1,932,125
Total	14,609,649

West Midlands

	£
Birmingham	4,023,579
Coventry	917,195
Dudley	942,583
Herefordshire	2,293,861
Sandwell	955,280
Shropshire	1,554,925
Solihull	694,027
Staffordshire	4,800,305
Walsall	821,996
Warwickshire	1,653,847
Total	18,657,598

North West

	£
Bolton	829,225
Bury	544,681
Cheshire	2,361,600
Cumbria	1,176,979
Knowsley	182,713
Lancashire	870,000
Manchester	1,317,125
Rochdale	634,574
St. Helens	238,000
Salford	773,898
Stockport	823,910
Tameside	655,645
Wigan	901,693
Wirral	867,740
Total	12,177,783

Yorkshire and Humberside

	£
Barnsley	690,331
Bradford	1,614,797
Calderdale	522,750
Doncaster	424,000
Humberside	555,000
North Yorkshire	2,024,144
Rotherham	261,000
Sheffield	830,409
Wakefield	864,280
Total	7,786,711

Northern

	£
Cleveland	1,566,763
Durham	1,965,268
Gateshead	367,550
Newcastle	670,960
Northumberland	1,074,928
North Tyneside	483,999
South Tyneside	476,309
Sunderland	982,346
Total	7,588,123

Wales

	£
Clwyd	1,266,023
Dyfed	1,026,726
Mid Glamorgan	1,829,441
South Glamorgan	1,067,911
West Glamorgan	1,263,292
Gwent	1,442,924
Gwynedd	843,856
Powys	1,266,023
Total	10,006,196

Scotland

	£
Ayr	197,000
Borders	316,238
Central	245,000
Dumbarton	292,000
Dumfries	430,756
Fife	1,008,907
Glasgow	2,330,764
Highland	155,000
Lanarkshire	619,000
Lothian	2,404,203
Renfrew	827,354
Tayside	300,000
Total	9,126,222

Great Britain

	£
Great Britain total	123,297,345

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 5 July 1990

HOME DEPARTMENT

Correspondence

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the reason for the delay in replying to the letter to him from the chief constable of Staffordshire on 8 May concerning residency qualifications for applicants to the police force.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The chief constable's letter concerned a citizen of Nigeria who wishes to join the police. His residency qualifications and his later application for leave to remain in this country have been the subject of detailed inquiries. This was explained to the chief constable in an interim reply on 24 May. A substantive reply will be sent as soon as practicable.

Begging, London

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the steps he is taking to protect the public from intimidatory begging on the streets of London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Decisions about the deployment of resources to tackle crime are an operational matter for the commissioner. I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the police will arrest for begging where there is some element of threatening or intimidating behaviour.

Irish Terrorism

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the level of co-operation between police forces in the United Kingdom and those in Belgium in the fight against Irish terrorism; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: Police forces in the United Kingdom are co-operating fully with those in Belgium and will continue to do so.

Homosexuals

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if his Department has any plans to require police forces to monitor and record areas of violence against homosexuals where there is evidence of homophobic motives.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will bring forward proposals for police action to protect lesbians and gay men from violent attacks.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Decisions about police action against specific offences are an operational matter for chief officers of police, but they attach a high priority to tackling violent crime.

Bomb Incidents

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has held discussions with the Metropolitan police following the recent bomb incidents in London.

Mr. Waddington: As I told the House in my statement on 26 June, I had a discussion with the commissioner that morning.

Vagrancy Act

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many successful prosecutions were brought under the Vagrancy Act 1824 in 1989 *(a)* in the Metropolitan police district and *(b)* in other parts of England and Wales.

Mr. Waddington: Information for 1989 will not be available until the autumn.

Security Service

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the operation of the Security Service Act.

Mr. Waddington: The Security Service Act 1989, which came into force on 18 December last year, provides for effective oversight of the service.

Fine Defaulters

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average cost of imprisoning a fine defaulter in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: The average cost of imprisonment in 1988-89 was £288 per inmate per week. No separate records are held for different categories of offender.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many fine defaulters were committed into custody in England and Wales during 1988 and 1989; what is the current daily population of fine defaulters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: Information on persons received into prison service establishments in default of payment of a fine is published anually in "Prison Statistics England and Wales"—table 7.3 of the volume for 1988, Cm. 825—copies of which are in the Library. The provisional receptions figure for 1989 is 17,700 and the average population was about 460.

Psychiatric Hostels

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many psychiatric hostel places were available for offenders in England and Wales for the latest date available; what percentage were occupied; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddingdon: There are no places specifically designed for offenders in need of psychiatric support in the statutorily approved probation/bail hostels, but only those suffering from severe subnormality or psychopathic disorder are statutorily precluded from admission to these hostels. There are 212 bed spaces specifically available for discharged prisoners in need of psychiatric support within the Home Office voluntary after-care accommodation grants scheme (VACAGS). The latest available figure, which relates to 1989, for occupancy of these bedspaces is 72 per cent. I am aware that a number of other projects within VACAGS occasionally accept such residents, as do other special needs accommodation projects not funded by the Home Office.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average weekly cost for the latest available date of a psychiatric hostel place in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: The Home Office gives a contribution to the total income received by accommodation projects within the voluntary after-care accommodation grants scheme. The average weekly cost of a psychiatric hostel place requires information on total costs and cannot be obtained without disproportionate cost.

Prison Statistics

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many category A, category B, and category C places were available in each prison region in England and Wales for the latest date available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: The certified normal accommodation of category B and category C training prisons in each of the four regions in England and Wales on 31 March 1990 was as follows:

	Certified normal accommodation in	
	Category B prisons	*Category C prisons*
North	2,140	3,228
South-East	2,687	2,912
South-West	1,038	1,517
Midland	565	3,088

Category A places are provided in some category B training prisons and some local prisons and remand centres. These places are upgraded as and when necessary for the secure custody of category A prisoners.

Some 14,704 places are provided for male prisoners in local prisons and remand centres. These establishments hold prisoners identified as being within a variety of security categories and unsentenced prisoners who are unclassified for security purposes.

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners currently under sentence or on remand in England and Wales are *(a)* mentally ill or *(b)* have a psychiatric history for the latest date available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: The number of inmates with a psychiatric history is not recorded centrally. On 30 September 1989, the latest date for which figures are available, 329 inmates—140 sentenced and 189 unsentenced—were reported by prison medical officers to be mentally disordered as defined by the Mental Health Act 1983. Of these, 264—90 sentenced and 174 unsentenced—were reported to be mentally ill.

On 30 June 1979 prison medical officers considered that 557 inmates were detainable within the terms of the legislation then in force. On the census dates in recent years the number has fluctuated between 250 and 350.

The Government encourage the diversion of mentally disordered offenders from the penal system whenever custody is not necessary in the public interest.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many psychiatric reports were prepared on remand prisoners in England and Wales for the latest year available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: A court requiring medical advice on a defendant's mental condition may remand that person to prison for a report. During the period 1 April 1988 to 31 March 1989 a total of 6,081 psychiatric reports to court, including 512 offered where not specifically requested were prepared by prison medical officers.

The Government encourage the use of other means of obtaining such reports including bail or remand to hospital where custody is not necessary in the public interest.

Children Leaving Home

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set up a national record of children under 16 years of age who leave either their own or local authority homes.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend is currently examining different ways of establishing a national register of all vulnerable missing persons, including missing children. He hopes to announce his conclusion shortly.

Natural History Museum

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the consequences for forensic science of the changes at the natural history museum.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We do not anticipate that the organisational changes being made at the natural history museum will have significant consequences for forensic science.

Mrs. Sarah Conlon

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what plans he has to compensate Mrs. Sarah Conlon for the false imprisonment of her husband, Giuseppe, and her son Gerard;

(2) how much he plans to pay Mrs. Sarah Conlon for the cost of the return of her husband's body to Belfast.

Mr. Waddington: I explained to the House on 14 June at column 454 that in the light of the view of the Director of Public Prosecutions the convictions of the Maguire family and their co-defendants are unsafe and unsatisfactory. The correct course would probably be for me to refer

the case to the Court of Appeal, but I did not think it was right to do so until all the submissions on that issue had been presented to the May inquiry and Sir John May had had an opportunity to respond to them. As soon as I receive Sir John May's report on the relevant evidence so far presented to his inquiry, I will consider referring the cases to the Court of Appeal under section 17(i)(a) of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968.

Should the late Mr. Giuseppe Conlon's conviction be set aside, I will consider any application which Mrs. Conlon may make for compensation in respect of her husband's conviction. The amount of any such payment would be determined by an independent assessor, who in reaching his decision would consider detailed submissions as to the matters to be taken into account.

On the advice of the independent assessor, an interim payment of compensation has already been made to Mr. Gerard Conlon in respect of his wrongful conviction for offences arising out of the Guildford and Woolwich pub bombings. Further payment will be made on the advice of the independent assessor.

Drug Rehabilitation Places

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many residential and non-residential drug rehabilitation places in both the statutory and voluntary sectors are available for offenders in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: There are no places specifically designated for drugs offenders in the statutorily approved probation/bail hostels, but there are 577 bed spaces specifically available for such discharged prisoners within the Home Office voluntary after-care accommodation grants scheme. I am aware that a number of other projects within the scheme occasionally accept such residents as do other special needs accommodation projects not funded by the Home Office. It is not possible to calculate the number of drugs offenders attending non-residential facilities.

Prison Building

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the cost to date of the prison building programme; what is the estimated cost of the remaining planned institutions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: The total capital cost of the 8 prisons already constructed is £223 million, at outturn prices. The costs of the remaining 16 prisons in the current prison building programme are estimated at £1,132 million, also at outturn prices, of which £336 million had been spent up to the end of March 1990.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Cambodia

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what allocations have been made from the £1 million pledged for 1990-91 for international agencies working in Cambodia.

Mrs. Chalker: Following discussions with international agencies active in Cambodia, Britain will grant £500,000 to UNICEF for its programmes in health, nutrition, water and sanitation. This will enable further progress to be made in priority activities to which Britain recently contributed £250,000. A further £300,000 will be provided to the World Food Programme to purchase rice in support of UNICEF's well and pond digging programme. This is an essential component of a nutrition programme already benefiting 7,480 families. Malaria is a major cause of morbidity and mortality in Cambodia. I have therefore decided to provide £200,000 to the World Health Organisation for their new anti-malaria programme.

I am sure that our contributions will make a significant impact on these key programmes of humanitarian assistance to the people of Cambodia. We shall monitor progress very closely.

DEFENCE

Low Flying

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the specified radius in nautical miles of low-flying avoidance around towns and villages;

(2) what definition is used for major conurbations and built-up areas in the instructions to pilots concerning overflight of major conurbations and built-up areas in the United Kingdom low-flying system;

(3) if simulated attacks on moving civilian road traffic are permitted in the United Kingdom low-flying system;

(4) what are the regulations concerning simulated attacks on targets of opportunity in the United Kingdom low-flying system.

Mr. Neubert: The points raised are the subject of recommendations by the House of Commons Defence Committee whose report on low flying (HC 120) is currently being considered by the Government and to which a response will be made in the normal way.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list all the avoidance sites which have been disestablished in the tactical training areas since 1984;

(2) if he will list all the avoidance sites which have been newly established in the tactical training areas since 1984.

Mr. Neubert: It is not our practice to release detailed information on flying restrictions in individual areas.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if all users of the United low-flying system are required to plan and brief an exact route for their sortie before take-off; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is the maximum permitted lateral deviation from planned route for aircrew attempting to maintain visual meteorological conditions in poor weather at low level.

Mr. Neubert: Comprehensive planning is required for all sorties in the United Kingdom low-flying system. The precision with which the actual route is planned will vary with the type and role of aircraft and with the nature of the low-flying exercise which is to be undertaken. Aircrew will take account of the possibility of adverse weather in their planning but no maximum permitted lateral deviation is laid down.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which types of aircraft's noise levels produced by NATO allied air forces which are common users of the United

Kingdom's low-flying system, will be included in the forthcoming noise survey to be conducted by his Department.

Mr. Neubert: The noise measurement trial conducted at the Royal Aerospace West Freugh range last month covered the following common users of the United Kingdom low-flying system: F-111, Hawk, Harrier GR5, Jaguar, Tornado and Tucano aircraft.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the nature, purpose and title of the low-flying exercise to be held in the vicinity of Swanton Morley, Norfolk, between 25 June and 20 July; how many and what types of aircraft are due to take part; what is the minimum altitude authorised for *(a)* helicopters and *(b)* fixed-wing aircraft participating in the exercise; and what notification has been given to the public of this exercise.

Mr. Neubert: There are no plans to hold a low-flying exercise in the vicinity of Swanton Morley over the period in question.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date that part of the London/Thames valley avoidance area encompassing Braintree, Witham and Heybridge, Essex, was abolished; what was the reason for its abolition; if he will list the parliamentary constituencies over which low flying is newly permitted, or within which the area available for low flying is extended, as a result of this measure; and what instructions are now issued to military pilots concerning low flying over *(a)* Witham *(b)* Braintree and *(c)* Heybridge.

Mr. Neubert: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 28 July 1989 at column *1031*.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the maximum number of aircraft permitted to operate at low level at any one time in the hilly areas of Wales; if this restriction applies to the whole of low-flying area 7; and if he will list any changes made to this maximum number since 1979.

Mr. Neubert: No more than 30 aircraft, excluding helicopters, are permitted to book into low flying area 7 at any one time during the period 0700 to 1800 local time Monday to Friday. No changes have been made to this figure since its introduction in 1987.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many complaints were received about military low flying over the national eisteddfod at Glyn Llifon agricultural college, Caernarfon, between 28 May and 2 June.

Mr. Neubert: I am not aware of any such complaints.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has further to reduce the number and size of low-flying avoidance areas covering special rules airspace around civil airports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave him on 26 July 1989, *Official Report*, column *317*.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the nature, purpose and title of the low-flying exercise held in the vicinity of the Llyn Brianne reservoir on 11, 12 and 13 June; how many and what types of aircraft took part; what was the minimum altitude authorised for *(a)* helicopters and *(b)* fixed-wing aircraft participating in the exercise; and what notification was given to the public of this exercise.

Mr. Neubert: Fighter evasion training involving one Hunter aircraft and two Lynx helicopters was conducted in the area of the Llyn Brianne reservoir over the period concerned within the normal minimum height constraints applicable in the United Kingdom low-flying system. No notification was given to the general public of this routine training activity.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-flying sorties took place over the United Kingdom during this year's Exercise Central Enterprise.

Mr. Neubert: None.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) on what date flow control for low-flying military aircraft in a southerly direction between the city of Hull and danger area D. G306 was first established;

(2) on what date flow control was first established in the United Kingdom low-flying system in a south-westerly direction *(a)* between RAF Marham and the Stanford practical training area and *(b)* in the vicinity of Harlesdon, Norfolk;

(3) on what date flow control was first established in the United Kingdom low flying system in a north-westerly direction in the vicinity of *(a)* Watton, Norfolk and *(b)* Diss, Norfolk;

(4) on what date flow control was first established in the United Kingdom low-flying System in a northerly direction between *(a)* Brancaster and Blakeney Point, Norfolk and *(b)* the city of Northampton and Sywell airfield;

(5) on what date flow control was first established in the United Kingdom low-flying System in a north-easterly direction between *(a)* RAF Cottesmore and RAF Wittering, *(b)* King's Lynn and RAF Sculthorpe and *(c)* on the north side of the RAF Wattisham military air traffic zone;

(6) on what date flow control was first established in the United Kingdom low-flying system in *(a)* a southerly direction in the vicinity of Cromer, Norfolk, and *(b)* a westerly direction between Peterborough and RAF Alconbury;

(7) on what date the anti-clockwise flow control was first established around the town of Sculthorpe in the United Kingdom low-flying system;

(8) on what date flow control was first established in the United Kingdom low-flying system *(a)* between Harworth and Carlton-in-Lindrick, Nottinghamshire, and *(b)* in the vicinity of Ackworth, west Yorkshire.

Mr. Neubert: Unidirectional traffic flows have been in use since before the introduction of the current low flying system in 1979 and I regret that the information requested could not be provided without disproportionate cost and effort.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what instructions are given to pilots concerning the minimum height and maximum speed to be flown over the Billing and Boothville suburbs of Northampton, when

flying through the channel in the United Kingdom low-flying system in a northerly direction between the city of Northampton and Sywell airfield.

Mr. Neubert: Aircraft flying in the area concerned are subject to the normal rules of the United Kingdom low flying system.

Research and Development

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration is being given within the options for change exercise to the mechanisms for returning research and development scientists and facilities to civilian manufacturing.

Mr. Neubert: The implications of options for change for the defence equipment programme, including the research programme, are being studied, but it is too early to say what their impact will be.

Exercise Panoramic II

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many aircraft, and of which types, will participate in Exercise Panoramic II; and from which bases they will operate;

(2) if he will make a statement on the nature and purpose of the forthcoming exercise entitled Panoramic II;

(3) if he will make a statement on the measures taken to ensure the safety of civilian sea and air traffic during Exercise Panoramic II.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Panoramic II is a trial designed to investigate the performance of air-to-air missiles. The trial, which began on 2 July and will continue until 13 July, involves four Tornado F3, one Phantom, one Victor, one VC10, one Nimrod and one Canberra aircraft. All the aircraft are operating from RAF Leuchars, with the exception of the Nimrod, which is operating from RAF Kinloss.

Missile firings are taking place within a special airspace reservation area north-west of Saxa Vord. The Nimrod carries out a search for shipping and ensures that the area is clear before any firing takes place. A coastal navigation warning has been issued by the Royal Navy hydrographer. All civilian air traffic routes through the area have been closed for the duration of the trial.

Airborne Anti-armour weapon

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to make a decision on the advanced airborne anti-armour weapon SR(A)1238.

Mr. Alan Clark: We have decided not to proceed with the advanced airborne anti-armour weapon to SR(A) 1238 at this stage; further decisions will not be made until the way forward from the "Options for Change" exercise is clear. In the light of altered circumstances, we may wish to consider designs to less stringent criteria than had previously been required.

ENVIRONMENT

Drinking Water

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the incidence and levels of *(a)* tetrachloroethylene, *(b)* trichloroethylene and *(c)* polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons in drinking water; if the levels detected have in any case exceeded World Health Organisation guidelines; and if he will discuss with his European Community counterparts the establishment of maximum advisable concentrations in respect of each of these chemicals.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 1989 set standards for tetrachloroethylene and trichloroethylene of 10 and 30 microgram/litre respectively as annual averages. These are based on tentative guideline values promulgated by the World Health Organisation. No specific standards for tetrachloroethylene and trichloroethylene are laid down in the EC drinking water directive.

Comprehensive information about the current incidence and levels of tetrachloroethylene and trichloroethylene in drinking water is not, at present, held centrally. The drinking water inspectorate is aware of a few public supplies which exceed the standards for these substances. The water companies concerned have either taken the supplies out of service or have given undertakings under section 20 of the Water Act 1989 to introduce treatment by 1994 in order to reduce the levels. Because of the safety margins allowed, medical advice is that public health is not endangered by those supplies which are continuing in use.

The Water Quality Regulations incorporate the standard of 0·2 microgram/litre for six specified polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH) laid down in the EC directive. They also set a national standard, based on the WHO guideline value, of 0·01 microgram/litre as an annual average for benzpyrene, an individual PAH.

At the request of my Department and the Welsh Office water undertakers carried out a comprehensive survey of their supplies in early 1989 to establish levels of PAH in drinking water. Of approximately 6,250 samples, 44—0·7 per cent.—contained concentrations in excess of standards mentioned above. These results indicate that there is not a general problem with PAH in drinking water. Where a high concentration of PAH is confirmed water companies carry out remedial programmes comprising relining or replacing water mains or flushing.

I see no need at present for any additional EC standards for these substances.

River and Harbour Pollution

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest available figure for the average fine imposed by magistrates courts in the south-west of England for river and harbour pollution.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Information collected by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department shows that, for cases brought under sections 31 or 32 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 as the principal offence, the average fine imposed by magistrates courts in 1988 for water pollution offences in the south-west was £570.

London Residuary Body

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the salary, expenses and other emoluments paid annually to the chairman of the London residuary body, and the estimated figures for 1991, following the reappointment announced on 26 June for the period to March 1993.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The chairman's current annual emoluments—salary and pension scheme contributions—are £63,530 and will rise to £64,165 from 1 January 1991. The total expenses paid to the chairman and LRB board members in 1988-89, the latest year for which information is available, was £6,430.

Ventilation

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will ensure that an adequate number of fans are made available to hon. Members and staff working in those parts of the Palace where ventilation systems have been closed down for repair during the summer recess.

Mr. Chope: The Parliamentary Works Office has made arrangements for engineers control on extension 4747 to issue fans on request to those who need them.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the Governments of Iceland, Denmark, Norway and the Faroes regarding proposals to increase the volume of reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel at Dounreay; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend has received representations from the Environmental Ministers of Iceland, Denmark, Norway and the Faroe Islands about reprocessing and radioactive waste disposal at Dounreay. He has also discussed this subject with the Danish Environment Minister.

Big Ben (Chime)

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the hour chime of Big Ben to be restored.

Mr. Chope: I hope early in August. The work to forge the new hammer arm has taken longer than expected.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he has made to the letter to him from Councillor Stewart Foster, of Leicester city council, dated 18 June, concerning student nurses and the poll tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I have written to Councillor Foster today.

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library the address and telephone number of each of the bodies responsible for hearing community charge appeals against decisions of charging authorities in London.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 4 July 1990]:* I have today placed copies of the information requested in the Library.

Quarrying, Marnhull

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to refuse any application for quarrying in Marnhull, Sturminster Newton, Dorset.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 4 July 1990]:* No. I cannot give such a general policy assurance. Any application coming before the Secretary of State for determination is considered on its merits.

WALES

MIND

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what grant he has given to MIND in Wales for 1990-91; on what date MIND was notified of this grant; what was the grant in preceding years; and whether there is any change in the conditions for 1990-91 under which grant payment is offered.

Mr. Grist: Wales MIND applied on 4 June 1990 for a grant under section 64 of the Health Service and Public Health Act 1968. A decision will be notified shortly. Previous years' section 64 funding was as follows:

	£
1987-88	59,550
1988-89	57,863
1989-90	57,166

In addition, £96,500 has been allocated to Wales MIND in the current year in respect of developments to facilitate implementation of the Welsh Office mental illness strategy on an all-Wales basis.

The only change in condition in 1990-91, common to all section 64 funding, is the introduction of a requirement that grant-aid made in respect of a capital asset has to be repaid if the asset is disposed of.

Registered Child Minders

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many registered child minders there are in Wales.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply I gave on 22 May 1990, at column *123*.

NHS and Community Care Act

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he intends to circulate to people in Wales regarding the implementation of the National Health Service and Community Care Act; and what budget he has allocated for this purpose.

Mr. Grist: The booklet for circulation in Wales will explain the main changes taking place in the national health service and reflect the particular circumstances in the Principality. It is being prepared in a bilingual version. We shall provide a budget sufficient for distribution of the booklet to all households throughout Wales.

General Practitioners (Prescribing)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what guidelines his Department has issued in the past 10 years in respect of *(a)* over-prescribing and *(b)* under-prescribing by general practitioners; and if he will place in the Library a copy of all such guidelines currently in force.

Mr. Grist: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Nurseries and Playgroups

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of *(a)* registered pre-school nurseries and *(b)* registered playgroups for each academic year from 1970-71 to 1988-89 in (i) Wales as a whole and (ii) each county.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The available information on the numbers of registered pre-school nurseries and registered playgroups is shown in the table. Data prior to 1975 are not readily available.

Number of Registered Facilities at 31 March

Clwyd

Year	Pre-school nurseries	Play-groups
1975	6	124
1976	7	141
1977	5	154
1978	5	173
1979	6	192
1980	5	237
1981	6	169
1982	7	176
1983	8	167
1984	8	173
1985	12	173
1986	12	167
1987	15	192
1988	22	203
1989	29	194

Dyfed

Year	Pre-school nurseries	Playgroups
1975	2	86
1976	1	105
1977	1	109
1978	—	115
1979	—	121
1980	—	129
1981	—	136
1982	—	141
1983	—	154
1984	—	158
1985	—	156
1986	—	155
1987	—	169
1988	—	197
1989	3	198

Gwent

Year	Pre-school nurseries	Playgroups
1975	3	82
1976	3	83
1977	3	96
1978	3	98
1979	3	97
1980	3	104
1981	1	103
1982	—	112
1983	—	105
1984	—	110
1985	—	114
1986	—	121
1987	—	126
1988	—	132
1989	—	137

Gwynedd

Year	Pre-school nurseries	Play-groups
1975	—	87
1976	—	94
1977	—	102
1978	—	111
1979	—	117
1980	—	134
1981	2	123
1982	3	129
1983	3	136
1984	3	137
1985	4	147
1986	4	149
1987	4	157
1988	6	129
1989	9	164

Mid Glamorgan

Year	Pre-school nurseries	Play-groups
1975	15	85
1976	8	81
1977	4	96
1978	3	103
1979	4	100
1980	4	90
1981	4	92
1982	4	110
1983	5	113
1984	10	104
1985	6	117
1986	7	121
1987	9	121
1988	8	127
1989	5	137

Powys

Year	Pre-school nurseries	Playgroups
1975	1	32
1976	1	36
1977	1	38
1978	1	40
1979	1	45
1980	1	52
1981	1	53
1982	—	56
1983	—	59
1984	—	62
1985	—	61
1986	5	63
1987	6	64
1988	5	63
1989	4	66

South Glamorgan

Year	Pre-school nurseries	Playgroups
1975	18	100
1976	20	113
1977	19	121
1978	17	120
1979	18	110
1980	16	104
1981	13	111
1982	12	109
1983	13	113
1984	14	112
1985	15	119
1986	16	115
1987	17	123
1988	19	138
1989	21	153

West Glamorgan

Year	Pre-school nurseries	Play-groups
1975	2	46
1976	1	43
1977	1	43
1978	1	40
1979	1	39
1980	1	45
1981	1	38
1982	1	44
1983	5	44
1984	6	46
1985	6	48
1986	5	53
1987	7	47
1988	7	51
1989	14	54

Wales

Year	Pre-school nurseries	Play-groups
1975	47	642
1976	41	696
1977	34	759
1978	30	800
1979	33	821
1980	30	895
1981	28	825
1982	27	877
1983	34	891
1984	41	902
1985	43	935
1986	49	944
1987	58	999
1988	67	1,040
1989	85	1,103

Community Care

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total expenditure on core community care services in Wales for each year since 1979; and how much and what percentage of the total was in respect of *(a)* community health, *(b)* his departmenal and *(c)* local authority expenditure.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The information is not available in precisely the form requested.

Expenditure by district health authorities in Wales on community health services[1] is shown at Table 1:

Table 1

	Expenditure £ million
[2]1981-82	44·1
1982-83	48·5
1983-84	51·5
1984-85	56·4
1985-86	61·5
1986-87	67·7
1987-88	84·7
1988-89	99·6

[1]Community health service costs consist of preventative health services (such as fluoridation, vaccination and immunisation, health education and health visiting), school medical and dental services, family planning services and primary district nursing services. Figures are extracted from "Key Statistical Indicators for National Health Service Management in Wales" published annually.

[2]Data for earlier years on a comparable basis are not available except at disproportionate costs.

Expenditure by local authorities in Wales on residential and domiciliary care is as follows:

Table 2

Local authorities	Expenditure £ million
1979-80	58·9
1980-81	70·5
1981-82	79·8
1982-83	87·8
1983-84	97·5
1984-85	103·7
1985-86	109·9
1986-87	117·7
1987-88	133·7
1988-89	150·0

The expenditure shown in tables 1 and 2 was supplemented each year by direct Welsh Office funding under a number of arrangements, but details of all these amounts are not available except at disproportionate cost.

PRIME MINISTER

European Court of Justice

Q51. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Prime Minister, what recent discussions she has had with the heads of other European Community Governments concerning the powers of the European Court of Justice; and if she will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has not yet had any formal discussions on this issue with the heads of other European Community Governments.

Environmental Co-operation

Q169. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a further statement on the United Kingdom's contribution to international co-operation on environmental issues.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

The Government work to protect the global environment through a wide range of international organisations including the European Community, the United Nations and the Organisation for Economic

Co-operation and Development. We are playing an active part in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and we have led the call for an international convention on climate change. On 25 May this year my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced that provided others are prepared to take their full share, Britain is prepared to set itself the very demanding target of returning carbon dioxide emissions to their current levels by 2005.

Last week the Government hosted on behalf of the United Nations Environment Programme the second meeting of the parties to the Montreal protocol which agreed important new measures to protect the ozone layer and to enable developing countries to play their part. It demonstrated the international co-operation we need to safeguard the global environment. We will continue to give support to UNEP's valuable work in this and other areas. We will also play a full and constructive role in preparations for the United Nations conference on environment and development which will be held in Brazil in 1992.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 July.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is hosting the NATO summit meeting. This evening she will be attending a dinner for NATO given by Her Majesty the Queen.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Elderly People

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether his Department is supporting the designation of a European Year of Elderly People; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: We intend to play a full part in the discussions on this and on other aspects of the Commission's communication. We shall do so on the basis that elderly people are as diverse as any other group in society and most lead active, independent lives.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response he has made to the European Commission communication on aging (COM(90)80 FINAL).

Mr. Maude: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply of my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Health on 3 July, *Official Report*, column *548*.

Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the CSCE conference on the human dimension at Copenhagen; and what has been the reaction of Her Majesty's Government towards the San Marino proposals for the Council of Europe to become the parliamentary dimension of the CSCE process.

Mr. Waldegrave: We welcome the successful conclusion of the second meeting of the conference on the human dimension, held in Copenhagen from 5 to 29 June. The meeting agreed a concluding document which represents a historic advance in CSCE participants' human rights commitments. It enshrines specifically proposals which the United Kingdom, together with other western countries, put forward, laying down the conditions which should be fulfilled for elections to be considered free and fair, and enumerating the principles for a sound legal system. The document also extends existing CSCE undertakings on freedom of expression, of association and peaceful assembly, and of movement, and reaffirms the participating states' respect for the rights of minorities. The explicit and universal adherence to these principles which the Copenhagen concluding document represents will be of great benefit in sustaining the process of democratic reform in eastern Europe. Copies of the concluding document are being placed in the Library of the House.

The Copenhagen meeting also discussed participating states' implementation of their CSCE human rights commitments and reviewed the mechanism established at the 1989 Vienna CSCE follow-up meeting allowing participating states to monitor each others' human rights performance.

The United Kingdom and other CSCE member states will be considering the ways and means in which the Council of Europe can contribute to the human dimension of the CSCE process.

Romanian Children (Adoption)

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on any action taken by the Romanian Government or any other agencies in that country to place a blockade or other hinderance upon the adoption of Romanian children by suitably qualified couples in the United Kingdom, including couples which have lodged suitable adoption papers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We understand that final approval of adoption from overseas has been temporarily halted until the new Romanian Parliament decides which authority is to be responsible for the final approval. This decision should be taken soon. If necessary, we shall ask the Romanian authorities to allow adoptions for which Romanian and United Kingdom procedures have already been started, and which satisfy the stated requirements of both countries, to be completed and the child concerned released to the adoptive parents.

Burma

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Burmese Government about the recent elections in that country; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The State Law and Order Restoration Council's abuse of the human and political rights of the Burmese people is well documented and has been repeatedly condemned. The surprisingly free and fair way in which the actual polling was conducted on 27 May was, therefore, all the more welcome. The official results now confirm that the main opposition party, the National League for Democracy, has won an overwhelming victory.

On 29 May, the British Government urged the SLORC to give effect to the clearly expressed wish of the people of

Burma and called for the early release of the imprisoned leaders of the democratic parties and for the unconditional lifting of martial law.

On 6 June, the European Community called on the military regime to respect the results of the elections by handing over power to a Government chosen by the newly elected Parliament without delay and to release political leaders in detention immediately.

The British Government again call on the military regime to respond to the clearly expressed wish of the Burmese people for change. Along with our EC partners, we are ready to co-operate with the new Government, once it is formed. Meanwhile, existing policy will continue until the regime takes concrete steps to end the military rule which the Burmese people have so decisively rejected by initiating a constructive dialogue with opposition leaders at an early date.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Civil Research and Development

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of Britain's gross domestic product is devoted to civil research and development; and what information he has as to comparable figures for France and West Germany.

Mr. Jackson: A report published last year by the OECD showed that in 1985, the latest year for which figures are available 1·8 per cent. of the United Kingdom's GDP was attributable to estimated gross domestic expenditure on civil research and development. The corresponding figures for France and West Germany were 1·8 and 2·6 per cent. respectively.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to take further action to encourage schools to seek grant-maintained status.

Mrs. Rumbold: The 1988 Act gives parents and governors the opportunity to seek grant-maintained status for their school. There has been a rapid expansion in the number of grant-maintained schools and a lot of interest among parents and governors. I anticipate that there will be many more applications for GM status.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to make all local education authority secondary schools grant maintained.

Mrs. Rumbold: It is for parents and governors to decide whether to seek grant-maintained status for their school. My right hon. Friend will consider every application on its merits.

Financial Support, Bradford

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received regarding financial suppport for education in Bradford; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. Friend has received a number of letters on this issue and I recently received a deputation from Bradford which included the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer).

Bradford has done well out of the change from the grant-related expenditure assessment for education to the standard spending assessment—the education component of its SSA is £179 million and is substantially higher than the comparable GRE figure for 1989-90. This assessment should mean that the authority has a solid funding base for its education service in 1990-91.

Bradford's annual capital guideline for 1990-91 was over £9 million. LEAs have been invited to submit their education capital expenditure plans for 1991-92 by 15 September. Bradford's needs will be considered sympathetically against an objective set of criteria, as will the needs of all other LEAs.

School Psychological Service

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to reduce the waiting lists for the school psychological service for pupils in Preston.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The operation of the school psychological service is a matter for local education authorities. I understand that the Lancashire LEA has recently reorganised the service and is in the course of making a number of additional appointments. The authority is currently reviewing the process by which pupils are referred to the service.

Student Grants

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in respect of the academic years 1988-89, 1989-90 and 1990-91 the number of grants made available for students to study for vocational qualifications at colleges in Scotland in respect of each course at each college.

Mr. Jackson: Information about the number of grants made available by local authorities in England and Wales for students to study for vocational qualifications at colleges in Scotland is not available. Information about the number of such grants made available by the Scottish Education Department is the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Further Education

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has made any assessment of the effect of community charge capping on the provision of further education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has considered all the representations made to him by the capped authorities, including those about service delivery, together with all other information he considers relevant, and he is satisfied that the final caps he is proposing will permit them to maintain their services at a reasonable level.

Local Management of Colleges

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list those local education authorities which have had their schemes for local management of colleges turned down by his Department.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend has not turned down any schemes for the local management of colleges, though a number have been approved with modifications or conditions. The schemes for Barnet, Hereford and Worcester and Staffordshire have yet to be approved, though Hereford and Worcester and Staffordshire are operating schemes in advance of statutory approval.

Management Information Systems

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress has been made in the allocation of education support grant funding to local education authorities in England and Wales for the development of management information systems in further education colleges.

Mr. Jackson: Between 1985-86 and 1989-90 education support grant allocations to local education authorities in England for the development of computerised management information systems in further education colleges supported £12·5 million expenditure. Commitments for 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93 support a further £21 million.

Allocation of education support grant funding for local education authorities in Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will give details of his Department's role on the question of quality assurance relating to management information systems development.

Mr. Jackson: With local education authorities, the Department is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the use of education support grants to support expenditure on computerised management information systems (CMIS) in further education colleges. This is achieved by means of annual progress reports from LEAs, national surveys of developments in colleges, the observations of Her Majesty's inspectorate and studies by consultants. The Department is also in contact with the major suppliers of CMIS software to discuss their products.

School Reorganisation

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what guidance he gives to local education authorities as to under what sections of and schedules to the Education (No. 2) Act 1986 they should conduct the selection procedure for the headships of schools which have been part of a major schools reorganisation programme;

(2) what steps he has taken to satisfy himself under the terms of section 68 of the Education Act 1944 that Leeds education authority is acting reasonably in the way it has decided to conduct the appointment of headships as part of the city's reorganisation of schools.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The Department's Circular 7/87 provides general guidance on the provisions of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986 relating to the appointment of head teachers. Where a local education authority is reorganising its schools by closing two or more of them and opening new schools in their place paragraph 23 of schedule 2 to the 1986 Act allows the local education authority, in consultation with the temporary governing bodies of the new schools, to appoint one of the head teachers of the schools which are closing to be the first head teacher for the new school, provided that a substantial number of the pupils at the discontinued schools, taken together, are expected to transfer to the new school. In these circumstances the authority is empowered to make the appointment in this manner as an alternative to the procedures usually applying to the appointment of head teachers. These are set out in section 37 of the Act and provide for the local education authority to advertise the post and hold a selection panel comprising persons appointed by the authority and no less a number of governors. It is my understanding that in carrying through its reorganisation of its schools the Leeds education authority has elected to adopt the paragraph 23(2) procedures.

Bursaries

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will announce the postgraduate bursary rates payable in the academic year 1990-91.

Mr. MacGregor: I propose to set the main maintenance rates for bursaries offered under my Department's postgraduate awards scheme in the academic year 1990-91 as follows:

	£
London	2,775
Elsewhere	2,195
Parental home	1,655

These represent increases above the current year's rates broadly in line with those for corresponding mandatory undergraduate awards. For the studentships in librarianship and information science administered by my Department, the rates for 1990-91 will be the same as those under the state studentship scheme run by the British Academy, which I announced in answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) on Wednesday 4 July, *Official Report*, column *575*.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Office Searches (EC Inspectors)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the circumstances in which the private offices of the chairman of British Airways were searched by European Community inspectors; what authority the inspectors had for entering the premises and studying documents; and which court authorised these searches.

Mr. Ridley: I am not responsible for the activities of the European Commission.

Postal Monopolies

Mr. Mudd: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on what date he expects the publication by the European Commission of its proposed Green Paper on postal monopolies.

Mr. Forth: I would refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave on 2 July, *Official Report*, column *426*.

Copyright (Television Programmes)

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will place in the Library a copy of counsel's opinion asked for by him on the protection granted to television programme formats under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. It would not be appropriate to place in the Library a copy of counsel's advice to me.

Cars

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects the European Economic Community to make a decision on the arrangements for trade in cars, with particular reference to the import to the continent of British cars manufactured by Japanese-owned firms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 2 July 1990]:* Following the informal discussion among Community Ministers on 19 June, the Commission is to have talks with the Japanese authorities, and is expected to report back to Ministers in July. I should like to see a firm agreement reached as soon as possible. However, I believe that the Government's position that cars manufactured in the EC by Japanese-owned companies should continue to enjoy unlimited free circulation throughout the Community is unassailable and has now been accepted by other member states.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the implications for his policy on treating cars produced in the United Kingdom by Japanese-owned firms in the same way as other British-produced cars of the European Commission's recent declaration concerning imports of Japanese motor vehicles.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 2 July 1990]:* Formal agreement has still to be reached among member states and with Japan on the future treatment of cars produced by Japanese-owned companies. I am insisting and I remain confident that all cars produced in Britain, including by Japanese-owned companies, will continue to enjoy unlimited free circulation throughout the Community after 1992.

Import and Export Licences

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in what form information on the granting of licences under the Import, Export and Customs Powers (Defence) Act 1939 is kept by his Department.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 2 July 1990]:* Information relating to import and export licences is kept in paper form and is subject to the Official Secrets Act. Since January 1990 certain export licence information has been preserved on microfilm. Some information pertaining to import licensing is held on computer.

Biological Weapons

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which section of the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1989 is concerned with biological weapons.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 2 July 1990]:* Biological weapons are controlled by entry ML7 of group 1 of part 2 of the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1989, as amended by the Export of Goods (Control) (Amendment No. 2) Order 1990.

Export Credits Guarantee Department

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether, following the conversion in 1991 of the insurance services group of the Export Credits Guarantee Department to a Government company, it will be necessary for the new company to establish at least one year's commercial accounts before its full privatisation.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 3 July 1990]:* No.

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress has been made in identifying an eventual buyer, or buyers, for the insurance services group of the Export Credits Guarantee Department.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 3 July 1990]:* Decisions have not yet been taken about the proposed method of sale of the insurance services group. No decisions have been taken about possible buyers.

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what method will be used to recruit a chief executive for the privatised insurance group of the ECGD.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 3 July 1990]:* This will be a matter for the new owners of the privatised business.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what consultations he has had with the European Commission regarding the prospective bidders for the insurance services group of the Export Credits Guarantee Department and competition policy.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 3 July 1990]:* Decisions have not yet been taken about the proposed method of sale of the insurance services group and no decisions have been taken about possible purchasers. The Government will, however, take into account the views of the European Commission in reaching decisions.

TRANSPORT

Tourism

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to encourage regional airports to recognise the importance of a quality welcoming system for visitors.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Government are keen to see the maximum use of airports in all parts of the country but the facilities referred to by the hon. Member are a matter for the commercial judgment of individual airport managements.

Private Aircraft

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many representations he has received in favour of introducing compulory third party liability insurance for private pilots.

Mr. McLoughlin: Over the past year my Department has received five communications supporting the introduction of compulsory third party insurance for civil aviation, including private aircraft.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total value of damage sustained by third parties as a result of accidents involving private aircraft for each of the last three years.

Mr. McLoughlin: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans to introduce compulsory third party liability insurance for private pilots.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend has received, in response to a request to the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority, initial advice from the authority on the issues which would have to be dealt with by a compulsory scheme, for which legislation would be needed, and he is now considering that advice.

Taxi Licences

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the introduction of the single European Act will affect the number of taxi licences available to United Kingdom citizens *(a)* in respect of Hackney cabs and *(b)* in respect of private cabs.

Mr. Freeman: The European Commission has not yet formulated definite proposals relating to Hackney carriage and private hire vehicle licensing. Unless or until such time as the EC issues a directive, the domestic licensing laws of each member state will apply to applicants for licences.

At present in Scotland, England—outside London—and Wales local authorities may not refuse a hackney carriage licence unless they are satisfied that there is no significant unmet demand for hackney carriage services in the area, but no numerical controls are allowed on private hire vehicles. In London there are no numerical controls on hackney carriage licences; private hire vehicles—minicabs—are not licensed. In Northern Ireland no numerical controls are allowed on either hackney carriages or private hire vehicles.

Roads, Folkestone and Southampton

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects a continuous dual carriageway road to be operational between Folkestone and Southampton.

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. Friend has no proposals for a continuous dual carriageway road between Folkestone and Southampton but with schemes completed or under construction and the further schemes announced in the Roads Report "Trunk Roads, England Into the 1990s", the M27—A27—A259 south coast trunk route is being progressively improved. It will be dual carriageway standard between Southampton and Polegate in East Sussex, and a mixture of dual and single carriageway between Polegate and Folkestone, depending on the variation in forecast traffic flows along the route.

M20, Ashford

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what design work is taking place on the Lacton interchange on the M20 in Ashford to improve the junction's traffic flow and capacity.

Mr. Atkins: Kent county council, as highway authority for the junction roundabout, is undertaking preliminary design of possible options to improve the capacity and traffic flow at M20 junction 10. Subject to my Department being satisfied about the effects to traffic on the motorway and its connecting roads, the choice of any scheme to be promoted rests with the county council.

Russell Scott School (Land Sale)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to complete the sale of land at the side of the M67 and the former Russell Scott school in Denton; and when negotiations for sale started.

Mr. Atkins: Negotiations will open shortly. It is too soon to say when a sale might be completed.

Passenger Coaches (Seat Belts)

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about his policy on the fitting and wearing of seat belts in passenger coaches.

Mr. Atkins: I am strongly in favour of the fitting of good quality seat belts on all seats in coaches and of the belts being worn wherever provided. I am very glad that the Bus and Coach Council is now recommending that all new coaches should be fitted with seat belts. We are discussing further with them the fitting of belts on existing coaches.

We are continuing to press for early agreement in the European Community to the mandatory fitment of seat belts on all seats in new coaches.

Aviation

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his reply of 2 July, *Official Report*, columns *428-29*, if he will make a statement outlining the nature and extent of the changes which will result from the commitment to establish a single market in aviation by the end of 1992.

Mr. McLoughlin: The agreement reached by EC Transport Ministers on 18 June set the Community firmly on course to complete a single market in aviation by the end of 1992. As well as setting out a second stage of EC liberalisation, this agreement incorporates into EC law the earlier Ministerial commitment to the key ingredients of a single market: the abolition of bilateral capacity sharing and the introduction of the double disapproval system for the setting of fares by 1 January 1993, and the adoption of uniform licensing criteria by 1 July 1992. The United Kingdom has welcomed these commitments and will continue to take a leading role in negotiations on the completion of a liberal EC market in air transport.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will seek to establish why the French Government blocked the proposal last month by British Midland Airways for a cheaper business fare from London to Paris; and if he will initiate proceedings against the French Government.

Mr. McLoughlin: The French Government initially maintained that the three-day business return fare of £149 proposed by British Midland for its London-Paris service was not reasonably related to the costs of the airline.

Under the EC arrangements for fare approval, which provide criteria for the assessment of fares proposals and for consultations in cases of disagreement, the Department of Transport met the French authorities on 2 May in Paris.

At these consultations the French agreed to accept a fare structure on British Midland's Heathrow-Paris service which would include a new three-day business return of £165. This is higher than first proposed, but is still substantially lower than existing business class return fares on the route of around £240. I understand that British Midland was content with the result.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his reply of 2 July, *Official Report*, columns *428-29*, if he will make a statement explaining the nature and extent of the greater freedom being made available to commercial airlines in consequence of the Transport Ministers Council of 18 June.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am particularly pleased that the EC Transport Council adopted a second package of measures which seals the commitment to the liberalisation of air transport in the European Community by the end of 1992, and provides for arrangements which will function in the interim.

The new package builds on the first set of measures agreed in 1987. It contains arrangements for setting fares which introduce an element of double disapproval and simplify the existing zonal system. It further relaxes the limits on capacity sharing by progressively increasing the maximum share of capacity enjoyed by the airlines of any one state to 75 per cent. The package also eases access to the market by creating third and fourth freedom traffic rights between virtually all Community airports, relaxing restrictions on fifth freedom services within the Community, and progressively lowering the thresholds for multiple designation. The Council accepted the need to deal quickly with predatory practices; and agreed principles against which air cargo services should be further liberalised by March 1991. Ministers also reached agreement on a mandate for the opening of aviation negotiations for EFTA.

Road Defects

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his Department's current estimate of the cost of making good all defects in local authority adopted roads *(a)* in total and *(b)* by local authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The Department of Transport does not have the detailed condition data that would be necessary to estimate the cost of rectifying all defects in roads that local authorities are responsible for maintaining. Central Government's contribution to local authority road maintenance is made as part of the annual revenue support grant settlement, and to structural maintenance of local authority bridges through the transport supplementary grant settlement. Local authorities are consulted through their representative bodies as part of the process of deciding on these levels of funding.

Nuclear Fuel

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has received from the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority regarding the transportation of spent fuel rods of highly enriched uranium to the United Kingdom from research reactors in Spain, the Netherlands and West Germany under contracts proposed between the authority and the relevant body in each country.

Mr. Atkins: While we are aware that such contracts are being sought, to date no application relating specifically to the transport of this material has been received. All shipments of spent fuel are required to be carried in containers which have been approved and certified by my Department as complying fully with stringent national and international transport safety regulations.

Lockerbie Disaster

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will meet the costs of legal representation for the relatives of victims of the Lockerbie disaster at the forthcoming Scottish fatal accident inquiry.

Mr. Parkinson: Yes. I am writing to the Secretary of the Lockerbie air disaster group of solicitors' firms to say that my Department will meet the reasonable costs incurred on behalf of the British relatives of the victims of the Lockerbie disaster by one team of legal representatives in carrying out the necessary work in preparing for and attending the inquiry.

This offer of financial assistance reflects the exceptional nature of the disaster, a crime perpetrated by international terrorists which resulted in the destruction of a large passenger aircraft in British air space. There are therefore very special reasons for departing from the practice that relatives' costs are not met in fatal accident inquiries or inquests.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Personal Pension Plans

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether, pursuant to his reply to the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling on 28 June, *Official Report*, column *350*, he will now include the Consumers Association in those interested bodies who have been asked for their views on the existing regulations on the disclosure of information to members of occupational and personal pension schemes.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Consumers Association has now been asked whether it wishes to make any comments.

Pensioners (Investment Income)

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the level of investment income, excluding savings, of pensioners with a weekly pension income of *(a)* less than £50, *(b)* £50 to £100, *(c)* £100 to £200, *(d)* £200 to £500 and *(e)* over £500; and if he will indicate the number of pensioners in each group.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The latest information from the 1987 family expenditure survey is set out in the table. The figures provided assume weekly pension income to consist of national insurance state retirement pension and supplementary benefit. There are no cases of people with this income in the levels of the top two bands specified in the question.

Retirement pension supplementary benefit[1]	*Percentage of pensioners in each group*	*Average savings/ investment income per week*[2]
		£
less than £50	65	13·85
50 to 99·99	35	33·60
100 to 199·99	less than 1	[3]58·05
200 to 499·99	0	nil
500 and over	0	nil

[1] Pounds per week at 1987 prices
[2] It is not possible to separately identify savings income from investment income except at disproportionate cost. Savings are generally accepted to be bank and building society deposits whereas investment income includes (for example) premiums on stocks/shares.
[3] Only two cases were found within this group which do not represent an adequate sample size.

Income Support

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he intends to implement the recommendation in commissioners' decision CIS/18/88, and amend the income support regulations to provide in the case of a pensioner moving from hospital to residential care, that income support commences immediately on discharge from hospital instead of on the following retirement pension pay day.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We have no plans to implement the suggestion of the appeal tribunal mentioned in CIS/18/88. For those over pension age, income support is paid in advance from the first pay day on or after the date of claim. Similar arrangements apply when income support is reduced or ceases, so equity is preserved.

Students

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he proposes to lay regulations concerning students' entitlement to benefits and to publish the report of the Social Security Advisory Committee on the draft regulations.

Mr. Scott: Draft regulations on students' entitlement to benefits were submitted to the Social Security Advisory Committee on 19 February. The committee subsequently reported its conclusions at the end of April. However, amendments to the Social Security Bill have since been carried in the House of Lords which would affect the Government's proposals. The Government will be asking the House to disagree with their Lordships' amendments when these are considered by the House of Commons.

The Social Security Advisory Committee report will be formally published and presented to Parliament with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's formal response when the main set of regulations is laid in due course. However, in order better to inform the House in advance of their consideration of the Lords amendments, we have today made special arrangements to place in the Library proof copies of the report on the draft regulations together with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's initial comments on that report.

Subject to further consideration of the Social Security Bill the Government intend to make two important changes to the draft regulations submitted to the Social Security Advisory Committee. First, the Government propose to introduce in all the income-related benefits a £10 weekly disregard on income received from top-up loans so long as the loan recipient continues as a student. Secondly, we intend to consult the local authority associations on a separate regulation which will extend the proposed definition of a disabled student to include students who are eligible for an award under the local education authorities disabled students allowance scheme by reason of deafness. Subject to the views of the local authority associations, we intend to lay this regulation as soon as possible after the main set of regulations.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Rathlin Island Trust

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has given any financial support to the Rathlin Island Trust; what representations he has received concerning the trust; and on what basis others are represented on the trust.

Mr. Needham: Financial support has been provided to the Rathlin Island Trust from a number of Government sources, as follows:

i. The Department of the Environment has paid £8,000 in historic building grant towards the repair and maintenance of the manor house.

ii. The Training and Employment Agency of the Department of Economic Development has paid £214,800 over the years 1987-88 to 1989-90 and are prepared to pay £64,000 in 1990-91 for ACE projects which include the refurbishment of the manor house, conversion of the tithe barn to create a dive centre and an environmental clean-up on the Island.

iii. An offer of grant of almost £54,000 towards the cost of developing an activity centre at the manor house complex has been made by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board, acting as agent for the International Fund for Ireland, under the tourism amenities scheme.

iv. The trust has also applied to the Department of Economic Development for grant aid from the European regional development fund under the tourism operational programme. The application which relates to other proposed works associated with the manor house development is at present under consideration.

In recent years several representations from the Rathlin Island Trust and others have been received by Ministers about provision of services on Rathlin island; no representations about the trust have been received. I am not aware of the way in which membership of the trust is gained.

Protection of Birds

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list those areas of special protection for birds as well as those Ramsar sites and areas with dual designation for the protection of birds.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Lough Neagh and Lough Beg is a Ramsar site. We are working on further special protection.

Radioactivity

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many areas of what size in Northern Ireland are still under food protection emergency prohibitions as a consequence of the Chernobyl incident; how many breeding sheep are still grazing on each such area; by how much radioactivity has decreased

in each such area by reference to *(a)* sheepmeat, *(b)* vegetation and *(c)* soil/peat; and when he now expects all restrictions on sheep to be removed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 3 July 1990]:* Testing of marketable lamb at slaughterhouses throughout Northern Ireland continues to show that lamb is safe. Restrictions on movement and slaughter of sheep in Northern Ireland apply in the following areas:

	Glenshane County Londonderry	*Belraugh County Londonderry*	*Glenwherry County Antrim*
Acreage	10,744	2,247	8,620
Estimated number of breeding sheep	11,300	3,000	7,000

Monitoring of radioactivity levels in survey flocks has demonstrated no significant fall in radioactivity levels.

The available research data from sampling of vegetation and soil/peat do not allow firm conclusions to be reached.

It is not possible to predict how long restrictions will need to stay in force. They will be lifted as soon as it is possible to do so without compromising the safety of the food chain.

Fair Employment

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the directors of the Inner City Trust in Londonderry.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 3 July 1990]:* The information requested is held by the Registrar of Friendly Societies at 64 Chichester street, Belfast and the registrar is required to make it available to the public, during office hours on payment of a fee.

Emergency Provision Legislation

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons were detained under Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Acts in 1989; and how many of these persons were subsequently charged with *(a)* scheduled offences, *(b)* non-scheduled offences.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 4 July 1990]:* Eighty seven people were arrested under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978 and six were subsequently charged with scheduled offences.

Female Prisoners

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the average length of custodial sentence of female prisoners in Northern Ireland in 1989.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 4 July 1990]:* Three hundred and twenty four days, excluding those committed to prison on default of payment of a fine.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the average period of custodial remand for female custodial remand prisoners in Northern Ireland in 1989.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 4 July 1990]:* The average length of time spent on custodial remand by female prisoners who were tried in 1989 and were in custody at the time of trial was 28 days.

Energy Costs

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to the answers of 11 June, *Official Report*, column 30 and 21 May, *Official Report*, column 30, about energy consumption, what is the square footage of office space to which these figures relate.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 25 June 1990]:* The total area of the Government office estate in Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Office in London in 1988-89 was just over 2·9 million sq. ft.

EMPLOYMENT

Job Interview Guarantee Scheme

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether, further to his reply of 11 June, *Official Report*, column *54*, concerning the progress of job interview guarantee, he will give the latest figures for the participation of unemployed people for each of the various options available under job interview guarantee, and for the numbers of participants who have been placed in jobs, by each area.

Mr. Eggar: The employment service became an executive agency on 2 April 1990. Mr. Mike Fogden, the Employment Service agency's chief executive, will be replying in writing to the hon. Lady.

Training

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of Government spending in the last financial year was devoted to training in each Group of Seven and European Community country; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The information is not available in the form requested. Figures showing public expenditure on labour market programmes as a percentage of GDP and which separately identify labour market training for adults and young people, are published in "Labour Market Policies for the 1990s"—OECD 1990. This OECD publication also draws attention to the methodological difficulties in attempting to arrive at internationally comparable data, the principal one stemming from the different institutional arrangements in individual countries, and it advises caution in interpreting the figures.

Tourism

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he expects his Department's review on tourism to be completed; and if he will consider publishing its full contents.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 4 July 1990]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply by my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Yardley, (Mr. Bevan) on 28 November 1989, *Official Report*, column *212*. There are no plans to publish the consultant's report that informed the review.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received from the London tourist board on his Department's review of tourism.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 4 July 1990]:* None.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received over modifications to the Development of Tourism Act 1969; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 4 July 1990]:* I have received no such representations. Within the framework of the Act, the recent review of tourism has concentrated on refocusing the Government's support for tourism.

ENERGY

Renewable Energy Projects

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will classify the number of renewable energy projects submitted to his Department for approval in the first tranche of renewable energy, according to which renewable technology and the total electrical capacity proposed for each category of renewables.

Mr. Peter Morrison: By the beginning of 1990 sponsors of some 350 projects, totalling around 2 GW of nominal capacity, had informed the precursors to the public electricity suppliers of their interest in contracting for renewables within the initial non-fossil fuel obligation.

This total included a certain amount of double-counting, since some projects were regarded by their sponsors as alternatives while others were competing projects from different sponsors. Other projects have not, in the event, been ready to contract within the initial order. Subject to those qualifications, the main categories of projects submitted were: landfill gas (80 projects, 110 MW nominal); waste incineration (60 projects, 800 MW nominal); and wind (130 projects, 500 MW nominal). Other projects submitted were for hydro, biogas, and tidal schemes.

My right hon. Friend plans to make an order setting the initial level of the non-fossil fuel obligation in respect of renewables-sourced electricity generation in the late summer. Projects that are not ready to contract under that order will have the opportunity to do so under subsequent orders.

Nuclear Power Stations

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will update the information given in his answer of 3 November 1989, *Official Report*, column *374*, to the hon. Member for Gordon, (Mr. Bruce) to give the annual load factor achieved by *(a)* the Central Electricity Generating Board, and *(b)* the South of Scotland electricity board nuclear power stations for each month from April 1989 to March 1990, inclusive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I have nothing further to add to the reply I gave the hon. Member on 11 June 1990, *Official Report*, column *7*.

Sizewell B

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what effect the decision of Nuclear Electric to charge £199 million on costs associated with Sizewell B to revenue will have on the level of the non-fossil fuel levy.

Mr. Wakeham: None. The size of the levy depends largely on the price charged by Nuclear Electric in its contract with the 12 regional electricity companies. This is not affected by changes in Nuclear Electric's accounting policies.

HEALTH

Kidney Disease

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of renal units in England and Wales.

Mr. Dorrell: According to information provided by the European Dialysis and Transplant Association, there are currently 84 renal and kidney transplant units in England and Wales.

Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will list all the meetings involving his Department and Porton International Ltd., and the attendance at each;

(2) if he will list the dates and attendance list of meetings between the Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research and Porton International Ltd.

Mr. Dorrell: A list of the liaison meetings between officers of the Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research (CAMR), the public health laboratory service (PHLS) and Porton Products Ltd. (PP), a member of the Porton International group, is at table A; and a list of meetings of the CAMR committee, a sub-committee of the PHLS board including representatives from the Department of Health and PP, is at table B. In addition, there have been a number of other meetings between the Department and Porton International since 1983.

Table A

Liaison meetings between the centre for applied microbiology and research and Porton international/Porton products

4 November 1985
18 December 1985
13 January 1986
3 March 1986
21 April 1986
10 June 1986
14 July 1986
4 September 1986
17 November 1986
15 December 1986
16 February 1987
25 March 1987
8 May 1987
13 July 1987
22 September 1987
6 November 1987
15 January 1988
21 March 1988
29 April 1988
23 June 1988
22 July 1988
22 September 1988
9 November 1988
9 December 1988

23 January 1989
27 February 1989
12 May 1989
4 September 1989
16 October 1989
29 November 1989
17 January 1990
21 March 1990
23 April 1990
5 June 1990

Table B

Meetings of the CAMR sub-committee of the public health laboratory service board
29 April 1987
9 July 1987
9 September 1987
12 November 1987
4 February 1988
12 May 1988
28 July 1988
3 November 1988
1 February 1989
10 May 1989
3 August 1989
2 November 1989
31 January 1990
16 May 1990

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether a valuation has been carried out of the cancer cell culture collection at the Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research.

Mr. Dorrell: No separate valuation has been carried out of the European collection of animal cell cultures.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how the internal and external audit responsibilities are exercised at the Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research; and who has the responsibility for carrying out these audits.

Mr. Dorrell: The Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research is part of the public health laboratory service (PHLS). The external audit of the PHLS' annual accounts is the responsibility of the Comptroller and Auditor General. The advances and receipts of the PHLS also form part of the Department's appropriation account for the hospital and community health service, the family practitioner service and other services, England—class XIV, vote I. Internal audit arrangements are the responsibility of the PHLS board.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the agreement between his Department and Porton International Ltd involving the Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research terminates.

Mr. Dorrell: There are no agreements between the Department and Porton International plc but there are various agreements between the public health laboratory service board and companies in the Porton International group concerning the Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research. The agreement concerning distributorship and marketing of certain products may be terminated on or after 13 October 1998.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the date on which the agreement was made between his Department and Porton International Ltd. giving that company exclusive rights over the commercial work of the Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research.

Mr. Dorrell: No such agreement exists. However, an agreement between the public health laboratory service board and Porton Products Ltd., a company in the Porton International group, concerning the distributorship and marketing of certain products of the Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research was signed on 22 March 1985.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the patents and exclusive licences held by the Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research.

Mr. Dorrell: The public health laboratory board holds some 57 current licences and patents on behalf of the Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research. Details are commercially sensitive.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether any *(a)* internal review or *(b)* value-for-money evaluation of the agreement between his Department and Porton International Ltd. involving the Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research has been carried out.

Mr. Dorrell: The operation of the agreements between companies in the Porton International group and the public health laboratory service board, involving the Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research, is kept under continuous review by the board.

Operations

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total number of coronary artery bypass grafting operations carried out in 1979 and in the latest year for which figures are available in each of the 14 health regions.

Mr. Dorrell: Information is not available in the precise form requested. The only figures on the number of coronary artery bypass grafts performed in 1979 are those for the United Kingdom collected annually by the Society of Cardiothoracic Surgeons. According to the society's returns, the number of grafts carried out in 1979 was 3,538; in 1987, the latest year for which comprehensive figures are available, the number was 12,820. This represents a rise of 262 per cent. over the period.

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total number of operations for chronic renal failure carried out in 1979 and in the latest year for which figures are available in each of the 14 health regions.

Mr. Dorrell: According to information from the United Kingdom transplant service the number of cadaveric kidney transplants carried out in the 14 regional health authorities in 1989 was as follows:

Region	*Cadaveric kidney transplants*
Northern	97
Yorkshire	104
Trent	131
East Anglian	60
North West Thames	93
North East Thames	165
South East and South West Thames	191
Wessex	90
Oxford	83
South Western	96
West Midlands	146
Mersey	61

Region	Cadaveric kidney transplants
North Western	138
Total	1,455

Regional figures are not available for 1979.

Information on any other operations for chronic renal failure is not collected centrally.

AIDS

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what reports he has received from the chief medical officer about the possible spread of HIV and AIDS via dentistry practice; whether any consideration has been given to the use, on one occasion only, of disposable drills; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Current evidence supports the view that there is little risk of transmitting infectious diseases, including HIV and AIDS, during dental treatment provided that recommended cross-infection control procedures are practised during the treatment of all patients. The chief dental officer of the Department of Health issued advice, explaining that infection with HIV was less easily transmitted than the hepatitis B virus and reminded practitioners of the recommendations of the expert group on hepatitis in dentistry—1979 HMSO—on the need for proper precautions. The chief dental officer reiterated his advice in May 1988. A copy has been placed in the Library.

Most dental drills—burs—are made of carbon steel, tungsten carbide or diamond and are not suitable for single use. They can most conveniently be sterilised by saturated steam in an autoclave.

Residential Homes

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals he has to ensure that persons with criminal convictions do not run residential homes for the elderly and disabled.

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he now intends to take to ensure that persons with a criminal record are not knowingly engaged in supervising and managing old persons' homes.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Government have decided, with the agreement of the Association of Chief Police Officers, to make arrangements for registration authorities to be able to obtain from the police details of any conviction recorded against a potential owner or manager of a residential care or nursing home. The arrangements will be similar to those already operating for the protection of children. They will cover both local authority and registered homes; and will apply to small homes once those homes are brought under regulatory control. Our aim is to bring the scheme into operation by 1 April 1991.

In addition, regulations will be made under the Registered Homes Act so that applicants for registration will be required by law to disclose any previous conviction. Where checks are made the individuals concerned will be notified if police records differ from the information supplied by them.

Free Milk

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to his reply of 16 May, *Official Report*, column *417*, of those 90,000 registered to receive free milk for children under five, how many are *(a)* child minders, *(b)* playgroups and *(c)* day nurseries.

Mr. Dorrell: Information is not available in the format requested.

Ward Closures, Camberwell

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the proposed closures of wards and beds by Camberwell health authority require his consent.

Mr. Dorrell: Under the terms of the Community Health Council Regulations 1985 a health authority proposing substantial development or variation in the health service is required to consult the community health council. If the community health council does not agree to proposals involvimg the closure of a health building it has the right to have the decision reviewed by the regional health authority. If the regional health authority supports the original decision, the matter can be referred to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State. A health authority may implement a closure if it is satisfied that, in the interests of the health service, a decision has to be taken without allowing time for consultation. In any such case, however, the health authority is obliged to notify the community health council immediately of the decision taken and the reason why no consultation has taken place.

Health Service Funding

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what prohibitions have been placed on health authorities from using non-recurring finance to support patient-related activities in the 1990-91 financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: We have issued no such prohibitions to health authorities.

Pegina

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will list those members serving on the Committee on the Review of Medicines when the herbal medicine Pegina was reviewed who have expertise in the pharmacy of plant materials;

(2) what reasons the Committee on the Review of Medicines gave to him for their decision not to renew the licence for the sale of the herbal medicine Pegina.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The advice given by the Committee on the Review of Medicines is based upon corporate decisions for which the Committee as a whole takes responsibility, there was a member with expertise in the pharmacology of plant materials at the relevant time. We are unable to provide details about the review of the herbal product "Pegina" since section 118 of the Medicines Act 1968 generally prohibits disclosure of information obtained by the licensing authority in pursuance of the Act.

Advertising

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which advertising agency has been advising in respect of health service publicity; and what brief it was given.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The two advertising agencies appointed following advice from the Government's Independent Advisory Committee on Advertising and currently used by the Department are TBWA Advertising Ltd and Yellowhammer.

TBWA Advertising Ltd advised on advertising campaigns to recruit nurses and to raise awareness of the need for blood and organ donors. Yellowhammer advises on the national campaign on the prevention of drug misuse.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what budget he has authorised to pay for the advertising, publication and distribution costs of the leaflets to be published by his Department to explain the Government's health service reforms; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The cost of the production and distribution of "The NHS Reforms and You" booklet is estimated at £2·75 million; this works out at 10p per household, which is good value bearing in mind that the average family spends £35 per week on the NHS. This cost includes the distribution of the booklet to each household in England and nine ethnic minority language versions which are available on request. The languages are Bengali, Cantonese, Greek, Gujerati, Hindi, Polish, Punjabi, Turkish and Urdu.

There are no plans to advertise the booklet.

Health Authorities

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give for each new regional and district authority *(a)* the criteria for selection of the new membership, *(b)* details of the process used for selection, *(c)* the timetable used to implement this process and *(d)* the names of those who have accepted invitations to join the authorities.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State is responsible for appointing non-executive members of regional health authorities. Regional health authorities are responsible for appointing non-executive members of district health authorities. The chief officer and the chief finance officer are ex-officio executive members on all RHAs and DHAs. The remaining executive members are appointed by the chairman, the non-executive members and the chief officer.

The main criteria used in the selection process are the personal qualities and experience of the individuals concerned. All suggestions are welcomed and given consideration, from whatever source they originate. Regional health authorities are to be reconstituted from 26 July 1990 and district health authorities from 17 September 1990. No appointments have yet been made.

Special Hospitals

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many special hospital places are currently available in England and Wales; how many are occupied; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: There are some 1,750 places currently available at the three special hospitals—Broadmoor, Rampton and Ashworth—which cover England and Wales, of which 1,616 were occupied on 30 June 1990. A further 91 patients were away from hospital on trial leave. If the hon. Member requires more detailed information, I suggest that he writes to the chairman of the Special Hospitals Service Authority, Dr. David Edmond, who is responsible for the operational management of the special hospitals.

Secure Units

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many regional secure unit places are currently available in England and Wales; how many are occupied; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: In June 1989, the most recent date for which information is available, there were 660 places in regional secure units, including interim facilities, in England. Occupancy figures are not held centrally. Health service provision in Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Hypothermia

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many death certificates showed hypothermia as *(a)* the cause of death and *(b)* a contribution to the causes of death in each of the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested is given in the table.

Number of deaths (a) with hypothermia as underlying cause of death and (b) with any mention of hypothermia on the death certificate, England and Wales, 1980-89

Year	Underlying cause[1]	Mention
1980	261	596
1981	276	685
1982	326	664
1983	221	538
1984	266	555
1985	440	827
1986	437	837
1987	269	559
1988	194	440
[2]1989	166	375

[1] Assigned to the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) 9th revision codes 778·3 and 991·6.

[2] Provisional.

Note:

For 1986 to 1989 neonatal deaths are included in the mentions but NOT in the underlying cause of death (neonatal deaths were not given an underlying cause of death from 1 January 1986 onwards).

Ice Cream

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will introduce specific measures to eliminate the health hazards posed by the sale of ice cream; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The reported incidence of food poisoning does not show that ice cream poses particular health problems. Ice cream, like any other food that may pose a health risk, will be subject to the new provisions of the Food Safety Act 1990. Among other things, the Act

provides for tighter controls when food is found to be unfit; for improved food law enforcement; for a system of registration of food traders and for the training of those who handle food commercially.

A recently publicised survey has produced some evidence of bacterial contamination of ice cream at the point of sale. In 1989 the Department collaborated with the Ice Cream Alliance, the Ice Cream Federation and the Institute of Environmental Health Officers to produce a code of practice to address this problem. The Department will bring the contents of the code to the attention of all ice cream vendors.

Births

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will give a breakdown by district health authority of *(a)* the total number of births and *(b)* the total number of directly national health service employed midwives, excluding agency and student midwives, in each of the last six years for which figures are available;

(2) if he will give a breakdown by district health authority of the average numbers of births per directly employed national health service midwife, excluding agency and student midwives, in each of the last six years for which figures are available.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 21 June 1990]:* Details for 1988, the latest year available, are shown in the table and have been placed in the Library. Providing the information by district health authority for six years would incur disproportionate cost.

Comparisons between different district health authorities need to be interpreted with caution, as they are not indicative of how well services are being provided. Health authorities will have regard to a number of different factors in setting staffing levels for their maternity services in addition to the expected number of births. These include the proportion of midwives to nurses, the size, number and layout of units and the pattern of community care, and the type of area.

SCOTLAND

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will place in the Library current information on work commissioned and completed on ethnic minorities in Scotland, in the areas of employment, pay, population and unemployment;

(2) if he will list work commissioned and completed on ethnic minorities in Scotland, in the areas of employment, pay, population and unemployment.

Mr. Lang: A firm of independent consultants has conducted a major survey, funded by the Scottish Office, of the circumstances and experiences of Scotland's principal ethnic minority groups to identify whether and to what extent these differ from those of the majority white population. The report of the survey, which will be published later this year, will be used to inform policy and to enable monitoring of future changes in areas such as ethnicity, housing, employment, education, health and crime. A copy of the report will be placed in the Library in due course.

Woodland Grant Scheme

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the location, area of planting and area of natural regeneration for each scheme that has been approved by the Forestry Commission under the native pinewood section of the woodland grant scheme since its introduction.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is as follows.

(hectares)

Location of scheme	*Area of planting*		*Area of natural regeneration*
	New planting	*Restocking*	
Corrielair, Skye and Lochalsh	257·9	—	25·5
Mains of Mulben, Moray	0·7	2·8	0·7
The Crannach 4, Kincardine and Deeside	34·8	—	—
Glen Tannar Estate, Kincardine and Deeside	—	15·7	—
Finzean Estate, Kincardine and Deeside	—	15·0	1·7
Coulin, Ross and Cromarty	51·0	23·8	—
Lochluichart Estate 1, Ross and Cromarty	274·8	—	—
Lochluichart Estate 3, Ross and Cromarty	275·0	—	—
Lochluichart Estate 4, Ross and Cromarty	222·8	—	—
Bayfield Hill, Ross and Cromarty	—	42·0	—
Monar Estate, Ross and Cromarty	8·9	—	—
Ardessie Fisheries, Ross and Cromarty	0·9	—	—
Glencalvie, Sutherland	34·2	—	—
Rothiemurchus (Cambusmore), Badenoch and Strathspey	—	81·6	—
Lethan Bar (South), Inverness	—	8·0	—
Lethan Bar (North), Inverness	—	23·6	—
Redburn, Nairn	—	6·3	—
Rothiemurchus (Guislich), Badenoch and Strathspey	17·2	—	—
Ardochy, Inverness	20·5	36·5	—
Conaglen Estate, Lochaber	44·0	78·1	—
Kingairloch, Lochaber	—	10·4	—
Blackmount, Argyll and Bute	46·8	—	—
Cray, Perth and Kinross	20·8	—	—

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total area in Scotland of all applications approved under the woodland grant scheme in each year since its introduction.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is given in the table.

Period	*Total area covered by approved applications (hectares)*	
21 June 1988-31 March 1989	19,761	[1]10,060
1 April 1989-31 March 1990	51,668	[1]18,827
1 April 1990-31 May 1990	9,350	[1]2,457

[1] Including proposed for new planting.

Applications covering a further 48,521 hectares, including 20,911 hectares of new planting, were awaiting approval at 31 May 1990.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total area and number of applications that the Forestry Commission has received for native Scots Pine since the availability of the broadleaved rate of grant for this species under the woodland grant scheme.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Forestry Commission has received 35 applications for establishing native Scots pine under the woodland grant scheme since the introduction of the higher rates of grant in June 1988. These applications cover a total area of 6,582 hectares, including 2,942 hectares of new planting, 685 hectares of restocking and 122 hectares of natural regeneration.

Radioactive Caesium

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by county, and by year for the last five years, the number of reported cases of radioactive caesium in people.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Low concentrations of caesium radionuclides are detectable in people generally as a result of atmospheric fallout and releases from nuclear installations.

Following the Chernobyl accident, the Scottish universities research and reactor centre was commissioned on behalf of the Scottish Development Department to undertake a study of the levels of radiocaesium in representative members of the population of Scotland. The results of the first phase of this study have been published in a report—"DOE Report No. DOE/RW/88.103, Measurement of radioactivity from Chernobyl in population groups in Scotland"—which is available in the Library.

Scottish Airports

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans his Department has to encourage further investment in Scottish airports and flights, especially in relation to 1992.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Government's policy of liberalising air services has led to the expansion of direct air services between Scotland and Europe and will continue to encourage operators to provide improved services where demand exists. BAA plc, which owns and operates Scotland's major international airports, has invested and is continuing to invest in facilities to meet the increase in demand. This substantial investment is being funded from the company's own resources.

The Scottish Office already provides support to Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd. in respect of its airports and to Loganair in respect of a lifeline air service to Tiree and Barra.

Care and Repair Projects

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish *(a)* the identity of each care and repair project sponsored by his Department, *(b)* the total annual revenue budget for each year of such projects, *(c)* the amount of annual contributions to each of these projects made by (i) the Scottish Office and (ii) local authorities, *(d)* the identity of individuals or organisations appointed by his Department to evaluate the projects, *(e)* in each case the cost or estimated or tender costs of such evaluations, and *(f)* the basis on which the persons or organisations appointed to evaluate the projects were selected.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The care and repair initiative in Scotland is funded jointly by the Scottish Development Department and Shelter (Scotland) and is managed by Shelter (Scotland). Eight local schemes have been set up under the initiative. Their locations and starting dates are shown in the table:

Location	*Starting date*
Skye and Lochalsh	October 1987
Aberdeen	November 1987
Renfrew	November 1987
East Lothian	December 1987
Falkirk	January 1988
Orkney	February 1988
Glasgow	March 1988
Clydesdale	September 1988

On the basis of information supplied to the Scottish Development Department by Shelter (Scotland) the total annual revenue budgets for the projects and for the national co-ordinator's office were as follows:

	£
1987-88	83,400
1988-89	201,000
1989-90	220,400

The Scottish Office's contribution to these budgets was as follows:

	1987-88 £	*1988-89* £	*1989-90* £
Skye and Lochalsh	4,000	9,500	14,000
East Lothian	5,000	7,000	13,500
Aberdeen	3,500	8,500	11,500
Renfrew	4,500	8,000	9,000
Falkirk	3,500	8,500	10,000
Orkney	2,000	9,500	10,500
Glasgow	Nil	8,000	8,500
Clydesdale	Nil	4,000	8,500
National co-ordinator's office	15,000	27,500	24,000
Total	37,500	90,500	109,500

Details of the amounts contributed by individual local authorities are not held centrally by the Scottish Office.

The current evaluation of the initiative has been sponsored jointly by the Scottish Development Department and Scottish Homes. The work is being carried out by the consultants Price Waterhouse, and is being supervised by an evaluation steering group chaired by Professor Duncan MacLennan of the centre for housing research at Glasgow university. The steering group is made up of representatives from the Scottish Development Department, Scottish Homes, Shelter (Scotland), Age Concern Scotland, COSLA and the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations. The steering group members were appointed by the care and repair initiative national advisory committee. The evaluation is being carried out at a cost of £101,976, funded equally by the Scottish Development Department and Scottish Homes, and the contract was awarded to Price Waterhouse following competitive tendering.

Student Grants

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in respect of the academic years 1988-89, 1989-90 and 1990-91 the number of grants made available for postgraduate vocational courses in respect of each course at each college in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* England, *(c)* Wales and *(d)* Northern Ireland.

Mr. Lang: The information for academic years 1988-89 and 1989-90 is as follows:

	Scotland	*England*	*Wales*	*Northern Ireland*	*Total*
1988-89	2,382	273	14	4	2,673
1989-90	2,606	293	18	2	2,919

The corresponding information for academic year 1990-91 is not yet available.

School Meals

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will introduce legislation which lays down nutritional standards which the providers of school meals must attain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: No. It is for education authorities, which are responsible for the administration of the school meal service, to decide the content and standard of school meals.

School Boards

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many school boards have been set up for primary schools; what percentage this is of the total; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many school boards have been set up for secondary schools; what percentage this is of the total; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The information is as follows:

	Primary	*Secondary*
Number of boards established	1,869	413
Percentage of schools in each category with boards established	80	96

The establishment of 2,282 school boards in Scotland clearly demonstrates the strength of public support for the Government's initiative, and illustrates the success of the policy of extending parental involvement in school education.

Quarry Dust

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice he has given to district councils concerning dust control from quarries; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No advice has been given to district councils in respect of dust control from quarries. The responsibility for ensuring that dust control measures undertaken by the operator are adequate rests with Her Majesty's industrial pollution inspectorate.

Alcohol Abuse

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent advice he has given to education authorities concerning alcohol abuse among children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Guidance on health education 10-14 is being prepared jointly by the Scottish Health Education Group (SHEG) and the Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum (SCCC) and will be issued to schools shortly. SHEG is also preparing videos and teaching packs about alcohol for school health education programmes. Schools from each education authority will take part in a conference on young people and alcohol in November, organised by the Department and sponsored by the Scotch Whisky Association. In addition, the Department has drawn the attention of education authorities to curricular material produced by Strathclyde health and aids project in education (SHAPE) which covers alcohol abuse among other subjects.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the percentage increase or decrease in notifiable offences recorded by the police in the first quarter of 1990 over the same quarter in 1989, identifying *(a)* violence against the person, *(b)* sexual offences, *(c)* burglary, *(d)* robbery, *(e)* theft, *(f)* handling stolen goods, *(g)* fraud and forgery, *(h)* criminal damage and *(i)* other offences.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The table sets out the figures on the percentage changes in crime recorded by the police using the best available approximations in the Scottish classification of crimes and offences to the categories listed. The term "notifiable offences" is not used in Scotland. Quarterly figures are subject to considerable variation and for technical reasons are less accurate than annual figures. The Scottish Home and Health Department statistical bulletin "Recorded Crime in Scotland 1989", a copy of which is in the Library, provides annual figures for 1989 and earlier years.

The number of crimes recorded by the police in the first quarters of 1989 and 1990 and the percentage change. (Provisional estimates) Scotland

	1st quarter 1989	*1st quarter 1990*	*Percentage change*
Violence against the person	11,486	12,777	+8
Sexual offences	1,012	1,149	+14
Burglary	23,693	26,941	+14
Robbery	1,118	1,241	+11
Theft	54,995	61,356	+12
Handling stolen goods	423	529	+25
Fraud and forgery	5,782	5,755	0
Criminal damage	18,963	21,561	+14
Othr crimes	7,321	9,416	+29
All crimes and petty assault	124,793	140,395	+13

Notes:

The categories listed have been derived from the categories of the Scottish classification of crimes and offences as follows:

"Violence against the person": all non-sexual crimes of violence (group 1 of the standard classification) apart from robbery together with the crimes of reckless driving at common law, endangering railway passengers and endangering ship by breach of duty and the offence of petty assault. (Following changes to the definition of serious assault in January 1990 to improve comparability between police forces, it is necessary to include petty assault when comparisons are made over time).

"Sexual offences": all crimes of indecency (group 2 of the standard classification) apart from indecent exposure, brothel keeping and prostitution.

"Burglary": housebreaking.

"Theft": opening lockfast places and clandestine removal in addition to theft per se.

"Handling stolen goods": reset.

"Fraud and forgery": fraud, forgery and uttering, bankruptcy and currency offences.

"Criminal damage": fire raising, vandalism and other crimes of malicious and reckless conduct not involving violence against the person.

"Other offences": other crimes in groups 1 to 5 of the standard classification not included above.

Lothian and Borders Police

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will now authorise the creation of another 50 police officers for the Lothian and Borders police force; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to him on 4 July 1990, *Official Report*, column *614*.

Religious Education

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will consult school boards concerning religious education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: A draft circular on religious education and observance was issued for consultation in March this year. Comments have been received by or on behalf of parents and a number of school boards. Responses are now being studied with a view to issuing a circular of guidance later in the year.

Nurses

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is his policy on the employment by Scottish health boards of *(a)* permanent nursing staff and *(b)* agency based, temporary nursing staff; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make a statement on his policy on the employment of temporary, agency-based nursing staff in acute hospital wards.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The employment of nursing staff is a matter for health boards to arrange. There are circumstances where it is more economic for boards to engage temporary agency-based nursing staff rather than to appoint permanent staff, but this must be decided in the light of local circumstances. The number of agency-based nursing staff is monitored regularly and at the last count it constituted half of 1 per cent. of the qualified nursing work force in Scotland.

Nursery Education

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many children in Scotland are currently receiving nursery education in state schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The provisional number of pupils in education authority nursery schools and departments at September 1989 is 42,269.

The extent and nature of pre-school education is a matter for education authorities.

Environmental Programme

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement concerning the amount of grant aid being made available uner the special grants (environmental) programme in 1990-91 to voluntary bodies in Scotland working in the environmental field.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am pleased to announce that the grant aid totalling £201,000 has been offered to the following voluntary bodies in the financial year 1990-91, to assist them in carrying out environmental conservation, improvement or educational work in Scotland:

	Amount of Grant £
Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland	2,500
Buchan Countryside Group	2,500
Central Scotland Countryside Trust	12,000
Centre for Human Ecology	4,000
Community Service Volunteers	7,500
Council for Scottish Archaeology	8,000
Environment Centre	6,000
Highland Forum	10,000
John Muir Trust	5,000
Locus	2,000
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds	11,000
Royal Zoological Society of Scotland	4,000
Scottish Community Woods Campaign	6,000
Scottish Conservation Projects	30,000
Scottish Ecological Consultants	4,000
Scottish Environmental Education Council	12,000
Scottish Field School of Archaeology	1,500
Scottish Fields Studies Association	8,000
Scottish Historic Buildings Trust	11,000
Scottish Rights of Way Society	2,500
Scottish Scenic Trust	2,000
Scottish Wildlife and Countryside Link	10,000
Scottish Wildlife Trust	25,000
Strathclyde Building Preservation Trust	3,500
The Woodland Trust	5,000
Water of Leith Conservation Trust	6,000

A further £4,000 is being held in reserve to support suitable projects arising during the year.

The aims and criteria of the scheme have been reviewed following its first three years of operation and the experience of the scheme has been generally very good. I am satisfied that the grants now offered will greatly assist the voluntary organisations to increase their level of activity and do much useful work.

Insulation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of loft insulation jobs completed so far in the current year and completed in the equivalent periods of 1987, 1988 and 1989; and what were the full-year figures for 1987, 1988 and 1989 for each region and Scotland as a whole.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 12 June 1990]:* Figures for 1990 are not yet available. Information on the number of dwellings for which home insulation grants were given in the years 1987, 1988 and 1989 is given in the following table:

Home insulation grants paid, Scotland

	1987	*1988*	*1989*
Scotland	18,099	9674	3,907
Borders	269	210	102
Central	4,404	2,743	930
Dumfries and Galloway	391	158	17
Fife	1,120	659	324
Grampian	1,326	441	95
Highland	902	267	34
Lothian	1,897	744	348
Strathclyde	5,927	3,723	1,813
Tayside	1,689	588	160
Orkney Islands	114	83	60
Shetland Islands	8	14	2
Western Isles	52	44	22

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

North Sea (Dumping)

Mr. Watson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if any information is available to his Department on the practical alternatives to the proposed dumping in the North sea of concentrated phenol contained in the waste products of paracetamol.

Mr. Gummer: The Ministry has required the company concerned to develop and implement a land-based means of disposal of its waste as soon as possible. A number of processes considered have proved impracticable, since the process chosen will need to treat all constituents of the waste, not just the phenol content (which is less than 0·8 per cent.). The company is now completing its evaluation of a possible process.

Tests on the waste show that under the conditions of disposal it causes no harm to the marine environment. Since no alternative means of disposal yet exists the licence for sea disposal has been renewed for a further period.

Tuberculosis

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has plans to review his policy towards tuberculosis control; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The tuberculosis control policy is kept under constant review to ensure its continued effectiveness.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many badgers have been slaughtered due to tuberculosis on a county-by-county basis for each year since 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested is as follows:

	1985	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*
Avon	103	88	37	110	129
Cornwall	302	270	117	100	176
Devon	43	31	91	193	180
Dorset	276	27	62	77	13
Dyfed	57	41	19	27	5
Gloucestershire	238	260	235	242	206
Somerset	6	—	65	23	—
East and West Sussex	4	—	—	—	—
Wiltshire	90	65	85	6	18
Total	1,119	782	711	778	727

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has and what research he has carried out into the possible transmission of bovine tuberculosis from cattle to cattle by nose contact; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Largely because of the effectiveness of routine cattle testing, the transmission of bovine tuberculosis both within herds and between contiguous premises in Great Britain is rare. The possible origin of infection in all confirmed herd breakdowns is investigated. Movements on to farms and badger activity have been shown to be far more significant.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cattle have been slaughtered as a result of tuberculosis by county for each year since 1985.

Mr. Gummer: The following table sets out for counties in England and Wales for the years 1986-89 the numbers of cattle slaughtered under the Tuberculosis (England and Wales) Order 1984. Counties not shown have no record of any slaughter. Information in the form requested is not available for 1985.

	1986	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*[1]
Berkshire	—	1	1	—
Buckinghamshire	—	—	—	1
Hampshire	3	3	2	2
Isle of Wight	—	—	—	1
Surrey	7	—	1	—
East Sussex	3	2	—	—
West Sussex	—	—	—	23
Bedfordshire	—	—	2	—
Cambridgeshire	—	1	—	—
Essex	1	—	5	—
Hertfordshire	2	2	—	—
Lincolnshire	1	1	—	6
Norfolk	3	—	—	1
Suffolk	—	1	—	4
Cleveland	—	—	2	—
Cumbria	3	1	1	1
Durham	3	—	—	—
Northumberland	—	3	19	1
Yorkshire	9	6	6	4
Humberside	—	—	—	7
Cornwall	101	173	118	244
Devon	46	159	173	88
Dorset	21	33	49	33
Gloucestershire	50	146	76	92
Avon	43	17	102	95
Somerset	9	43	13	7
Wiltshire	25	22	9	102
Cheshire	2	2	5	1
Derbyshire	—	1	3	9
Hereford and Worcester	19	2	4	25
Lancashire	10	25	19	12
Leicestershire	3	12	9	10
Merseyside	—	5	1	—
Nottinghamshire	1	—	3	—
Shropshire	1	—	15	13
Staffordshire	5	2	15	14
Warwickshire	5	3	2	3
Greater Manchester	5	7	1	1
Powys	11	61	4	7
Gwynedd	—	1	—	—
Dyfed	82	68	52	51
Clwyd	—	—	—	4
South Glamorgan	1	—	—	—
West Glamorgan	—	—	2	—
Gwent	—	—	1	7
Total	475	803	715	869

[1] Provisional.

Swine Swill Farms

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will estimate the number of unlicensed swine swill farms in operation; what steps he is taking to identify such premises; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: It is not possible to estimate whether and to what extent any swill farms remain unlicensed, but there is no evidence to indicate that this is a significant problem.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent assessment he has made of the animal welfare implications of the operating and feeding practices of swine swill farms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Swine swill farms are visited quarterly by the state veterinary service under the requirements of the Waste Food Order 1973. Welfare is monitored at these visits as well as at any other visits. Any welfare problems found will be dealt with as necessary either by giving advice or by recommending prosecution action.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are his estimates of the number of cattle infected with BSE, which have not shown symptoms of the disease, which have entered the food chain.

Mr. Gummer: No estimate has been made. The offals ban provides the necessary safeguards, should any cattle incubating the disease be slaughtered for human consumption.

Brucellosis

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cattle have been slaughtered in England and Wales as a result of brucellosis since 1985.

Mr. Gummer: A total of 8,474 cattle are recorded as having been slaughtered under the Brucellosis (England and Wales) Order 1981, as amended, since 1 January 1985.

Pesticides

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what advice he has given to *(a)* local authorities, and *(b)* British Rail about the use of pesticides to prevent them leaching into water supplies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The Department of Environment has commissioned a study of non-agricultural uses of herbicides and the Advisory Committee on Pesticides is reviewing as a priority those herbicides found most frequently in water. Advice may be issued to local authorities and British Rail in the light of these initiatives.

Caseous Lymphadentitis

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food further to his answer to the hon. Member for South Shields, *Official Report*, 28 June, columns *338-39*, if he will make inquiries as to why the goats imported from Germany subsequently found to have caseous lymphadentitis, had not been identified as having this disease during their post-import inspection; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to the *Official Report* of 21 June, column *653*.

Farm Animal Welfare Council

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all the publications of the Farm Animal Welfare Council, giving the date of publication in each case.

Mr. Gummer: The list of FAWC publications is as follows:

Report on the Animal Welfare Implications of Harvesting of Deer Antlers in Velvet (January 1980)
Advice to the Agriculture Ministers of Great Britain on the Need to Control Certain Mutilations on Farm Animals (July 1981)
Report on the Welfare of Poultry at the Time of Slaughter (January 1982)
Report on the Welfare of Livestock (Red Meat Animals) at the Time of Slaughter (June 1984)
Report on the Welfare of Farmed Deer (February 1985)
Report on the Welfare of Livestock when Slaughtered by Religious Methods (July 1985)
Report on the Welfare of Livestock at Markets (May 1986)
Egg Production Systems—an Assessment (September 1986)
Regulations Working Group Interim Ststement (November 1986)
Assessment of Pig Production Systems (March 1988)
Advice to Agriculture Ministers on Transportation of Unfit Animals (April 1988)
Report on Priorities in Animal Welfare Research and Development (May 1988)
Report of Enforcement Working Group (February 1990)
Advice to Ministers on the Handling and Transport of Poultry (February 1990)

Food Labelling

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the outcome of the discussions at the Council of Ministers meeting on 25-26 June on eggs and poultrymeat labelling rules; and whether any agreement was reached on the stamping of eggs.

Mr. Gummer: The Agriculture Council on 25-26 June adopted as A points (a) a regulation on marketing standards for eggs which will replace Council Regulation 2772/75 and (b) a regulation which will introduce marketing standards for poultrymeat. Both regulations include labelling requirements.

The new regulation on marketing standards for eggs permits, but does not require, one or more of a specified range of marks to be stamped on grade A eggs subject, in some cases, to further provisions to be set out in Commission regulations.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Manufacturing Industry

10. **Mr. Day:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the growth of manufacturing exports since 1985.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Over the period 1985 to 1989, the volume of manufactured exports rose by 31 per cent.; the fastest four-year growth rate since the comparable period ending in 1971.

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the manufacturing output figures for each EC country for the most recent year for which figures are available, and in 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Recent data on manufacturing output for the United Kingdom are published in the CSO's Economic Trends and for other EC countries in the OECD's Main Economic Indicators.

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the manufacturing investment figures for the last two years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: At 1985 prices, the estimates of manufacturing investment in 1988 and 1989, including leased assets, are £11,334 million and £12,054 million respectively Investment grew by an average 9 per cent. in the two years. This follows four years of growth averaging almost 8 per cent.

Government Expenditure

15. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest forecast for the share of gross domestic product to be taken by general Government expenditure.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The forecast for the ratio of general Government expenditure (excluding privatisation proceeds) to gross domestic product in 1990-91 published in the 1990 Financial Statement and Budget Report is 39 per cent.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what his Department's estimate of total Government expenditure was for 1990-91 *(a)* at the time of his Autumn Statement of 1989 and *(b)* at the time of his Budget; and what is the current estimate.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The projection of general government expenditure for 1990-91, set out in the 1989 Autumn Statement was £210·4 billion, and in the 1990 Financial Statement and Budget Report, £212·7 billion. A further estimate will be published in the 1990 Autumn Statement.

Retail Prices Index

Mr. James Lamond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met representatives of the retail prices index advisory committee; and what was discussed.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next expects to meet the retail prices index advisory committee to discuss the contents of the price index.

Mr. Lilley: It has never been the practice for the Minister responsible for the retail prices index to hold discussions with the advisory committee. The committee's recommendations are submitted as formal reports, which are subsequently presented to Parliament and published. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) that he had received such a report and will be announcing the Government's decision on the recommendations in due course.

40. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the adequacy of the retail prices index as a guide to the cost of living.

Mr. Lilley: The retail prices index is not a cost of living index in the strict sense of measuring changes in the cost of maintaining a particular level of consumption: nor is it a measure of what people need to spend in order to live. Rather it measures the impact of price changes on the cost of a "basket" of goods and services as purchased by households in the United Kingdom and I am satisfied that, given that "basket", it is adequate for the purpose. However, the index is affected by short-term, factors which make it an unsatisfactory indicator of the underlying trend of inflation, and it may also be unsuitable for international comparisons as other countries' indices are constructed differently. In particular the RPI is unusual in including mortgage interest payments and the community charge. For some purposes it is therefore helpful to refer to derivatives of the RPI or to other indices.

Interest Rates

20. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received in relation to the impact of interest rates on Scottish economic performance; and if he will make a statement.

42. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received regarding the impact of interest rates on Scottish economic performance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend has received a number of such representations.

25. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the current level of interest rates.

Mr. Ryder: Bank base rates are 15 per cent.

Balance of Payments

21. **Mr. Frank Cook:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the deficit on the current account of the balance of payments for *(a)* the first quarter of 1990 and *(b)* the first quarter of 1989.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The answer is £4·7 billion and £4·2 billion, respectively.

Mortgage Repayments

22. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on the number of people six to 12 months in arrears on their mortgage repayments.

Mr. Ryder: The latest available figures show that at end 1989 there were approximately 58,000 mortgage loans six to 12 months in arrears.

Top People's Pay

23. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he collects relating to top people's pay.

Mr. Ryder: The top salaries review body makes recommendations to the Government on the pay of top civil servants, senior military and the judiciary. I am also aware of the salaries of a variety of other senior public servants. No information is collected by Government on the pay of senior executives in private industry and business.

Inflation

24. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to meet his Economic Community counterparts, to discuss a common method to determine the inflation rate of each member state.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so at present. The practices followed in compiling consumer price indices vary between Community countries. The United Kingdom regularly joins in discussions with other members with a view to understanding the differences in methodology. When changes in the retail prices index have been proposed they have always been considered by the RPI advisory committee and due account taken then of practice elsewhere.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the current rate of inflation.

Mr. Ryder: The all-items RPI inflation rate was 9·7 per cent. in May. Underlying inflation, as measured by the RPI excluding mortgage interest payments and community charge, was 7·0 per cent.

Income Tax

26. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what increase in the rate of income tax would be required in 1990-91 for the top one-fifteenth earners to raise an additional £3 billion.

Mr. Lilley: About 1 in 15 taxpayers will pay income tax at the higher rate in 1990-91. An increase of 10 percentage points in the higher rate of tax would increase the liability to income tax of this group by about £3 billion in a full year. This estimate takes no account of any behavioural effects that might result from such an increase.

44. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on progress on the implementation of separate taxation for married couples.

Mr. Lilley: Independent taxation of husbands and wives was successfully introduced on 6 April this year.

35. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the estimated cost to the Treasury in a full year of making the married man's tax allowance transferable to non-working wives; and what is his policy as to the merits of making such a move.

Mr. Lilley: Under independent taxation, the married couple's allowance will go to the husband in the first instance. However, if he has insufficient income to use it in full himself any surplus can be transferred to his wife—whether or not she is at work—against her own income of any kind for her to use.

Bank of England

27. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met the Governor of the Bank of England; and whether the level of inflation was discussed.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend meets the Governor of the Bank of England on a regular basis.

Mr. Beith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met the Governor of the Bank of England to discuss exchange rate policy.

Mr. Major: I meet the Governor of the Bank of England on a regular basis.

European Currency

28. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on his new proposals for a European currency.

29. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has for an alternative European currency unit to compete with the currencies of European Community member states; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) on 21 June at column *655*.

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received recently about his plan for the exchange of Common Market currency for European Economic Community national currencies; what further steps he proposes to take; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has received a number of representations. He will be discussing the ideas put forward in his speech to the German Industry Forum with his Community colleagues in the coming weeks.

Company Cars

30. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about tax allowances for company cars.

Mr. Lilley: These allowances are regularly reviewed.

Tobacco

31. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many representations he has received concerning the increase in tax on tobacco in the current year's Budget; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: Nine letters were received from individuals or bodies representing health professionals who gave broad support for the tobacco taxation measures announced in the 1990 Budget. Four individuals wrote opposing the duty increases on cigarettes, cigars and hand-rolling tobacco.

European Monetary Union

33. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has for furthering European monetary union; and if he will make a statement.

39. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on his new proposals for European monetary union.

Mr. Lilley: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer my right hon. Friend the Chancellor gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) on 21 June at column *655*.

Investment

34. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met the Confederation of British Industry; and whether levels of investment were discussed.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor chaired the National Economic Development Council on 4 July, at which the CBI was represented. One of the topics discussed was United Kingdom investment, capacity and growth.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what he forecasts the growth in total fixed investment in 1990 will be.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Friend's latest forecast for total fixed investment, published in the Financial Statement and Budget Report, projects a fall of 1¼ per cent. in 1990.

Exchange Rate Mechanism

36. **Mr. Barry Porter:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what his latest plans are for taking the United Kingdom into the European exchange rate mechanism; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) on 7 June at column *774*.

Credit Advertising

37. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking to encourage the banks and building societies to adopt the recommendations contained in the Jack report on credit advertising.

Mr. Ryder: The banks and building societies have already set up a Committee under the independent chairmanship of Sir George Blunden, former Deputy Governor of the Bank of England, to oversee the preparation of the code of banking practice recommended in the Jack report. The intention is to have the main points of the code in place by early 1991, and the terms of reference of the committee make it clear that consumer and other interests will be fully consulted before the code is finalised. I understand the code will cover the issue of credit marketing as both the Jack committee and the Government have recommended. We shall look carefully at what they propose to see whether it is sufficient or whether any further action is necessary.

Tax and National Insurance

38. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the average sums paid in income tax and in national insurance contributions in 1989; and the comparable figures for 1979.

Mr. Lilley: The information is as follows:

Amount paid in income tax and national insurance contributions on average earnings

	Amount paid in income tax[1] and NIC on average earnings[2]	*Percentage of average earnings[2] paid in income tax and NIC*
1978-79		
Single person	29·25	31·5
Married man	25·76	27·8
1989-90[3]		
Single person	80·31	28·7
Married man	72·67	26·0

[1] Assuming that the only allowances available against income tax are the single persons and married man's/married couple's allowances as appropriate.

[2] Average earnings are for full time adult males in all occupations. In 1978-79 they were £92·8 per week; in 1989-90 they are assumed to be £280·0 per week in line with the assumptions in paragraph 3.02 of the 1989 Autumn Statement.

[3] Figures are derived from the financial year average NIC Class 1 paid in 1989-90.

Disabled People

41. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the tax concessions available for disabled people and their carers; and what is the annual cost to the Revenue.

Mr. Major: Various social security benefits for the disabled are exempt from income tax:

Benefit	*Cost of Exemption (1989-90) £ million*
Invalidity benefit and severe disablement allowances	390
Industrial disablement benefits	70
Allowances to rehabilitees	[1]7
Attendance allowance	95
Mobility allowance	55
War disablement benefit	95

[1] Negligible.

Two tax allowances are available in respect of disability: the blind person's allowance and the additional personal allowance for a husband with dependent children whose wife is totally incapacitated throughout the tax year. Each of these allowances costs up to £5 million a year.

In addition, the following extra-statutory concessions give favourable treatment to payments to the disabled:

A26 Sick benefits—Estimated cost: up to £100,000.

A59 Home to work travel of severely disabled employees —No central data on which to base a reliable estimate.

A62 Pensions to employees disabled at work—Estimated cost: up to £100,000.

Further details are given in the Inland Revenue's booklet IR 1.

Private Education Allowances

43. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much tax revenue was forgone during the last financial year in respect of allowances for private education.

Mr. Lilley: If the hon. Member will write to me giving details of the particular allowances he has in mind I shall be happy to provide the relevant information.

EC Trade

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the United Kingdom's deficit or surplus in *(a)* all trade and *(b)* trade to manufacturers with the European Community in each year since 1972.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The latest information is available on the Central Statistical Office database which may be accessed through the Library of the House.

Privatisation

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the total income to the Exchequer as a result of privatisation measures since May 1979.

Mr. Lilley: The net proceeds from privatisation since 1979 to date amount to some £28 billion.

Coinage

Mr. Speller: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consultations he undertakes with local government representatives when considering changes in the coinage; what estimate he has made of the consequential cost of converting coin-operated machines when the 5p coin is replaced; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: The decision to introduce the new 5p coin was taken after extensive research and consultation on Britain's coinage.

In July 1987 a consultative pamphlet inviting comments on options for changes to the coinage, was issued to a wide range of organisations including local authorities. Sample coins have been made available to a large number of vending interests and local authorities in order to assist in the adjustment to the new coin.

While there will undoubtedly be some transitional costs for owners of coin operated machines, they will benefit from the lower cost of handling lighter coins.

Government Revenue

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total sum of central Government revenue for 1989-90; and what was the amount of central Government revenue used for that funding of local government services.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Total central Government receipts in 1989-90, on a national accounts basis, are estimated to have been £181·2 billion. On the same basis, central Government grants to local authorities, are estimated to have been £27·1 billion. Central Government grants to local authorities, within the planning total, are estimated to have been £23·5 billion.

VAT

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing for each country within the European Economic Community the rate of value added tax attaching to *(a)* food, *(b)* children's clothing, *(c)* new housing and *(d)* books and newspapers.

Mr. Ryder: The information available for each EC member state is set out in the tables:

(a) Food in shops[1]

Country	*Rate per cent.*
Belgium	6
Denmark	22
France	[2]5·5
Germany	7
Greece	6
Ireland	[3]0
Italy	[4]4, 9
Luxembourg	[3]3, 6
Netherlands	6
Portugal	[5]0, 8, 6
Spain	6
United Kingdom	[7]0

[1] Excluding luxury foods.
[2] With certain exceptions, e.g. sweets, ice-cream, margarine which are standard-rated at 18·6 per cent.
[3] Alcohol and soft drinks other than fruit juices are liable at 25 per cent. in all circumstances, as is all food and drink supplied through a vending machine.
[4] The lower rate applies to essential foodstuffs such as bread, pasta and fish.
[5] The lower rate applies to meat, meat products, bread and butter.
[6] The rate shown in brackets applies to the autonomous regions of the Madeira and Azores archipelagoes. The zero-rate applies to unprepared foodstuffs.
[7] With certain exceptions including ice-cream, chocolates and similar confectionery, alcoholic and soft drinks, potato crisps and similar products and pet foods.

Food in restaurants

Country	*Rate per cent.*
Belgium	17
Denmark	22
France	18·6
Germany	14
Greece	[1]—
Ireland	10
Italy	[2]9
Luxembourg	6
Netherlands	6
Portugal	[3]8 (6)
Spain	[4]6, 12
United Kingdom	15

[1] Information not available. Greece has set its VAT rates at 6 per cent., 18 per cent. and 36 per cent., but full details about the applicability of the rates are not yet available.
[2] Excluding the supply of food in luxury premises including luxury hotels.
[3] Lower rates apply in the autonomous regions of the Azores and Madeira archipelagoes.
[4] The higher rate applies to services supplied in luxury hotels.

(b) Children's clothing

Country	*Rate per cent.*
Belgium	19
Denmark	22
France	18·6
Germany	14
Greece	16
Ireland	0
Italy	19
Luxembourg	12
Netherlands	18·5
Portugal	[1]17, 12
Spain	12
United Kingdom	0

[1] Lower rate applies in the autonomous regions of the Azores and Madeira archipelagoes.

(c) New housing

Country	*Rate per cent.*
Belgium	17·0
Denmark	22·0
France	18·6
Germany	[1]—
Greece	[2]—
Ireland	10·0
Italy	[3]4·0, 19·0
Luxembourg	[1]—
Netherlands	18·5
Portugal	[1]—
Spain	[4]12·0
United Kingdom	0·0

[1] Exempt.
[2] Information not available.
[3] Certain "low-priced" housing 4 per cent., others 19 per cent.
[4] Or 6 per cent. if the first supply by a contractor of a residential dwelling.

(d) Books

Country	Rate per cent.
Belgium	6·0
Denmark	22·0
France	5·5
Germany	7·0
Greece	[1]—
Ireland	0·0
Italy	0·0
Luxembourg	6·0
Netherlands	6·0
Portugal	0·0
Spain	6·0
United Kingdom	0·0

[1] Information not available.

Newspapers

Country	Rate per cent.
Belgium	0·0
Denmark	0·0
France	2·1
Germany	7·0
Greece	[1]—
Ireland	10·0
Italy	0·0
Luxembourg	6·0
Netherlands	6·0
Portugal	0·0
Spain	6·0
United Kingdom	0·0

[1] Information not available.

Taxes and Benefits

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* up-to-date figures on the same basis as those provided to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East, in his answer of 8 January, *Official Report*, columns *559-64*, revising his figures to include an estimate of the effects of the 1990 Budget statement and the introduction of the community charge.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 5 June 1990]:* Figures for 1978-79 to 1987-88 were placed in the library of the House last year (as noted in the *Official Report*, 13 April 1989, column 624). The latest estimates for 1988-89, 1989-90 and 1990-91 are given in the tables. I regret that it is not yet possible to produce satisfactory estimates of the effects of the introduction of the community charge and associated arrangements for transitional relief.

Notes to Tables

(1) Income tax payments are calculated on the assumption that the households receive no tax reliefs other than the standard allowances and only have income from employment. All earners, including wives, are assumed to pay class 1 NI contributions at the contracted in rate. The figures for NI contributions are financial year averages.

(2) From 1990-91 husbands and wives will be taxed independently. Previously the tax liability of couples depended on their joint income. To permit comparisons with earlier years the table therefore shows income tax and national insurance contributions paid by a married couple in 1990-91 as a proportion of their joint income, assuming, as in the earlier years, that where both partners are earners, the husband and wife share the relevant multiple of earnings in the ratio 60:40.

(3) In order to provide comparability with 1978-79, when support for children was given partly through child tax allowances, child benefit is treated as a negative income tax for the married couple with two children.

(4) Average earnings are taken to be the average gross weekly earnings of all full-time males on adult rates with pay unaffected by absence. These were £256·30 per week in 1988-89, £280·00 per week in 1989-90, and estimated to be £303·80 per week in 1990-91, using the Government Actuary Department's assumption of 8½ per cent. growth over 1989-90 as published in the 1989 Autumn Statement.

(5) The estimate of indirect taxes are derived from the 1985 family expenditure survey, and are based on the illustrative assumption that 10 per cent. of disposable income is saved. There are wide variations in spending patterns between households with similar incomes and composition, and estimated payments of VAT, other indirect taxes and domestic rates are therefore approximate, even within the income range for which figures are shown. Outside this range the margin of error is even higher and reliable estimates cannot be made. Because of sampling variation, there can be substantial differences between the estimates obtained from family expenditure surveys for different years.

Income tax, NICS and indirect tax payments at multiples of average earnings, 1988-89

	Multiples of average earnings										
	0·50	*0·75*	*1*	*1·5*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*7*	*10*	*20*
Single											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income Tax	19·51	35·53	51·55	83·59	129·33	231·85	334·37	436·89	641·93	949·49	1,974·69
NICS	11·53	17·30	23·07	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45
VAT	—	9·52	12·82	19·98	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	15·15	18·96	27·22	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	31·04	77·50	106·40	158·24	156·78	259·30	361·82	464·34	669·38	976·94	2,002·14
Domestic rates	—	7·68	9·35	12·99	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Percentage of earnings											
Income Tax	15·2	18·5	20·1	21·7	25·2	30·2	32·6	34·1	35·8	37·0	38·5
NICS	9·0	9·0	9·0	7·1	5·4	3·6	2·7	2·1	1·5	1·1	0·5
VAT	—	5·0	5·0	5·2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	7·9	7·4	7·1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	24·2	40·4	41·5	41·2	30·6	33·7	35·3	36·2	37·3	38·1	39·1
Domestic rates	—	4·0	3·6	3·4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Married, no children											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income Tax	12·35	28·37	44·39	76·43	117·87	220·39	322·91	425·43	630·47	938·03	1,963·23
NICS	11·53	17·30	23·07	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45
VAT	—	8·73	12·32	20·12	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	16·82	20·63	28·89	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	23·88	71·22	100·41	152·89	145·32	247·84	350·36	452·88	657·92	965·48	1,990·68
Domestic rates	—	7·52	8·73	11·37	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Income tax, NICS and indirect tax payments at multiples of average earnings, 1989-90

	Multiples of average earnings										
	0·50	*0·75*	*1*	*1·5*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*7*	*10*	*20*
Percentage of earnings											
Income Tax	9·6	14·8	17·3	19·9	23·0	28·7	31·5	33·2	35·1	36·6	38·3
NICS	9·0	9·0	9·0	7·1	5·4	3·6	2·7	2·1	1·5	1·1	0·5
VAT	—	4·5	4·8	5·2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	8·8	8·1	7·5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	18·6	37·1	39·2	39·7	28·3	32·2	34·2	35·3	36·7	37·7	38·8
Domestic rates	—	3·9	3·4	3·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Married, both working											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income Tax	0·00	15·84	31·86	63·90	97·83	173·19	260·33	361·18	566·22	873·78	1,898·98
NICS	7·95	15·76	21·02	34·60	45·90	54·90	54·90	54·90	54·90	54·90	54·90
VAT	—	9·87	13·82	21·42	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	19·54	22·99	29·65	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	7·95	61·01	89·69	149·57	143·73	228·09	315·23	416·08	621·12	928·68	1,953·88
Domestic rates	—	9·29	9·92	11·14	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Percentage of earnings											
Income Tax	0·0	8·2	12·4	16·6	19·1	22·5	25·4	28·2	31·6	34·1	37·0
NICS	6·2	8·2	8·2	9·0	9·0	7·1	5·4	4·3	3·1	2·1	1·1
VAT	—	5·1	5·4	5·6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	10·2	9·0	7·7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	6·2	31·7	35·0	38·9	28·0	29·7	30·7	32·5	34·6	36·2	38·1
Domestic rates	—	4·8	3·9	2·9	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Married, 2 children											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income Tax	−2·15	13·87	29·89	61·93	103·37	205·89	308·41	409·93	615·97	923·53	1,948·73
NICS	11·53	17·30	23·07	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45
VAT	—	8·69	12·76	21·59	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	16·67	19·71	26·33	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	9·38	56·53	85·43	137·30	130·82	233·34	335·86	437·38	643·42	950·98	1,976·18
Domestic rates	—	7·42	8·85	11·96	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Percentage of earnings											
Income Tax	−1·7	7·2	11·7	16·1	20·2	26·8	30·1	32·0	34·3	36·0	38·0
NICS	9·0	9·0	9·0	7·1	5·4	3·6	2·7	2·1	1·5	1·1	0·5
VAT	—	4·5	5·0	5·6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	8·7	7·7	6·8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	7·3	29·4	33·4	35·6	25·5	30·3	32·8	34·1	35·9	37·1	38·6
Domestic rates	—	3·9	3·5	3·1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Income tax, NICS and indirect tax payments at multiples of average earnings, 1989-90

	Multiples of average earnings										
	0·5	*0·75*	*1*	*1·5*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*7*	*10*	*20*
Single											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income Tax	21·61	39·11	56·61	91·61	142·87	254·87	366·87	478·87	702·87	1,038·87	2,158·87
NICS	11·10	17·40	23·70	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74
VAT	—	10·48	14·08	21·95	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	15·56	19·45	27·95	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	32·71	82·55	113·84	169·25	170·61	282·61	394·61	506·61	730·61	1,066·61	2,186·61
Domestic rates	—	8·49	10·33	14·36	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Amounts 1988-89 prices											
Income Tax	20·05	36·28	52·51	84·98	132·53	236·43	340·32	444·22	652·01	963·70	2,002·66
NICS	10·30	16·14	21·99	25·73	25·73	25·73	25·73	25·73	25·73	25·73	25·73
VAT	—	9·72	13·06	20·36	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	14·43	18·04	25·93	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	30·34	76·58	105·60	157·00	158·27	262·16	366·06	469·95	677·75	989·43	2,028·40
Domestic rates	—	7·88	9·58	13·32	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Percentage of earnings											
Income Tax	15·4	18·6	20·2	21·8	25·5	30·3	32·8	34·2	35·9	37·1	38·6
NICS	7·9	8·3	8·5	6·6	5·0	3·3	2·5	2·0	1·4	1·0	0·5
VAT	—	5·0	5·0	5·2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	7·4	6·9	6·7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	23·4	39·3	40·7	40·3	30·5	33·6	35·2	36·2	37·3	38·1	39·0
Domestic rates	—	4·0	3·7	3·4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Married, no children											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income Tax	13·97	31·47	48·97	83·97	130·63	242·63	354·63	466·63	690·63	1,026·63	2,146·63

	Multiples of average earnings										
	0·5	0·75	1	1·5	2	3	4	5	7	10	20
NICS	11·10	17·40	23·70	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74
VAT	—	9·60	13·52	22·08	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	17·26	21·17	29·70	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	25·07	75·73	107·36	163·49	158·37	270·37	382·37	494·37	718·37	1,054·37	2,174·37
Domestic rates	—	8·30	9·64	12·56	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Amounts 1988-89 prices											
Income Tax	12·96	29·19	45·43	77·89	121·18	225·07	328·97	432·87	640·66	952·35	1,991·31
NICS	10·30	16·14	21·99	25·73	25·73	25·73	25·73	25·73	25·73	25·73	25·73
VAT	—	8·91	12·54	20·48	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	16·01	19·64	27·55	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	23·26	70·25	99·59	151·66	146·91	250·81	354·70	458·60	666·39	978·08	2,017·04
Domestic rates	—	7·70	8·94	11·65	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Percentage of earnings											
Income Tax	10·0	15·0	17·5	20·0	23·3	28·9	31·7	33·3	35·2	36·7	38·3
NICS	7·9	8·3	8·5	6·6	5·0	3·3	2·5	2·0	1·4	1·0	0·5
VAT	—	4·6	4·8	5·3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	8·2	7·6	7·1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	17·9	36·1	38·3	38·9	28·3	32·2	34·1	35·3	36·7	37·7	38·8
Domestic rates	—	4·0	3·4	3·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Married, both working											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income Tax	0·58	18·08	35·58	70·58	109·21	191·08	286·28	397·73	621·73	957·73	2,077·73
NICS	9·59	15·89	22·19	34·79	46·40	55·49	55·49	55·49	55·49	55·49	55·49
VAT	—	10·80	15·06	23·56	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	19·94	23·42	30·38	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	10·17	64·71	96·25	159·31	155·61	246·57	341·77	453·22	677·22	1,013·22	2,133·22
Domestic rates	—	10·24	10·92	12·30	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Amounts 1988/89 prices											
Income tax	0·54	16·77	33·01	65·47	101·31	177·25	265·57	368·95	576·74	888·43	1,927·39
NICS	8·90	14·74	20·58	32·27	43·04	51·47	51·47	51·47	51·47	51·47	51·47
VAT	—	10·02	13·97	21·86	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	18·50	21·73	28·18	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	9·43	60·03	89·29	147·78	144·35	228·73	317·04	420·43	628·22	939·91	1,978·87
Domestic rates	—	9·50	10·13	11·41	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Percentage of earnings											
Income Tax	0·4	8·6	12·7	16·8	19·5	22·7	25·6	28·4	31·7	34·2	37·1
NICS	6·9	7·6	7·9	8·3	8·3	6·6	5·0	4·0	2·8	2·0	1·0
VAT	—	5·1	5·4	5·6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	9·5	8·4	7·2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	7·3	30·8	34·4	37·9	27·8	29·4	30·5	32·4	34·6	36·2	38·1
Domestic rates	—	4·9	3·9	2·9	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Married, 2 children											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income Tax	−0·53	16·97	34·47	69·47	116·13	228·13	340·13	452·13	676·13	1,012·13	2,132·13
NICS	11·10	17·40	23·70	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74
VAT	—	9·43	13·87	23·57	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	16·95	20·08	26·91	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	10·57	60·75	92·12	147·69	143·87	255·87	367·87	479·87	703·87	1,039·87	2,159·87
Domestic rates	—	8·15	9·72	13·16	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Amounts 1988-89 prices											
Income Tax	−0·49	15·74	31·98	64·44	107·73	211·62	315·52	419·42	627·21	938·90	1,977·86
NICS	10·30	16·14	21·99	25·73	25·73	25·73	25·73	25·73	25·73	25·73	25·73
VAT	—	8·75	12·87	21·86	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	15·72	18·63	24·96	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	9·81	56·35	85·45	137·00	133·46	237·36	341·25	445·15	652·94	964·63	2,003·59
Domestic rates	—	7·56	9·02	12·21	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Percentage of earnings											
Income Tax	−0·4	8·1	12·3	16·5	20·7	27·2	30·4	32·3	34·5	36·1	38·1
NICS	7·9	8·3	8·5	6·6	5·0	3·3	2·5	2·0	1·4	1·0	0·5
VAT	—	4·5	5·0	5·6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	8·1	7·2	6·4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	7·6	28·9	32·9	35·2	25·7	30·5	32·8	34·3	35·9	37·1	38·6
Domestic rates	—	3·9	3·5	3·1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Income tax, NICS and indirect tax payments at multiples of average earnings, 1990-91

	Multiples of average earnings										
	0·5	*0·75*	*1*	*1·5*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*7*	*10*	*20*
Single											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income Tax	23·53	42·52	61·50	99·48	160·21	281·73	403·25	524·77	767·81	1,132·37	2,347·57
NICS	10·45	17·29	24·12	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28
VAT	—	11·49	15·39	23·93	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	17·04	21·28	30·54	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	33·98	88·34	122·29	182·23	188·49	310·01	431·53	553·05	796·09	1,160·65	2,375·85
Amounts 1988-89 prices											
Income Tax	20·41	36·88	53·34	86·28	138·95	244·35	349·74	455·13	665·92	982·11	2,036·05
NICS	9·06	15·00	20·92	24·53	24·53	24·53	24·53	24·53	24·53	24·53	24·53
VAT	—	9·97	13·35	20·75	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	14·78	18·46	26·49	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	29·47	76·62	106·06	158·05	163·48	268·87	374·27	479·66	690·45	1,006·63	2,060·58
Percentage of Earnings											
Income Tax	15·5	18·7	20·2	21·8	26·4	30·9	33·2	34·5	36·1	37·3	38·6
NICS/	6·9	7·6	7·9	6·2	4·7	3·1	2·3	1·9	1·3	0·9	0·5
VAT	—	5·0	5·1	5·3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	7·5	7·0	6·7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	22·4	38·8	40·3	40·0	31·0	34·0	35·5	36·4	37·4	38·2	39·1
Married, no children											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income Tax	15·26	34·25	53·23	91·21	146·98	268·50	390·02	511·54	754·58	1,119·14	2,334·34
NICS	10·45	17·29	24·12	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28
VAT	—	10·60	14·84	24·14	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	18·89	23·14	32·42	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	25·71	81·03	115·33	176·05	175·26	296·78	418·30	539·82	782·86	1,147·42	2,362·62
Amounts 1988-89 prices											
Income Tax	13·24	29·71	46·17	79·11	127·48	232·87	338·27	443·66	654·45	970·63	2,024·58
NICS	9·06	15·00	20·92	24·53	24·53	24·53	24·53	24·53	24·53	24·53	24·53
VAT	—	9·19	12·87	20·94	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	16·38	20·07	28·12	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	22·30	70·28	100·03	152·69	152·00	257·40	362·79	468·19	678·98	995·16	2,049·11
Percentage of earnings											
Income Tax	10·0	15·0	17·5	20·0	24·2	29·5	32·1	33·7	35·5	36·8	38·4
NICS	6·9	7·6	7·9	6·2	4·7	3·1	2·3	1·9	1·3	0·9	0·5
VAT	—	4·7	4·9	5·3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	8·3	7·6	7·1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	16·9	35·6	38·0	38·6	28·8	32·6	34·4	35·5	36·8	37·8	38·9
Married, both working											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income Tax	0·81	19·80	38·79	76·76	114·74	199·37	307·20	428·72	671·76	1,036·32	2,251·52
NICS	7·23	14·07	20·90	34·57	46·93	56·56	56·56	56·56	56·56	56·56	56·56
VAT	—	12·08	16·68	25·89	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	21·82	25·61	33·18	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	8·04	67·77	101·98	170·40	161·67	255·93	363·76	485·28	728·32	1,092·88	2,308·08
Amounts 1988-89 prices											
Income Tax	0·70	17·17	33·64	66·58	99·51	172·92	266·43	371·83	582·62	898·80	1,952·75
NICS	6·27	12·20	18·13	29·98	40·70	49·05	49·05	49·05	49·05	49·05	49·05
VAT	—	10·48	14·47	22·45	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	18·92	22·21	28·78	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	6·97	58·78	88·45	147·79	140·21	221·97	315·49	420·88	631·67	947·85	2,001·80
Percentage of Earnings											
Income Tax	0·5	8·7	12·8	16·8	18·9	21·9	25·3	28·2	31·6	34·1	37·1
NICS	4·8	6·2	6·9	7·6	7·7	6·2	4·7	3·7	2·7	1·9	0·9
VAT	—	5·3	5·5	5·7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	9·6	8·4	7·3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	5·3	29·7	33·6	37·4	26·6	28·1	29·9	31·9	34·2	36·0	38·0
Married, 2 children											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income Tax	0·76	19·75	38·73	76·71	132·48	254·00	375·52	497·04	740·08	1,104·64	2,319·84
NICS	10·45	17·29	24·12	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28
VAT	—	10·38	15·19	25·72	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	18·41	21·80	29·23	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	11·21	65·83	99·84	159·94	160·76	282·28	403·80	525·32	768·36	1,132·92	2,348·12
Amounts 1988-89 prices											
Income Tax	0·66	17·13	33·59	66·53	114·90	220·29	325·69	431·08	641·87	958·06	2,012·00
NICS	9·06	15·00	20·92	24·53	24·53	24·53	24·53	24·53	24·53	24·53	24·53
VAT	—	9·00	13·17	22·31	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	15·97	18·91	25·35	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	9·72	57·09	86·59	138·72	139·43	244·82	350·22	455·61	666·40	982·58	2,036·53
Percentage of earnings											

	Multiples of average earnings									
	0·5	0·75	1	1·5	2	3	4	5	7	10	20
Income Tax	0·5	8·7	12·7	16·8	21·8	27·9	30·9	32·7	34·8	36·4	38·2
NICS	6·9	7·6	7·9	6·2	4·7	3·1	2·3	1·9	1·3	0·9	0·5
VAT	—	4·6	5·0	5·6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	8·1	7·2	6·4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	7·4	28·9	32·9	35·1	25·5	31·0	33·2	34·6	36·1	37·3	38·6

Hospital Trusts

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if the capital raised on the market by the proposed hospital trusts will be counted in the public sector borrowing requirement.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 2 July 1990]:* NHS trusts will be classified as public corporations, and their borrowing from the market will be included in the public sector borrowing requirement.

Household Expenditure

Mr. Clay: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing average household expenditure underlying the 1990 weights for the general retail prices index as in the April 1989 edition of the *Employment Gazette*.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 4 July 1990]:* Following is the information:

Average household expenditure underlying the 1990 weights for the general RPI

	£ per week at January 1990 prices
Food	36·41
Catering	10·78
Alcoholic drink	17·91
Tobacco	7·87
Housing	42·98
Fuel and light	11·38
Household goods	16·38
Household services	9·08
Clothing and footwear	15·81
Personal goods and services	8·97
Motoring expenditure	30·16
Fares and other travel costs	4·85
Leisure goods	11·07
Leisure services	6·98
All items	230·65

Source: Central Statistical Office

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 6 July 1990

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Teacher Recruitment

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many extra teachers and potential extra teachers have been recruited as a result of his Department's recent advertising campaign; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Nearly 20,000 requests have been received from people seeking information about teaching as a career in response to the first phase of the teacher recruitment advertising campaign. The next step is for those who, as a result of the campaign, have decided upon a career in teaching to approach their local education authority or contact the graduate teacher training registry depending on their qualifications and experience.

Special Educational Needs

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many cases are known to his Department arising from their special educational needs, of children of school age suffering from juvenile muscular degeneration; and what educational provisions is made for these children.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Information identifying the nature of a child's special educational needs is not collected centrally.

Infant School Teachers

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the median years of service of teachers in infant schools in each year from 1980 until the latest year for which figures are available.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information requested is given in the table:

Median years of service of full-time qualified teachers in infant and first schools in England 1980-87

	[1] *Years*
1980	11
1981	12
1982	13
1983	13
1984	14
1985	13
1986	14
1987	13

[1] All figures in complete years.
Source: The Database of Teacher Records.

Local Management of Schools

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement concerning the effects of local management of schools upon schools of under 100 pupils in England.

Mrs. Rumbold: Under local management of schools all primary and secondary schools will be funded according to the resource allocation formula as approved by my right hon. Friend. Although not required to do so, the majority of local education authorities have indicated that they intend, in the longer term, to delegate responsibility for managing budgets to schools with fewer than 100 pupils.

School Building

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from school governing bodies in north Devon about the level of capital grant for school building.

Mr. Alan Howarth: None.

HEALTH

Kidney Disease

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* males and *(b)* females over the age of 65 years, per million of the population, are accepted for kidney dialysis treatment.

Mr. Dorrell: According to information provided by the European Dialysis and Transplant Association, the number of new patients aged 65 years and over, accepted for renal replacement therapy in 1988 was as follows:

	Number	*Per million population*
Males	265	75
Females	167	31

The rate per million population is based on the number of males and females respectively in the relevant age group.

Hospitals

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total number of *(a)* hospital beds, *(b)* nurses, *(c)* consultants and *(d)* all administrative staff in the national health service hospitals in (i) England and (ii) the Basildon and Thurrock health authority or its predecessor for each of the years 1960, 1965, 1970, 1975, 1980, 1985 and the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information is shown in the following tables.

England[4]

Year	Discharges and deaths	Average daily number of available hospital beds	Hospital nursing and midwifery staff (WTE)[2]	Hospital medical and dental consultants (WTE)[3]	Administration and clerical staff (WTE)
1960	n/a	n/a	[5]197,900	[5]10,800	n/a
1965	[7]4,616,700	[7]434,800	[5]222,400	[5]10,200	[5]37,600
1970	5,011,700	423,600	[5]252,800	[6]9,700	[5]45,300
1975	4,975,800	387,600	300,400	11,300	91,900
1980	5,670,000	356,000	330,200	12,600	105,400
1985	6,353,800	325,500	352,500	14,000	111,000
1988	6,586,000	282,900	355,600	15,000	116,000

[1] All figures are rounded to the nearest hundred (100).
[2] There was a change in nurses working hours in 1980-81 from 40 to 37·5 hours per week. This has not been taken account of in the calculations.
[3] Figures include permanent paid and honorary staff. Prior to 1987 senior hospital-dental officers with allowance were included with consultants.
[4] These are figures for England and Wales. Figures for England are not available prior to 1971.
[5] Figures for 1960 and 1965 are not comparable with later years.
[6] Figures for 1970 are not comparable with other years.
[7] Figures are for 1966.
n/a not available.

Basildon and Thurrock DHA[1]

Year	Discharges and deaths[2]	Average daily number of available hospital beds[2]	Hospital nursing and midwifery staff (WTE)[3]	Hospital medical and dental consultants (WTE)[4]	Administration and clerical staff (WTE)
1960	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1966	14,930	2,360	n/a	n/a	n/a
1970	19,010	2,430	n/a	n/a	n/a
1975	22,920	1,860	n/a	n/a	n/a
1980	29,450	1,880	1,820	n/a	310
1985	33,300	1,950	2,140	n/a	490
1988	33,710	1,720	1,970	n/a	690

[1] All figures are rounded to the nearest ten (10).
[2] For years 1966 and 1970 the data is for Tilbury and south east Essex and south Ockenden hospital management committees.
[3] There was a change in nurses working hours in 1980-81 from 40 to 37·5 hours per week. This has not been taken account of in the calculations.
[4] Figures not available as consultants' contracts are not directly held by non-teaching district health authorities.
n/a not available.

Contraceptive Clinics

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if Her Majesty's Government will make more funds available to health authorities for the purposes of providing contraceptive clinic services.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In the future, as now, it will be for each health authority to decide on the most appropriate financial arrangements for family planning provision. Under the NHS reforms, district health authorities will be responsible for ensuring that patients have access to a comprehensive range of services and this will include family planning. Guidance issued by the Department on the provision of family planning services was recently reaffirmed in a letter (EL(90)MB115) to regional general managers by the director of operations and planning on the NHS management executive. A copy of the letter is available in the Library.

Newmarket Hospital

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if funds earmarked in 1988 for the redevelopment of Newmarket hospital are still available.

Mr. Dorrell: The East Anglian regional health authority is still holding an allocation within its capital programme towards that scheme.

Drug Prescribing

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many times regulation 16 of the Service Committee and Tribunal Regulations has been invoked in respect of *(a)* excessive prescribing and *(b)* under-prescribing by each family practitioner committee in each of the past five years for which figures are available.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Regulation 16 of the Service Committee and Tribunal Regulations has not been invoked in England in the past five years. Regulation 16 concerns excessive prescribing only and not under-prescribing.

Private Residential Homes

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he has taken to ensure that private nursing homes and residential care homes include medical requisites and all necessary services in their fees.

Mr. Dorrell: People in residential care homes retain the right to NHS services as though they were in their own homes. The fees charged need only reflect provision made beyond this. The person responsible for a private nursing home must provide adequate facilities and services for those accommodated and we would expect fees to reflect this. Nursing home patients retain the right to NHS general medical, dental and hospital services.

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether elderly people in private residential care are entitled to receive free national health service prescriptions.

Mr. Dorrell: All men aged 65 and all women aged 60 or over are entitled to have NHS prescriptions dispensed free of charge. One of the duties of the person responsible for a residential home is to make adequate arrangements for patients and residents to receive general medical and dental services under part II of the National Health Service Act 1977.

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will hold an inquiry into the level of fees charged by private nursing homes and residential care homes.

Mr. Dorrell: The level of fees charged in private nursing or residential care homes is a matter between the proprietor and the residents or whoever pays on the residents' behalf and not one in which we see any need to intervene.

Eye Tests

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of sight tests in the second quarter of 1990, and in previous quarters over the past five years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information on sight tests is not available centrally on a quarterly basis. Statistics on the number of sight tests paid for under the general ophthalmic services are currently collected on a six-monthly basis. The following table gives the number of NHS sight tests paid for in England for the five-year period up to and including 31 September 1989—the most recent figure available. Comparable data on private sight tests conducted since April 1989 are not centrally collected.

Number of sight tests paid for by FPCs England

	Millions
1984-85	
April-September	4·793
October-March	5·090
1985-86	
April-September	5·166
October-March	5·080
1986-87	
April-September	5·265
October-March	5·350
1987-88	
April-September	5·581
October-March	6·114
1988-89	
April-September	5·779
October-March	6·714
1989-90	
April-September	3·380

AIDS

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the latest figures available for the total number of AIDS cases reported in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: At the end of May 1990 the cumulative United Kingdom total of AIDS cases reported was 3,346, of whom 1,845 are known to have died.

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many infants died from sudden infant death syndrome in the United Kingdom in 1989-90; what precentage change that is from 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The information is shown in the table. Data relate to Great Britain rather than the United Kingdom, since comparable data for Northern Ireland are not available.

Number of deaths under one year of age with any mention of "sudden infant death syndrome", "cot death" or similar term on the death certificate, Great Britain 1980 and 1989

1980	[1] *1989*	*Percentage change*
1,358	1,464	[1]7.8

[1] Provisional.
Data for 1990 are still being processed.

Publications

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has any plans to make savings by discontinuing the circulation to NHS doctors of (i) *Drug and Therapeutics Bulletin*, (ii) *Prescribers Journal*, (iii) *Health Trends* and (iv) the *British National Formulary*.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 26 June 1990]:* There are currently no such plans. All such departmental publications are reviewed from time to time to ensure that their circulation continues to be justified to meet the needs of the target audience.

Administrative Costs

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will set out the administrative costs as a percentage of total costs for the national health service for each financial year since 1980-81 and the projected figure for 1990-91.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 5 June 1990]:* Following is information, covering both hospital and community health services and family practitioner services, derived from annual accounts submitted to the Department for the years 1980-81 to 1988-89 (the latest available).

We do not collect such information in-year and consequently cannot provide an estimate for 1990-91, but equivalent information for the financial year 1989-90 will be available in the autumn.

National Health Service (England)—Headquarters Administration (Hospital and Community Health Services [HCHS] and Family Practitioner Services)

Expenditure		*As a proportion of total current expenditure*	*As a proportion of total expenditure (Current and Capital)*
	£000(cash)	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*
1980-81	378,311	4·26	4·00
1981-82	393,377	3·97	3·72
1982-83	403,292	3·75	3·52
1983-84	418,429	3·66	3·45

Expenditure	£000(cash)	As a proportion of total current expenditure Per cent.	As a proportion of total expenditure (Current and Capital) Per cent.
1984-85	444,016	3·63	3·41
1985-86	479,047	3·71	3·47
1986-87	516,624	3·72	3·48
1987-88	574,198	3·76	3·53
1988-89	624,496	3·66	3·44

Sources

Annual financial accounts of:

i. regional and district health authorities and the special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals (predecessor authorities for years prior to 1982-83)

ii. family practitioner committees

iii. The Dental Estimates Board and the Prescription Pricing Authority.

Notes to the Table

1. HCHS covers the total expenditure of the health authorities concerned including hospital, community health, patient transport (ie ambulance), blood transfusion and other services.

2. Expenditure on headquarters administration includes all current expenditure on the pay and pay related costs of staff of all disciplines (including general managers) employed at headquarters levels and their office costs and overheads. It excludes the cost of clerical and secretarial support staff employed in departments at hospital and unit levels; such costs are regarded as operational.

3. The table includes the total expenses of the Dental Estimates Board and the Prescription Pricing Authority which are regarded as wholly administrative. Expenditure by other bodies and special health authorities providing central services to the National Health Service (eg the Central Blood Laboratories Authority) and expenditure met centrally by the Department is excluded.

ENVIRONMENT

Rate Bills

Mr. Richard Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 19 June, *Official Report*, columns *477-80*, if he will publish the overall estimated increase in rate bills in 1990-91 as against 1989-90 of *(a)* shops *(b)* factories, *(c)* hotels and boarding houses, *(d)* officies and *(e)* mines, in total and by economic regions (i) including the effects of transitional relief and (ii) excluding the effects of transitional relief.

Mr. Chope: Aggregate changes in rate bills between 1989-90 and 1990-91 for the types of property about which my hon. Friend asks, with and without the transitional arrangements, are given in the table. The figures have been calculated at 1990-91 prices and are based on the rateable values shown in the lists deposited with local authorities on 20 December 1989. The figures take no account of empty property or other reliefs.

£ million

Region	Shops		Offices		Factories		Hotels and Boarding Houses		Mines	
	Without transition	With transition	Without transition	With transition	Without transition	With transition	Without transition	With transition	Without transition	With transition
Northern	−14·86	−4·66	−13·40	−3·35	−72·44	−15·89	1·85	0·33	0·39	0·19
Yorkshire and Humberside	−5·90	−4·40	−20·05	−5·64	85·65	−20·75	3·15	0·93	9·99	1·51
East Midlands	−1·60	0·09	−10·33	−2·56	−71·76	−19·34	3·17	0·77	6·78	1·44
East Anglia	20·33	6·96	1·71	0·56	−9·23	−3·68	2·75	0·68	—	—
Inner London	207·22	40·52	259·78	100·00	4·62	0·20	55·42	7·54	—	—
Outer London	54·94	14·06	−0·17	2·28	−36·07	−11·73	4·17	1·21	—	—
Rest of South East	131·80	38·99	91·64	31·95	−51·06	−16·14	16·78	3·24	0·13	0·06
South West	53·81	15·13	9·45	3·58	−21·07	−6·90	6·71	1·49	−0·14	−0·04
West Midlands	−27·80	−7·64	−19·18	−5·92	−144·42	−32·39	4·43	1·15	3·27	0·56
North West	−39·28	−9·56	−48·01	−11·13	−150·04	−32·17	3·54	1·17	0·75	0·26
England	378·22	89·39	251·45	109·78	−637·13	−158·79	101·97	18·52	21·16	4·00

Note: The totals for England may not sum due to rounding.

Energy-efficient Buildings

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what contribution will be made by his Department to the International Building Bureau conference on energy-efficient buildings, to be held in London on 21 June.

Mr. Chope: I understand that the hon. Member is referring to the luncheon held by the Industrial Building Bureau at the House of Lords on 21 June to mark the launch of its national industrial building audit. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory), attended the lunch and spoke on the subject of energy-efficient buildings and related matters.

Protection of Birds

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those areas of special protection for birds as well as those Ramsar sites and areas with dual designation for the protection of birds.

Mr. Trippier: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to special protection areas under the EC birds directive rather than areas of special protection under section 3 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Details of those sites which have been designated as special protection areas and as wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar convention are set out in the table. Those sites with dual designation have been marked with an asterisk. Responsibility for the designation of sites in Scotland rests with the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Sites designated as wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar convention

Name and county/region

Bridgwater Bay—Somerset
Bure Marshes—Norfolk
Cors Fochno and Dyfi—Dyfed, Gwynedd and Powys
Hickling Broad and Horsey Mere—Norfolk
Lindisfarne—Northumberland
Minsmere-Walberswick—Suffolk
North Norfolk Coast—Norfolk
Ouse Washes—Cambridgeshire and Norfolk
Abberton Reservoir—Essex

Rostherne Mere—Cheshire
*Chesil Beach and the Fleet—Dorset
*The Dee Estuary—Merseyside, Cheshire and Clwyd
*Derwent Ings—North Yorkshire and Humberside
*Holburn Moss—Northumberland
Irthinghead Mires—Cumbria and Northumberland
*The Swale—Kent
*Alt Estuary—Merseyside
*Leighton Moss—Lancashire
*Martin Mere—Lancashire
*Rockliffe Marshes (Part of Upper Solway Flats and Marshes)—Cumbria
*Chichester and Langstone Harbours—Hampshire/West Sussex
*Upper Severn Estuary—Gloucestershire
*The Wash—Lincolnshire/Norfolk
*Pagham Harbour—West Sussex
Moor House—Cumbria
Orfordness-Havergate—Suffolk
Ribble Estuary—Lancashire
Skomer—Dyfed
*The Swale—Kent
*Chesil Beach and The Fleet—Dorset
Chew Valley Lake—Avon
Coquet Island—Northumberland
*The Dee Estuary—Merseyside, Cheshire and Clwyd
*Derwent Ings—North Yorkshire
Farne Islands—Northumberland
*Holborn Moss—Northumberland
*Alt Estuary—Merseyside
*Leighton Moss—Lancashire
*Martin Mere—Lancashire
Grassholm—Dyfed
*Rockliffe Marshes (Part Upper Solway Flats and Marshes)—Cumbria
Chichester and Langstone Harbours—Hampshire/West Sussex
*Upper Severn Estuary—Gloucestershire
*The Wash—Lincolnshire/Norfolk
*Pagham Harbour—West Sussex
*North Norfolk Coast—Norfolk

Water Quality

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek powers to forbid the payment of dividends to the shareholders in water companies until all European Community directives on water quality are met.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No.

Greenhouse Effect

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will obtain for his departmental library a copy of the cassette and transcript of the Radio 4 analysis programme on the greenhouse effect and global warming broadcast on 28 June.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State took part in this programme, the contents of which have been noted.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will obtain for his departmental library a transcript of the interview given by the Minister for the Environment and Countryside, the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier), to the BBC radio "Today" programme on 30 June, on the London amendment conference of the Montreal protocol.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: A copy is already in my Department's library.

Carbon Dioxide Emissions

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he received the report commissioned by his Department jointly from the centre for configurational studies at the Open university and the earth resource research centre on the potential role of town and country planning in reducing carbon dioxide.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: A draft report commissioned from the Open university was received by my Department in March this year.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to ensure research contracts placed by his Department contain a stipulation the contractors institute a policy of chlorofluorocarbons recovery from equipment using chlorofluorocarbons, in research carried out for his Department.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: It is Government policy to encourage all users of equipment using CFCs to institute a policy of CFC recovery and to reduce dependence on such equipment.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the essential medical uses of chlorofluorocarbons that will be exempted from phasing out by 2000 or 2005 in the United Kingdom, following the recent amendment to the 1987 Montreal protocol.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: There are no essential medical uses of chlorofluorocarbons exempted from the 2000 phase-out under the recently revised Montreal protocol.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements exist for the recovery of chlorofluorocarbons in refrigeration and refrigeration units used by his Department and research laboratories sponsored by his Department.

Mr. Chris Patten: My Department does not have to dispose of a significant amount of refrigeration equipment. We have, however, identified facilities which provide for the safe disposal of such items and the recycling of any CFC gases.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why the United Kingdom decided not to sign the proposals sponsored by Finland at the amendment conference on the Montreal protocol in London in June to bring forward the date for the phase-out of chlorofluorocarbon use to 1997.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Neither my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State nor my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside was asked to sign the proposal. However, we are firmly committed to the phase-out of chlorofluorocarbons, with exemption for essential medical uses, by 1997. We will be pressing the European Commission to bring forward proposals to this end.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, following the agreement made at the recent London amendment conference of the Montreal protocol on the protection of the ozone layer, he has any

plans to make arrangements with *(a)* foreign embassies and consulates and *(b)* United States military forces based in the United Kingdom for the safe recovery of all chlorofluorocarbons in refrigeration and air conditioning in their premises.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Foreign embassies and consulates are responsible for their own maintenance and facilities in the United Kingdom. Maintenance of United States military installations is managed on their behalf by PSA and appropriate procedures are already used in handling and disposal of equipment containing chlorofluorocarbons.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the agreement made by Her Majesty's Government for the phase-out of chlorofluorocarbons use by 2000 applies to *(a)* Her Majesty's Crown Territories of Hong Kong, *(b)* the Falkland Islands, *(c)* Gibraltar and *(d)* the Channel Islands.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Her Majesty's Government's ratification of the Montreal protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer, and the recently agreed adjustments, apply to Hong Kong, the Falkland Islands, Gibraltar and Jersey. Arrangements are in hand to apply them to Guernsey.

Competitive Tendering

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress is being made in relation to the enforcement of the competition provisions of the Local Government Act 1988.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend has today issued directions under section 14 of the Local Government Act 1988 requiring both East Lindsey district council and Knowsley metropolitan borough council to expose refuse collection work to competitive tendering again by July 1991. He has taken this action because he is not satisfied with the responses which these authorities made to the notices issued under section 13 of the Act.

The notices issued to both authorities set out his belief that they had acted contrary to the requirement of section 7(7) of the Act, which is that, in awarding a contract, they must not

"act in a manner having the effect or intended or likely to have the effect of restricting, distorting or preventing competition",

in that they had assigned refuse collection work to their own direct service organisations when they had received a lower-priced bid from a private contractor.

North Sea Conference

Mr. Norris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish the guidance note on implementation of the declaration of the third North sea conference in the Hague on 2 to 8 March.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The United Kingdom has taken an early lead in setting out the details of the measures it will be taking to implement the agreements reached at the Hague North sea conference in March. I am publishing the implementation note today. This gives guidance on the ministerial declaration of the Hague conference and lists the targets and timetables we have set for the action necessary to implement these commitments. It demonstrates our determination to protect the marine environment, both in the North sea and all the seas and coastal waters surrounding the United Kingdom. Copies of the note will be placed in the Library of the House.

Right to Buy, Norwich

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give figures showing the proportion of occasions on which Norwich city council's housing committee has quoted prices to tenants seeking the right to buy above the figure estimated by its own estates surveyor.

Mr. Chope: A landlord is required to state its opinion of the value of a property to be sold under the right to buy on the assumptions specified in section 127 of the Housing Act 1985. This opinion, and the basis on which it is formed, are the responsibility of the landlord, and the Department does not collect information of the kind requested. A tenant who disagrees with the landlord's opinion has the right to an independent determination of value by the district valuer. Twenty-two such determinations were made on the application of tenants of Norwich city council in the three months ending 30 June, the value determined being lower than the council's opinion in all 22 cases by an average of £2,966 or 6·32 per cent.

Nuclear Waste (Reprocessing)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what arrangements are in hand for the return to West Germany of waste arising from the reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel from Wachersdorf;

(2) if he will give details of the nuclear waste reprocessing contract between Sellafield and the Federal Republic of West Germany in respect of the Wachersdorf plant; and what discussions he has had with the German Government on safety standards at Sellafield.

Mr. Baldry: I have been asked to reply.

I understand from British Nuclear Fuels plc that the new reprocessing contracts with the Federal German electricity utilities will bring in some £750 million of business to the company. These contracts are for reprocessing spent fuel, not nuclear waste.

In line with all BNFL's overseas reprocessing contracts signed since 1976, these contracts contain options for the return of wastes arising. The Government intend that such options should be exercised and that wastes should be returned.

Exchange of information agreements exist between the nuclear regulatory authorities in the United Kingdom and the Federal Republic of Germany. Nuclear safety standards in the Federal Republic are in line with those in the United Kingdom.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Blind People

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what information he has as to the numbers of blind people who neither pay tax nor benefit from social security payments.

Mr. Scott: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Finsbury Park Local Office

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the real level of expenditure on social fund loans and grants in 1988-89 and 1989-90 relative to expenditure on single payments in 1987-88 in Finsbury Park Department of Social Security office, taking into account the repayment of loans by claimants to the Department of Social Security.

Mr. Scott: The table shows the comparative expenditure for the Finsbury Park Department of Social Security office as reckoned by the gross domestic product deflator.

	Expenditure (in £000s)
1987-88 Single Payments	769
1988-89 Social Fund	
Gross	474
Net	375
1989-90 Social Fund	
Gross	624
Net	389

Social Fund

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will make it his practice in future to seek parliamentary approval of any general directions issued by him to social fund officers.

Mr. Scott: No. It was clearly Parliament's intention, recognised in a recent case before the Court of Appeal, that the social fund would operate in accordance with the directions of the Secretary of State, which would not be subject to parliamentary approval.

Disability

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will review the adequacy of social security provision for people with severe disabilities needing full-time care.

Mr. Scott: On 10 January we laid before Parliament "The Way Ahead: Benefits for Disabled People" which details our major proposals arising from our review of the balance and structure of social security benefits for disabled people and their carers. The existing benefit structure already recognises that disabled people have extra needs. The OPCS survey findings showed that attendance allowance and mobility allowance are well targeted on the most common of the more costly disabilities. From October 1990 a carer's premium, initially at a rate of £10 a week, will be introduced into income support and housing benefit for those receiving invalid care allowance. We estimate that this will help 30,000 carers.

Single Payments

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing the total number of single payments made in 1986-87 and 1987-88 broken down into pensioners, couples with children, lone parents, sick and disabled people and others.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 21 June 1990]:* The information requested is available only for the 12 months prior to each annual statistical inquiry. As marital status applies to all client groups, the data are split into two separate tables.

Number of single payments (thousands)

	February 1986	*May 1987*
Group		
Pensioners	410	933
Sick and disabled	175	257
Others	2,498	2,115
Total	3,083	3,305
Marital status		
Lone parent	1,038	960
Couples with dependants	876	693
Others	1,169	1,652
Total	3,083	3,305

Source: Annual statistical inquiry
Notes: Columns may not sum due to rounding.

The figures include payments made to cases during the 12 months prior to the inquiry, but exclude those cases which received a payment during the year but were not in receipt of benefit at the date of the inquiry; there is therefore an undercount of the total payments made.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing the proportion of pensioners, couples with children, lone parents, sick and disabled people and others on income support who received single payments in 1986-87 and 1987-88.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 21 June 1990]:* The information requested is available only for the 12 months prior to each annual statistical inquiry. As marital status applies to all client groups, the data are split into two separate tables.

Proportion of single payments by client group and marital status

Group	*February 1986*	*May 1987*
Pensioners	0·14	0·31
Sick and Disabled	0·24	0·30
Others	0·30	0·29
All cases	0·24	0·30
Marital status		
Lone parent	0·44	0·52
Couples with dependants	0·59	0·47
Others	0·16	0·24
All cases	0·24	0·30

Source: Annual statistical inquiry.
Note:
The figures include payments to cases during the 12 months prior to the inquiry, but exclude those cases which received a payment during the year but were not in receipt of benefit at the date of the inquiry; there is therefore an undercount of the total payments made.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing expenditure on the single payments scheme in each year between 1980-1981 and 1987-1988 in both current prices and 1990-91 prices.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 21 June 1990]:* The information requested is given in the table.

National expenditure on single payments

£ million

	Current prices	1990-91 prices
1980-81	48·403	87·302
1981-82	57·295	94·123
1982-83	98·074	150·265
1983-84	166·136	243·197
1984-85	240·663	335·621
1985-86	334·409	442·633
1986-87	329·945	422·376
1987-88	213·084	258·898

Source: Statistical record of actual single payment decisions made.

WALES

Protection of Birds

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those areas of special protection for birds as well as those Ramsar sites and areas with dual designation for the protection of birds.

Mr. David Hunt: The designation of special protection areas and Ramsar sites is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, although Welsh sites are designated in consultation with me. I therefore refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside today.

Radioactive Caesium

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list by county, and by year for the last five years, the number of reported cases of radioactive caesium in people.

Mr. Grist: The information is not available in the form requested. However, last month the Welsh Office published a report of a study of radioactivity in over 150 volunteers in north, south and mid-Wales.

The study showed that there were no significant differences between the body burdens of radiocaesium of the volunteers from the different parts of Wales, and that if the body burdens continue to decline at the current rate, levels in the Welsh population will on average reach pre-Chernobyl levels some time this year. A copy of the report "Whole Body Monitoring Research Project" is in the Library.

Welsh subjects are also participating in a national survey of radiocaesium levels in people, sponsored by the Department of the Environment.

Nurseries and Playgroups

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the numbers of *(a)* children, *(b)* qualified staff and *(c)* full-time equivalent qualified staff in registered (i) pre-school nurseries and (ii) playgroups for each academic year from 1970-71 to 1988-89 in (1) Wales as a whole and (2) each county of Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The number of staff in registered pre-school nurseries and playgroups is not held centrally. The available information on the numbers of places for children in registered pre-school nurseries and registered playgroups is shown in the following table. Data before 1975 are not readily available.

Number of places at 31 March

Clwyd

Year	Pre-school nurseries	Playgroups
1975	168	2,887
1976	198	2,953
1977	140	3,225
1978	154	3,806
1979	178	3,317
1980	178	3,802
1981	190	3,834
1982	203	3,957
1983	218	3,726
1984	218	3,815
1985	292	3,815
1986	289	3,792
1987	340	4,358
1988	382	4,573
1989	645	4,341

Dyfed

Year	Pre-school nurseries	Playgroups
1975	51	1,787
1976	11	2,048
1977	16	2,062
1978	—	2,089
1979	—	2,206
1980	—	2,443
1981	—	2,527
1982	—	2,597
1983	—	2,626
1984	—	2,663
1985	—	2,645
1986	—	2,644
1987	—	2,736
1988	—	3,378
1989	56	3,226

Gwent

Year	Pre-school nurseries	Playgroups
1975	63	1,829
1976	68	1,859
1977	68	2,171
1978	68	2,174
1979	68	2,137
1980	68	2,277
1981	7	2,064
1982	—	2,245
1983	—	2,144
1984	—	2,203
1985	—	2,323
1986	—	2,403
1987	—	2,580
1988	—	2,677
1989	—	2,803

Gwynedd

Year	Pre-school nurseries	Playgroups
1975	—	1,761
1976	—	1,818
1977	—	1,907
1978	—	1,998
1979	—	2,122
1980	—	2,418
1981	40	2,181
1982	60	2,470
1983	60	2,531
1984	60	2,553
1985	66	2,767
1986	77	2,804
1987	89	2,817

Year	Pre-school nurseries	Playgroups
1988	67	2,523
1989	189	3,219

Mid Glamorgan

Year	Pre-school nurseries	Playgroups
1975	444	1,789
1976	207	1,854
1977	127	2,240
1978	101	2,419
1979	127	2,416
1980	127	2,163
1981	127	2,174
1982	127	2,534
1983	145	2,685
1984	260	2,448
1985	157	2,686
1986	136	2,801
1987	210	2,747
1988	184	2,873
1989	117	3,064

Powys

Year	Pre-school nurseries	Playgroups
1975	10	653
1976	10	707
1977	10	581
1978	10	831
1979	10	914
1980	10	1,067
1981	10	1,086
1982	—	1,112
1983	—	1,325
1984	—	1,305
1985	—	1,294
1986	30	1,328
1987	50	1,357
1988	76	1,300
1989	81	1,363

South Glamorgan

Year	Pre-school nurseries	Playgroups
1975	377	2,578
1976	402	2,917
1977	534	2,931
1978	460	3,109
1979	478	2,768
1980	424	2,695
1981	357	2,918
1982	338	2,775
1983	310	2,806
1984	357	2,806
1985	377	2,943
1986	416	2,849
1987	438	3,074
1988	498	3,409
1989	548	3,727

West Glamorgan

Year	Pre-school nurseries	Playgroups
1975	70	1,099
1976	40	1,085
1977	40	1,173
1978	40	835
1979	40	849
1980	10	888
1981	15	727
1982	15	849
1983	101	890
1984	111	928
1985	121	933
1986	101	1,062
1987	106	932
1988	106	1,020
1989	276	1,002

Wales

Year	Pre-school nurseries	Playgroups
1975	1,183	14,383
1976	936	15,241
1977	935	16,290
1978	833	17,261
1979	901	16,729
1980	817	17,753
1981	746	17,511
1982	743	18,539
1983	834	18,733
1984	1,006	18,721
1985	1,013	19,406
1986	1,049	19,683
1987	1,233	20,601
1988	1,313	21,753
1989	1,912	22,745

NHS and Community Care Act

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will make it his policy that information circulated to people in Wales regarding the implementation of the National Health Service and Community Care Act should include information and advice on problems that may arise in the course of its implementation.

Mr. Grist: The booklet that we propose to distribute to all households in Wales will, of course, contain accurate information and advice. It will not address hypothetical problems arising from the implementation of the Act. Following the initial adjustment to the new arrangements we have every reason to believe that the advantages stemming from the reforms will be recognised and welcomed widely.

Drug Prescribing

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many times regulation 16 of the Service Committee and Tribunal Regulations has been invoked in respect of *(a)* excessive prescribing and *(b)* under-prescribing by each family practitioner committee in each of the past five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Grist: Regulation 16 has been invoked once during the last five years in respect of a case of excessive prescribing in the West Glamorgan FPC area.

General Medical Practices, West Glamorgan

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the reasons for the delay in financial allocation for service development of general medical practices in West Glamorgan.

Mr. Grist: Final cash allocations cannot be made until an analysis has been completed for information supplied

by all family practitioner committees in Wales. This information could not be provided until several weeks after the end of the financial year 1989-90. I hope to announce these allocations within a few weeks.

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many infants died from sudden infant death syndrome in Wales in 1989; what was the comparable figure in the previous three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Available data on deaths of babies under a year old, resident in Wales, caused by sudden infant death syndrome (ICD code 798.0) for the years 1986-1989 are given in the following table.

The introduction in 1986, in England and Wales, of a separate certificate for neonatal deaths—in the period 28 days after birth—means that it is not appropriate to assign a single underlying cause to such deaths. Consequently, for all infant deaths—in the first year after birth—only a count of the certificates where the syndrome is mentioned can be made, whether the syndrome was the underlying cause of death or not.

Deaths in infants in Wales

	(a) in Postneonatal period[1] due to ICD 798.0	*(b) within 1 year of birth where ICD 798.0 mentioned on death certificate[2]*
1989	63	66
1988	68	78
1987	88	96
1986	66	72

Source: OPCS.

[1] Post neonatal period as from 28 days but within 1 year of birth.

[2] Includes deaths listed in column *(a)*.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to combat sudden infant death syndrome in Wales.

Mr. Grist: The Government announced a major new initiative to reduce infant mortality, including sudden infant deaths, in their response to the Social Services Select Committee report on perinatal, neonatal and infant mortality which was published in July 1989 (Cmnd 741). The review of research relating to sudden infant death syndrome commissioned as part of this initiative will be of benefit to Wales. Also, in line with the initiative's goal to increase capacity to undertake expert post mortem examination of infants who die, action has been put in hand to secure, by central funding, the appointment of a full-time consultant paediatric pathologist at the University hospital of Wales. Pending that appointment, part-time consultant sessions are being funded centrally.

Local Management of Schools

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning the effects of local management of schools upon schools of fewer than 100 pupils in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. and learned Gentleman to my reply of 15 June 1990, column *369*.

School Budgets

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average budget for schools in Wales of *(a)* fewer than 100 pupils, *(b)* between 101 and 200 pupils and *(c)* over 201 pupils; what were the comparable figures in real terms in (i) 1975, (ii) 1980 and (iii) 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: This information is not available.

Polychlorinated Biphenyls (River Usk)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what arrangements have been made to deal with contamination of the River Usk by polychlorinated biphenyls carried in vessels in the river.

Mr. Grist: We are not aware of any such incidents. However, were such an event to occur it would be a matter for the National Rivers Authority, the local authority and if it were within a port, the harbour authority.

Mental Illness

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much money was allocated in the 1989-90 financial year by his Department (1) specifically to support the implementation of the all-Wales strategy on mental illness and (2) for other work in connection with mental illnesss *(a)* to each local authority in Wales, *(b)* to voluntary organisations in each local authority area and *(c)* to voluntary organisations in Wales as a whole.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 26 June 1990]:* No funding was allocated by the Department in 1989-90 under the mental illness strategy; 1990-91 is the first year of central Government funding under the strategy.

The following allocations were made by the Department to local authorities in 1989-90 under the urban programme for projects concerned primarily with mental illness:

	£
Dyfed	14,092
Gwent	29,852
Newport	1,097
Cynon Valley	14,910
Merthyr Tydfil	11,797
Ogwr	22,189
Vale of Glamorgan	5,623
West Glamorgan	31,346

With the exception of the allocation made to West Glamorgan, all this funding was provided for voluntary sector schemes.

In addition, Wales MIND received a grant of £57,166 under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968.

The Department also made available earmarked funds totalling £1,072,547 to district health authorities which use them to make payments to local authorities and voluntary organisations under the powers in section 28A of the National Health Service Act 1977.

NATIONAL FINANCE

World Student Games

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to cast a commemorative coin to help fund the world student games in Sheffield.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to cast a commemorative coin to help fund the world student games in Sheffield.

Mr. Ryder: There are no plans to issue a commemorative coin to mark the world student games.

Vehicle Excise Duty

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what reviews he is carrying out into the likely effects of linking motor vehicle excise duty to engine capacity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: We have no plans at present to link vehicle excise duty to engine capacity.

VAT

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the amount of tax forgone due to the zero rating of value added tax on *(a)* food, *(b)* children's clothing, *(c)* new housing and *(d)* books and newspapers.

Mr. Ryder: The extra revenue yield, in a full year, from applying the standard rate of VAT to the items listed is estimated approximately at:

	£ million
a. Food	5,100
b. Children's clothing	600
c. New Housing	1,600
d. Books and newspapers	700
Total	8,000

Such estimates depend, among other things, on the reaction of consumers to increased prices and so are subject to a considerable margin of error.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will take steps to harmonise the arrangements for payment of value added tax on duty-free fuel by British fishing vessels to bring them into line with existing arrangements for Belgian, Dutch and French fishing.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 2 July 1990]:* The Government are aware of the difficulties for British fishing vessels and other maritime interests, caused by the European Court of Justice's ruling on some of the United Kingdom's VAT zero rates. They are considering whether and how any changes to the present arrangements should be made.

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the likely increase in the retail prices index if value added tax at standard rate was applied to *(a)* food, *(b)* children's clothing, *(c)* new housing and *(d)* books and newspapers.

Mr. Ryder: Following is the information:

	Percentage increase in the Retail Prices Index Per cent.
a. Food	2·0
b. Children's clothing	0·2
c. New housing	[1]n.a.
d. Books and newspapers	0·2

[1]The effects on the RPI of applying VAT to new housing cannot be quantified precisely. The immediate impact would be very small. Over many years however it would become significant.

Beaulieu Group

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, further to his reply of 20 March, *Official Report*, column *525*, on the directors of the Beaulieu group of companies charged with cheating the public Revenue and offences under section 39(3) of the Value Added Tax Act 1983 heard before the Harrogate justices, he will make a further statement on the progress of the case.

Mr. Ryder: Jan De Clerck, Dominiek De Clerck, Luc De Clerck and Francis De Clerck are next due to appear upon a remand before the Harrogate justices on 16 August 1990.

The prosecution will seek to pursue committal proceedings on a date to be fixed by the court following representations by the parties at the remand hearing.

Mortgage Arrears

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on the number of people more than one month and up to six months in arrears on their mortgage repayments.

Mr. Ryder: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave to the hon. Member on 27 June at column *216*.

Natural Beauty Products, Bridgend

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide the hon. Member for Bridgend with a full note of the meeting on 1 February between Customs and Excise and Natural Beauty Products Ltd., Bridgend, including the timing and source of, and participants in, all phone calls made and received during that meeting.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 29 June 1990]:* I refer the hon. Member to the letter that my right hon. and noble Friend the Paymaster General sent to him on 6 July, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

German State Lottery

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the last date on which lottery tickets from the West German state lottery organisations were seized by Customs and Excise.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 5 July 1990]:* I understand from Customs and Excise that the latest date on which it seized lottery material from the Suddeutsche Klassenlotterien is 2 July 1990 and the latest date on which it seized material from the Nordwestdeutsche Klassenlotterien is 18 May 1990.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards seizures of West German state lottery tickets, in the light of the legal proceedings initiated by a West German lottery ticket salesman; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 5 July 1990]:* Policy remains that the import prohibition on lottery material should be enforced. Pending the outcome of any legal proceedings taken to challenge the validity of its action, Customs will continue to seize offending material which comes to its notice.

EMPLOYMENT

Radiation Exposure

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will introduce legislation to reduce levels of exposure to radiation at nuclear plants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The current dose limits are set out in schedule 1 to the Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985 (IRR 85). The regulations comply with an EC directive (80/836 Euratom, as amended by 84/467) which in turn reflects advice from the International Commission on Radiological Protection (ICRP). The ICRP is now reviewing its advice. The Health and Safety Commission's working group on ionising radiations will consider the revised ICRP recommendations, when finalised, and make any necessary proposals for further action.

Proposals for interim action pending the receipt of the revised ICRP recommendations were set out in an HSC consultative document earlier this year. The response is being considered with a view to issuing an additional part to the existing approved code of practice to IRR 85.

Industrial Tribunals

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many cases were registered with industrial tribunals in the United Kingdom and in the calendar year 1989 under section 1 of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 where the applicant claimed that their employer had not provided a written statement of terms and conditions of employment.

Mr. Nicholls: The information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Action for Jobs

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what expenditure was incurred on the action for jobs campaign in 1988-89 in addition to printed material, television advertising, press advertising, radio advertising and outdoor advertising.

Mr. Eggar: Expenditure of £10,000 on exhibition materials and £5,000 on research was incurred on the action for jobs campaign in 1988-99, in addition to expenditure on printed material, television advertising, press advertising, radio advertising and outdoor advertising.

SCOTLAND

Cleanliness

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will release additional funding to enable local authorities to upgrade standards of cleanliness in public places.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The matter of any cost implications that may arise for local authorities in upgrading standards of cleanliness in public places and other provisions contained in the Environmental Protection Bill has been raised in the round of discussions with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on local government finance in 1991-92. They will be taken into account in establishing the level of aggregate external finance for that year.

Public Toilets

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will introduce legislation compelling Scottish local authorities to upgrade standards of hygiene in public toilets; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Islands and district councils have discretionary powers under section 26 of the Local Government and Planning (Scotland) Act 1982 to provide, equip and maintain fixed or moveable public conveniences in such places as appear to them to be suitable.

My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to introduce legislation on standards of hygiene in such places.

Sexual Offences

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland in each of the years from 1980 to 1989 inclusive how many gay and/or bisexual men in Scotland were convicted of importuning in public places, contrary to section 32 of the Sexual Offences Act 1956.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Section 32 of the Sexual Offences Act 1956 does not extend to Scotland. It is not possible to separately identify broadly similar offences within the Scottish Home and Health Department's classification of crimes and offences.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many men in Scotland were convicted of the offences of procuring or attempting to procure the commission of acts of buggery and gross indecency in each of the years 1980 to 1989, inclusive.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not separately identifiable within the Scottish Home and Health Department's classification of crimes and offences.

Roads

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimates he has on the proportion of A702 traffic that will be diverted to the M74-M8 within Fastlink.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Following our consultations on the routes south of Edinburgh study,

management consultants have been appointed to assess the viability of the Fastlink as a privately financed project. Clearly the new road would attract traffic from the A702. It is for potential promoters of the scheme to quantify the volume of traffic which might be diverted to the route, but it could be in excess of one third of the flow on the rural section of the road north of Biggar.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to enforce restrictions on heavy vehicles using the A702 and A701 routes after the M74-M8 Fastlink is completed.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Subject to the satisfactory conclusion of discussions with Strathclyde, Borders and Lothian regional councils, it is proposed that the A702 would be de-trunked on completion of an M74-M8 Fastlink. The A701 is not a trunk road. It would therefore be for the regional councils as local roads authorities to consider whether any access restrictions were desirable.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans his Department has to reconsider dualling the A1 to Dunbar.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have announced a package of improvement schemes for the A1 which is likely to require the provision of nearly £50 million. We propose to dual the A1 from Bankton to Haddington, and in the longer term to Dunbar, and it is intended to formulate an appropriate package of further measures to improve the level of service over the remaining length. Dual carriageways are considered for roads expected to carry between 11,000 and 46,000 vehicles per day, and dualling on the A1 is being provided at the threshold level. Although dualling of the whole route is not ruled out in the very long term, current average daily traffic levels on the rural sections through Borders region are only about 5,000 vehicles per day.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimates he has on the cost of dualling the A6091 between the A68 and the A7.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The A6091 is not a trunk road, and is the responsibility of Borders regional council as local roads authority.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to visit the Borders region to discuss the Government's current road plans for the future development of the A7 south of Hawick with the local roads authority; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 5 July 1990]:* I received an invitation from Roxburgh district council to attend a meeting to discuss the Government's plans for improving road access to the Borders. I propose to visit Borders regional council, as the authority responsible for trunk roads. I also propose to visit Roxburgh district council, on housing matters in the course of which I shall listen to its representations. Neither the date nor format of the meetings has yet been arranged.

Health Boards

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any plans to review the levels of remuneration for health board chairmen.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend accepts that the remuneration of health board chairmen should be revised to reflect the additional workload which chairmen are experiencing in preparing for implementation of NHS reforms and in recognition of the new responsibilities which they will take on when the new health boards are established in 1991. He has therefore decided on the following levels of remuneration for chairmen with effect from 1 April 1990:

Health board	*Remuneration £ per annum*
Greater Glasgow	22,730
Lothian	20,490
Grampian; Tayside	18,250
Lanarkshire; Argyll and Clyde	16,005
Ayr and Arran; Fife; Forth Valley; Highland	13,415
Borders; Dumfries and Galloway	10,810
Orkney; Shetland; Western Isles	6,510

In addition, my right hon. and learned Friend has decided that remuneration should be introduced for non-executive members of the new health boards. This will apply from 1 April 1991 and the levels will be £5,000 per annum for mainland health boards and £2,000 per annum for island health boards.

Illiteracy

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many children have left school in each of the past five years unable to read or write in each education authority area.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 5 July 1990]:* This information is not available.

New Towns

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet the chairmen of the new town development corporations.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 5 July 1990]:* My right hon. and learned Friend has no immediate plans to meet the chairmen of the new town development corporations. I shall be meeting them on Friday 6 July.

Primary Schools, Glasgow

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current teacher to pupil ratio in Glasgow primary schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 5 July 1990]:* The pupil:teacher ratio in primary schools in the Glasgow division of Strathclyde in 1989-90 was 19·4:1, compared with 20·9:1 in 1988-89. This information may be found in SED statistical bulletin No. 9/B1/1990, a copy of which is in the Library.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Dental Health

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information is available to indicate the average cost per estimate for completed dental treatment for patients under 16 years in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: At present the average cost per course of dental treatment for children under 16 years is £25·78.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what statistical information is available on child dental health under 18 years in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: A survey of the dental health of children aged five, eight, 12 and 15 years was carried out in 1989. Preliminary results show that on average caries levels in these age groups have fallen by some 38 per cent. since 1983.

Extradition

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has received any indications from the Government of the Republic of Eire about removal of articles 2 and 3 of their 1937 constitution or appropriate amendment of the Extradition Act 1965 in order to deal with terrorists more effectively.

Mr. Cope: The situation in relation to our arrangements for dealing with fugitive offenders is currently being reviewed by British and Irish officials, as agreed between the respective Ministers on 19 April. I would prefer not to comment on the details of the review.

Community Care Grants

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many claims there have been for community care grants in each DHSS office in Londonderry city, Limavady, Coleraine and Magherafelt during the last 12 months for which figures are available; and how many in each office were *(a)* granted, *(b)* refused and *(c)* how many of the applicants refused were advised on the refusal form to (i) apply for a budgeting loan, (ii) were offered a budgeting loan and (iii) how many offered a loan sought and received such a loan, or as much of such information as is available to him.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 3 July 1990]:* Information about the number of community care grants processed each month, the number awarded and the amount paid by each social security office is available in the Library. The number of refusals can be derived from these figures.

Applicants who are refused community care grants do not need to apply for budgeting loans as social fund officers automatically consider the possibility of a loan in all such cases. No information is available about the number of loans subsequently offered or made to people whose applications for grants have been turned down.

Remand Prisoners

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of prisoners on custodial remand for (i) scheduled and (ii) non-scheduled offences were *(a)* given a non-custodial sentence, *(b)* given a custodial sentence and *(c)* found not guilty or not proceeded against in 1989.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 4 July 1990]:* The information requested is as follows:

Per cent.

1989	*(i) Scheduled*	*(ii) Non-scheduled*
(a) Non-custodial	14·3	17·5
(b) Custodial	75·4	72·2
(c) not guilty etc.	10·3	10·3

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many prisoners were remanded in custody prior to trial for *(a)* scheduled and *(b)* non-scheduled offences in 1989.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 4 July 1990]:* In 1989, 928 individuals were remanded in custody for scheduled offences and 697 individuals were remanded in custody for non-scheduled offences.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many attacks on RUC personnel took place in 1989, showing whether the attack was on (i) a foot patrol and (ii) a mobile patrol, the total attacked while on duty each month together with details of the type of attack, namely *(a)* physical assault, *(b)* stone throwing, *(c)* petrol bomb, *(d)* explosion or *(e)* shooting and the number of persons made amenable.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 4 July 1990]:* The information is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, in 1989 there were over 500 incidents in which the police were attacked either on duty or at home. Of these, 67 incidents involved the use of firearms and 83 the use of explosives.

TRANSPORT

Roads

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much money has been spent on road schemes, not including maintenance, since 1960; and whether he will express this in terms of the current value of the pound.

Mr. Atkins: Total capital expenditure by central Government on national roads in the United Kingdom 1960-61 to 1989-90 amounts to about £15 billion, or £35 billion when expressed in 1989-90 prices. These figures should be treated as approximations, since there have been definitional changes.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what information he has on the number of *(a)* properties and *(b)* homes that have been demolished as a result of road schemes since 1960;

(2) what information he has on the acreage of *(a)* agricultural land and *(b)* other land taken out of use (i) permanently and (ii) temporarily as a result of road schemes since 1960.

Mr. Atkins: Information is not held in the form requested, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Collision (River Usk)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the cargoes carried on the vessels Marius AS and Belle Roger which were involved in a collision on the River Usk at Newport on 24 April.

Mr. McLoughlin: The collision on 24 April was between the Greek bulk carrier Morias and the Irish container vessel Bell Ranger.

The Morias was carrying a cargo of steel products, and the Bell Ranger a cargo of containers. The containers, none of which appears to have been damaged, were loaded with general cargo, except one, which contained drums of chemical waste.

Air Fares

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met his colleagues in the Council of Ministers for Transport to discuss deregulation of air fares.

Mr. Parkinson: I attended a meeting of the EC Transport Council on 18 June 1990. A formal commitment was made to complete a single market in aviation by the end of 1992, and agreement was reached on a second package of EC air transport liberalisation measures for the interim. Regulations on fares, market access and capacity sharing, and on the application of the competition rules to air transport were adopted. The agreement reached will allow airlines greater freedom to exercise their own commercial judgment.

Railway Investment Criteria

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will seek an early meeting with his West German counterpart to discuss railway investment criteria.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so.

Concessionary Travel

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many local authorities *(a)* issue free bus passes, *(b)* issue some form of assisted bus passes and *(c)* do not provide free or assisted travel for their pensioners.

Mr. Freeman: According to a survey of local authorities done by the Department of Transport in 1986, there were concessionary fares schemes for pensioners in 92 per cent. of districts in England and Wales, some operated by district councils and some by county councils or passenger transport executives. Of the 285 schemes for the elderly, 19 provided for free fares. There were no concessionary fares schemes in 29 districts. In London, a free fare scheme is funded by the boroughs.

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to make it mandatory for every local authority to provide a free bus pass to their pensioners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Local authorities always have discretionary powers to provide for reduced fares or free travel for people of state pensionable ago on local public transport services, and we have no plans to change these arrangements.

Passenger Transport Authorities (Funding)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has made for monitoring and acting upon the effects of the change in funding of passenger transport authorities in those areas affected by *(a)* poll tax capping and *(b)* loss of safety net grant in 1991-92.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 5 July 1990]:* The passenger transport authorities discuss transport and financing issues with my Department on an on-going basis. Spending priorities within the level of community charge caps are a matter for the local authorities concerned.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on proposals for amending the use of weighted ward densities in the allocation of funding for public transport authorities in the coming financial years.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 5 July 1990]:* Representations made by the local authority associations will be considered by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, who will make his proposals known in the autumn.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Serious Fraud Trials

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Attorney-General when he last met the director of the Serious Fraud Office to discuss the conduct of serious fraud trials.

The Attorney-General: I last met the Director of the Serious Fraud Office for this purpose on 3 June 1990.

Wreck Commissioners

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Attorney-General (1) what steps were taken to avoid any possible conflict of interests when assessors were appointed to sit on the Wreck Commissioners inquiry into the loss of the MV Derbyshire;

(2) what criteria govern the appointment of members of Lloyd's Register to sit on a Wreck Commissioners inquiry when the ship under scrutiny had been granted a certificate by Lloyd's Register.

The Attorney-General: Those under consideration for appointment as assessors are asked to confirm that they have no connection with any known parties to the formal investigation which might give rise to a conflict of interest.

Any assessor for a formal investigation, including members of Lloyd's Register, must fulfil the criteria set out in the schedule to the Merchant Shipping (Formal Investigations) Regulations 1985 (SI 1985/No. 1001), and any other appropriate criteria relating to special skills or knowledge which the Lord Chancellor might set having regard to the nature of the casualty which is to be the subject of that inquiry.

PRIME MINISTER

Gifts

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Prime Minister what guidelines exist in respect of the receipt, recording and disposal or otherwise of gifts received by Ministers acting in their official capacity.

The Prime Minister: It is a well-established rule that no Minister should accept gifts, hospitality or services from anyone which would, or might appear to, place him or her under an obligation. The recording and, where appropriate, disposal of gifts received is a matter for Departments.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Prime Minister (1) where the synthetic sapphire presented to her in her official capacity by the British Scientific and Technical Trust is held;

(2) if she will make it her policy to refuse any gift offered to her in her official capacity which contains *(a)* ivory, *(b)* fur, *(c)* tropical hardwoods or *(d)* chlorofluorocarbons;

(3) what gift she presented to President de Klerk on the occasion of his recent visit to the United Kingdom;

(4) what gift she presented to President Gorbachev on the occasion of her recent visit to the USSR in June;

(5) what gift she presented to President Bush on the occasion of her visit to the United States of America in November 1989.

The Prime Minister: It is not my normal practice to provide information of this kind concerning gifts given or received.

1991 Census

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Prime Minister whether the level of resources and funding for the Northern Ireland 1991 census will be on the same basis as for the census in the rest of the United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister: Yes.

Calcutt Inquiry

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister whether she expects to revise any more of her previous parliamentary answers in the light of the findings of the Calcutt inquiry into the handling of papers relating to Mr. Colin Wallace; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Mr. Calcutt's inquiry into the handling of Mr. Colin Wallace's disciplinary case is still in progress.

A copy of the conclusions of the Ministry of Defence's internal inquiry into the handling of documents relating to Mr. Wallace's case has been placed in the Library of the House. Nothing in these conclusions makes it necessary to revise my previous parliamentary answers.

Exchange Rate Mechanism

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister what mechanisms exist for revaluation within the exchange rate mechanism; how often they have been used; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to section 3.2 of the resolution of the European Council of 5 December 1978 on the establishment of the European monetary system (EMS) and related matters, a copy of which is in the Library of the House. Since the inception of the EMS on 13 March 1979, there have been 12 realignments of currencies in the exchange rate mechanism.

New Taxes

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy to introduce no new taxes before the next general election.

The Prime Minister: We have no plans to introduce any new taxes. Since 1979, we have abolished five major taxes, and the 1990 Finance Bill contains provisions for the abolition of two more.

NATO Meeting, London

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister what proposals she proposes to put to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation Heads of Government meeting on 5-6 July in London.

The Prime Minister: The NATO summit, which ends today, has been an important opportunity to chart the future course of the alliance at a time of momentous change in Europe. We need to preserve a sure defence and adapt NATO to the new circumstances. A copy of the declaration to be issued by the summit will be placed in the Library of the House as soon as it is available.

Natural History Museum

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister in relation to the science base of the United Kingdom, what proposals have recently been discussed with the chairman of the trustees of the natural history museum.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 5 July 1990]:* The Lord President indicated on my behalf, in response to the hon. Member's question of 26 June, that the chairman of the museum is in discussion with the Government's chief scientific adviser and the Office of Arts and Libraries about the museum's position in relation to the United Kingdom science base.

As the Minister for the Arts said in the Adjournment debate of 20 June, he will be holding further discussions with the chairman of the trustees and the museum's director on this and related issues.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

South Africa

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received regarding the policy of Her Majesty's Government on sanctions in relation to South Africa.

Mr. Waldegrave: We receive numerous representations on all aspects of our policy towards South Africa.

Cyprus

Mr. Knowles: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Government of the Republic of Cyprus to observe paragraph 5 of Security Council resolution 649.

Mr. Maude: We continue to support United Nations efforts to bring about a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement to the Cyprus dispute, in line with Security Council resolution 649. We maintain continuous diplomatic contact with all parties to this end.

Morocco

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement concerning the official visit of the Prince of Morocco to Britain.

Mr. Waldegrave: Prince Sidi Mohammed paid a highly successful first official visit to Britain from 18 to 22 June as a guest of Government. He met His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, had dinner with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, met other Ministers, visited Parliament and the City of London and had the opportunity to see some modern technology projects.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether his Department has raised the issue of violation of human rights with the Moroccan Government.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Moroccan Government are aware of our concern about human rights abuses wherever they occur.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what his Department is intending to do to influence the Moroccan Government to renew a direct dialogue with the Polisario.

Mr. Waldegrave: This is a matter for the parties involved. We continue to believe that the good offices of the UN Secretary-General and the chairman of the Organisation of African Unity offer the best prospects for an early and equitable solution. The latest developments at the UN are encouraging.

Western Sahara

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps have been taken by his Department to assist Perez de Cuellar in his efforts to implement the last general assembly resolution regarding the organisation of a fair and genuine democratic referendum for the self-determination of the Saharawi people without any military or administrative constraints.

Mr. Waldegrave: There have been welcome developments since the last UN general assembly resolution. The Secretary-General is expected soon to make detailed proposals for the establishment of a UN mission for the referendum in the western Sahara (MINURSO). Together with the other members of the Security Council we support these efforts and stand ready to consider requests for assistance.

Bulgaria

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his response to the recent elections in Bulgaria.

Mr. Waldegrave: The vote was generally free and fair, although there was a certain amount of intimidation and violence during the campaign. Both observers and Bulgaria's own electoral commission have cast doubts on some individual results. We shall now need to assess the policies and practices of the new Government and hope that their commitment to reform will be shown to be real.

Guyana

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have been held with the Government of Guyana concerning the freedom of the forthcoming elections.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend, the then Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, and my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development reminded President Hoyte of the importance which the Government attach to the principle of free and fair elections when they met him in October and December 1989.

I also emphasised the need for elections to be free and fair when the Foreign Minister of Guyana called on me on 21 May 1990.

Nuclear Non-proliferation

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd), *Official Report*, 21 June, column *685*, he will list in the *Official Report* the states parties to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, the non-governmental organisations and members of the public to whom he makes reference as having made communication on the nuclear non-proliferation treaty review conference and the general nature of the communications.

Mr. Waldegrave: Only at disproportionate cost could the non-governmental organisations and members of the public who have communicated on the subject of the NPT be listed. The communications received have been concerned with Government policy towards, and the fulfilment of obligations arising from, the NPT.

The following are states parties to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty:

United Kingdom
United States of America
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
Afghanistan
Antigua and Barbuda
Australia
Austria
Bahamas
Bahrain
Bangladesh
Barbados
Belgium
Belize
Benin
Bhutan
Bolivia
Botswana
Brunei Darussalam
Bulgaria
Burkina Faso
Burundi
Cambodia
Cameroon
Canada
Cape verde
Central African Republic
Chad

Colombia
Congo
Costa Rica
Cote D'Ivoire
Cyprus
Czech and Slovak Federal Republic
Denmark
Dominica
Dominican Republic
Ecuador
Egypt
El Salvador
Equatorial Guinea
Ethiopia
Fiji
Finland
Gabon
Gambia
German Democratic Republic
Germany, Federal Republic
Ghana
Greece
Grenada
Guatemala
Guinea
Guinea Bissau
Haiti
Holy See
Honduras
Hungary
Iceland
Indonesia
Iran
Iraq
Republic of Ireland
Italy
Jamaica
Japan
Jordan
Kenya
Kiribati
Korea, Republic of
Kuwait
Lao People's Democratic Republic
Lebanon
Lesotho
Liberia
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
Liechtenstein
Luxembourg
Madagascar
Malawi
Malaysia
Maldives
Mali
Malta
Mauritius
Mexico
Mongolia
Morocco
Nauru
Nepal
Netherlands
New Zealand
Nicaragua
Nigeria
Norway
Panama
Papua New Guinea
Paraguay
Peru
Philippines
Poland
Portugal
Qatar
Romania
Rwanda
St. Lucia
St. Vincent and the Grenadines
San Marino
Sao Tome and Principe
Saudi Arabia
Senegal
Seychelles
Sierra Leone
Singapore
Solomon Islands
Somalia
Spain
Sri Lanka
Sudan
Suriname
Swaziland
Sweden
Switzerland
Syrian Arab Republic
Thailand
Togo
Tonga
Trinidad and Tobago
Tunisia
Turkey
Tuvalu
Uganda
Uruguay
Venezuela
Vietnam
Western Samoa
Yemen, Republic of
Yugoslavia
Zaire

Notes:

1. Taiwan (not recognised as a State by Her Majesty's Government) signed the Treaty in Washington on 1 July 1968 and deposited an Instrument of Ratification in Washington on 27 January 1970.

2. North Korea (not recognised as a State by Her Majesty's Government) acceded to the Treaty on 12 December 1985 in Moscow.

GATT

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the implications for developing countries of the United States, European Community, Japanese and Nordic proposals for the current Uruguay round of GATT to include liberalisation of the services sector.

Mr. Redwood: I have been asked to reply.

With services accounting for a growing proportion of world trade, the proposals being considered in the GATT Uruguay round for a multilateral agreement on trade in services, stand to benefit all participants, developed and developing countries alike. The United Kingdom and its European Community partners are working for an agreement with the widest possible participation, and which achieves the greatest liberalisation. It is recognised that the commitments expected of developing countries will need to take account of development of their service sectors, and this is reflected in the draft agreement recently tabled by the EC.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Sexual Offences

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) in each of the years from 1980 to 1989 inclusive how many gay and/or bisexual men in England and Wales were convicted of importuning in public places, contrary to section 32 of the Sexual Offences Act 1956;

(2) in each of the years from 1980 to 1989 inclusive how many men were convicted for the offences of gross indecency and indecency between males in England and Wales.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is given in the table. Data for 1989 will not be available until the autumn.

Males convicted of specified sexual offences 1980 to 1988 England and Wales

Offence	*Soliciting or importuning by a man (Section 32 of Sexual Offences Act 1956)*	*Indecency between males*
1980	1,184	1,603
1981	878	1,420
1982	783	1,145
1983	719	1,232
1984	399	821
1985	452	730
1986	452	714
1987	500	951
1988	545	1,333

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many men in England and Wales were convicted of the offences of procuring or attempting to procure the commission of acts of buggery and gross indecency in each of the years 1980 to 1989, inclusive.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is given in the table. Data for 1989 will not be available until the autumn.

Male defendants convicted of procuration of males 1980 to 1988 England and Wales

	Procuration of males
1980	143
1981	121
1982	140
1983	125
1984	194
1985	350
1986	193
1987	246
1988	332

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what guidance his Department issues to police forces on what constitutes an immoral purpose for the purposes of prosecution for importuning in a public place for immoral purposes;

(2) what guidance his Department issues to police forces as to those acts which might be construed as representing gross indecency.

Mr. John Patten: None. The law has been interpreted by the courts. If necessary the police can turn to the Crown prosecution service for advice.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidance his Department issues to police forces on criteria to be employed when deciding between prosecution for the offences of indecency between men and gross indecency; and what is his Department's definition of indecency between males as used in its sexual offences statistics.

Mr. John Patten: None. Charges brought under section 13 of the Sexual Offences Act 1956 are for acts of gross indecency between men. There is no lesser offence of indecency as opposed to gross indecency.

Crime Prevention

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the steps which Her Majesty's Government have taken since 1979 to promote crime prevention.

Mr. Waddington: The Government's strong belief in the potential for the whole community to contribute to crime prevention is reflected in the range of measures we have taken which include the following:

(i) Publication in 1984 and in 1990 of circulars to local authorities and a variety of relevant agencies, recommending the development of locally based crime prevention schemes through partnership between local authority departments, the police and commercial and voluntary interests.

(ii) A series of national publicity campaigns using TV and press advertising. The most recent, which is not yet complete, features the latest edition of the handbook of crime prevention advice entitled "Practical Ways to Crack Crime". Over 3 million copies of this handbook have been distributed.

(iii) The establishment of Crime Concern, an independent body (funded initially by the Home Office) which seeks to encourage and facilitate local crime prevention activity, and to draw the business sector into crime prevention.

(iv) The safer cities programme. Projects have been set up in 16 inner-city areas with the objectives of reducing crime, lessening the fear of crime and creating conditions in which economic enterprise and community life can flourish.

(v) The establishment of the standing conference on crime prevention, giving the opportunity for a wide range of groups and agencies to discuss ideas on crime prevention.

(vi) Enhancement of the training offered to the police service by the Home Office crime prevention centre, including specialist areas such as architectural liaison and designing out crime.

(vii) A seminar in 1986, chaired by the Prime Minister, brought together representatives from the private sector, the unions, the police and central and local government to discuss action on crime prevention. This event led to the setting up of the ministerial group on crime prevention, through which Ministers from 13 Government Departments co-ordinate an interdepartmental approach to crime prevention.

Immigration

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many nationals of *(a)* Trinidad and Tobago, *(b)* Guyana, *(c)* Barbados and *(d)* Jamaica have (i) been admitted and (ii) been refused admittance and removed during each of the first five months of the current year.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The available information is given in the following table:

Citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Barbados and Jamaica admitted to, and refused leave to enter and removed from, the United Kingdom

	1990 January	February	March	April	May
Trinidad and Tobago					
Total admitted[1]	1,200	700	1,400	1,400	1,400
Total refused leave to enter and removed	11	11	10	9	11
Guyana					
Total admitted[1]	300	300	400	500	400
Total refused leave to enter and removed	6	3	6	3	4
Barbados					
Total admitted[1]	500	300	400	700	700
Total refused leave to enter and removed	2	1	3	3	4
Jamaica					
Total admitted[1]	1,600	2,000	1,900	2,100	2,400
Total refused leave to enter and removed	50	52	58	42	48

[1] Provisional figures.

Birmingham Prison

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide a month-by-month breakdown of the number of attempted suicides by inmates in Birmingham prison during the first six months of 1990.

Mr. Mellor: The number of inmates who were recorded as having attempted suicide at Birmingham prison in each of the first six months of 1990 is as follows:

	Number
January	1
February	1
March	2
April	2
May	9
June	4
Total	19

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people are still remanded in custody awaiting trial following the incidents in Trafalgar square on 31 March.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Students (Deportation)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his Department's current policy and practice on enforcing deportation decisions against students who have been found to be working in breach of their conditions of entry; what definition is used of student; and whether he will list the colleges which he would not recognise as providing courses of study for overseas students acceptable under the immigration rules.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Any overseas student who wishes to work during his free time or vacations may do so by obtaining the requisite permission from the Department of Employment. Each case in which a student is found working without such permission is considered on its individual merits: as required by the immigration rules, the case for deportation is considered in the light of all known relevant factors. For this purpose a student is a person who at the time meets the requirements of the immigration rules for the grant of leave to enter or remain as a student. The Immigration and Nationality Department keeps records of information which has come to light about individual colleges. In dealing with individual applications from students, account is taken of any material which is available to the Department about the circumstances of, and courses offered by, the colleges concerned. Caseworkers are made aware of what information is available by means of internal notices which are part of staff instructions and are not published.

Criminal Records Office

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps have been taken to *(a)* receive the original notes and *(b)* identify the authors of criminal records office file no. 10368/74.

Mr. John Patten: These are among the matters which are being considered by the Devon and Cornwall constabulary, whose report my right hon. and learned Friend will consider very carefully in due course.

Football Licensing Authority

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to meet representatives from the Football League to discuss the work of the Football Licensing Authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. and learned Friend has no such plans at present. My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State has had such a meeting and has recently written to the chief executive of the Football League on this subject.

Firearms

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next intends to meet the chairman of the firearms consultative committee to discuss firearms certification procedures.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend has no immediate plans to meet the chairman of the firearms

consultative committee. It is for the committee to keep under review the working of the administration of the Firearms Acts 1968 to 1988 and to make to my right hon. and learned Friend such recommendations as the committee may from time to time think necessary for the improvement of that working.

Bombing Cases

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has discussed the Guildford and Woolwich or the Maguire cases with *(a)* the Lord Chief Justice or *(b)* the Master of the Rolls.

Mr. John Patten: No.

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the nine Surrey police officers who were in Birmingham at the time of the pub bombings have been identified.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the replies given to questions from the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) on 30 October 1989 at columns *39-40*. It is not known whether any Surrey officers were in Birmingham at the time of the pub bombings, although I understand that a team of nine Surrey officers was in the west midlands area at the time. This is among the matters relating to the case of the Birmingham pub bombings which are currently under investigation by the Devon and Cornwall constabulary on behalf of the chief constable of the West Midlands police.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the new inquiry undertaken by the Devon and Cornwall police into the Birmingham Six to be completed.

Mr. John Patten: It is not possible at this stage to say when the Devon and Cornwall constabulary will be able to report on the results of its inquiries, but I know that the police are fully aware of the need to complete those inquiries as quickly and as thoroughly as possible.

Television Licences

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will meet pensioners' representatives to discuss free television licences for all pensioners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Such a meeting would serve no strong purpose. Our policy is clear and well known to the hon. Member. The licence fee is not a proper instrument of social policy, and we have no plans to change the present concessionary arrangements. Giving free licences to all pensioners would cost £435 million a year, and would necessitate increasing the cost of the licence to everyone else to well over £100.

Missing Persons Register

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to establish a national computerised missing persons register; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to establish a national computerised missing persons register; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have been considering the establishment of such a register for some time now. We have been examining two possible options and are now seeking the views of the Association of Chief Police Officers before reaching a conclusion as to the better method.

Criminal Damage

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his estimate of the cost of vandalism or criminal damage in England in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is not available.

Prison Officers, London

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list for each of the London prisons the number of applications for transfer from officers at those prisons to other prisons in England and Wales for each of the last three years; and what is the number of applications that have been granted;

(2) if he will list the present number of transfer applications that have been submitted by officers serving at each of the London prisons for transfers to another prison in England and Wales; and what is the longest period of time such an application has been waiting for a decision to be made.

Mr. Mellor: The available information is given in the following table.

Establishment	*Number of transfer requests*			*Numbers transferred*[1]			*Earliest outstanding request*
	1988	*1989*	*1990*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	
Holloway	24	45	12	42	13	11	13 July 1987
Pentonville	47	40	10	25	15	6	16 February 1987
Wormwood Scrubs	62	77	16	47	49	9	24 April 1987
Brixton	58	103	37	80	35	10	4 September 1987
Feltham	13	70	18	16	17	11	29 September 1988
Wandsworth	52	91	25	57	27	5	1 April 1987
Latchmere House	10	12	9	8	2	3	10 May 1988

[1] Includes officers requesting transfer during previous years.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps are taken to help prison officers transferred from other establishments into London prisons with accommodation.

Mr. Mellor: Prison officers who are transferred to London prisons on permanent compulsory transfer terms are entitled to reimbursement of the expenses incurred in moving home. They are eligible to receive, for example, travel and subsistence allowances, removal expenses, estate agents' and solicitors' fees, a transfer grant or a miscellaneous expenses grant and in certain circumstances the interest charges on bridging loans.

Drugs

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many drug finds there have been in each British prison establishment in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Waddington: The following relates to England and Wales. Responsibility for prison establishments in Scotland rests with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. New instructions for the reporting by prison establishments of finds of illicit drugs and related implements took effect on 1 July 1984. Available information about numbers of finds reported since that time is shown in the table. The information for 1984 and 1985 relates to both substances and implements. The figures for subsequent years relate to substances only.

Establishment	[1]*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	[2]*1990*
Acklington	5	18	21	8	16	18	16
Albany	36	86	—	11	1	16	—
Aldington	1	1	3	1	4	9	6
Ashford	1	12	—	6	1	29	—
Ashwell	3	1	9	6	25	23	1
Askham Grange	1	2	2	2	2	8	3
Aylesbury	2	2	13	9	12	17	9
Bedford	13	17	12	11	12	5	8
Birmingham	10	27	—	28	66	56	30
Blantyre House	1	1	—	—	—	3	—
Blundeston	14	26	17	14	16	23	8
Bristol	7	10	—	13	30	59	12
Brixton	46	111	118	199	205	251	122
Brockhill	6	5	8	1	14	9	13
Buckley Hall	—	—	—	1	1	2	—
Bullwood Hall	3	1	5	1	14	7	14
Camp Hill	6	5	17	3	8	13	13
Campsfield House	—	—	—	—	1	1	2
Canterbury	4	13	1	5	8	1	2
Cardiff	6	5	17	15	31	15	4
Castington	1	1	7	2	5	4	2
Channings Wood	16	8	17	12	18	11	5
Chelmsford	32	16	24	18	34	52	19
Coldingley	6	6	3	5	7	9	1
Cookham Wood	—	1	11	14	—	5	—
Dartmoor	2	10	11	18	25	17	10
Deerbolt	1	3	3	1	1	6	5
Dorchester	5	3	6	1	5	2	1
Dover	5	24	19	16	16	9	7
Downview	—	—	—	—	—	7	3
Drake Hall	—	8	3	11	2	9	1
Durham	7	13	39	31	19	26	4
East Sutton Park	—	4	1	7	10	7	2
Eastwood Park	—			1	2	3	2
Erlestoke	—	3	1	3	14	5	1
Everthorpe	1	3	1	2	2	7	2
Exeter	1	6	14	15	11	13	1
Featherstone	3	43	25	10	10	24	6
Feltham	9	33	21	23	59	107	83
Ford	8	17	40	37	59	64	19
Frankland	4	13	7	12	35	29	4
Full Sutton	—	—	—	—	18	15	1
Garth	—	—	—	—	—	19	13
Gartree	9	58	12	8	12	22	10
Glen Parva	2	5	12	13	15	21	8
Gloucester	—	1	—	1	3	5	1
Grendon/Spring Hill	18	5	36	19	14	22	3
Guy Marsh	2	—	—	—	1	1	4
Haslar	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hatfield	—	1	1	—	3	2	
Haverigg	15	42	45	50	34	30	10
Hewell Grange	2	1	—	5	8	3	1
Highpoint	14	5	34	10	21	31	22
Hindley	7	8	3	5	8	10	8
Hollesley Bay	2	13	—	—	41	37	8
Holloway	16	21	22	37	40	53	15
Hull	11	8	7	4	7	27	5
Huntercombe/Finnamore Wood	13	19	5	2	5	31	6

Establishment	[1]1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	[2]1990
Kingston	1	—	—	—	1	2	—
Kirkham	—	6	13	13	56	69	—
Kirklevington	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lancaster	4	8	4	3	20	15	1
Latchmere House	7	33	10	4	3	6	—
Leeds	19	12	15	27	23	25	1
Leicester	5	6	13	10	4	18	—
Lewes	51	18	—	1	9	13	—
Leyhill	2	1	—	2	16	3	4
Lincoln	3	25	9	8	15	32	8
Lindholme	—	—	—	—	47	39	12
Littlehey	—	—	—	—	21	23	13
Liverpool	43	121	170	110	96	82	29
Long Lartin	28	54	32	29	35	27	13
Lowdham Grange	5	7	7	4	14	15	—
Low Newton	—	7	7	6	11	9	1
Maidstone	15	18	21	37	10	13	2
Manchester	43	87	48	20	42	88	10
Morton Hall	—	—	2	4	5	7	7
The Mount	—	—	—	—	6	31	15
New Hall	3	—	—	—	4	5	—
Northallerton	2	1	3	3	3	6	—
Northeye	19	26	—	4	27	17	20
North Sea Camp	1	—	—	—	2	6	2
Norwich	23	5	18	24	40	53	24
Nottingham	—	6	4	3	4	5	1
Onley	2	11	7	9	9	26	2
Oxford	4	—	6	3	5	1	—
Parkhurst	16	43	39	38	29	80	7
Pentonville	15	30	32	33	50	63	49
Portland	—	3	—	2	22	24	2
Preston	7	6	13	22	12	10	—
Pucklechurch	—	4	1	7	3	22	8
Ranby	4	5	6	8	14	16	5
Reading	2	9	6	11	26	14	14
Risley	12	23	17	19	19	14	1
Rochester	14	10	31	16	57	27	14
Rudgate	1	3	13	10	11	17	8
Send	—	—	1	2	15	16	5
Shepton Mallet	10	2	10	20	15	13	11
Shrewsbury	1	4	2	4	9	10	1
Stafford	26	35	21	33	35	42	8
Standford Hill	29	18	—	16	36	26	11
Stocken	—	5	2	5	16	11	5
Stoke Heath	6	5	13	5	12	19	—
Styal	4	2	1	1	1	8	1
Sudbury/Foston Hall	4	17	7	6	15	9	3
Swaleside	—	—	—	—	4	11	19
Swansea	—	4	23	3	8	2	—
Swinfen Hall	—	—	3	2	6	8	3
Thorn Cross	—	—	15	21	16	24	1
Thorp Arch	—	—	5	11	10	12	4
Usk-Prescoed	—	—	2	3	4	7	4
The Verne	1	15	2	9	11	10	16
Wakefield	5	15	5	12	11	5	1
Wandsworth	108	359	237	147	267	217	129
Wayland	—	7	31	26	45	28	16
Wellingborough	1	1	5	6	4	7	—
Werrington	1	—	1	1	—	3	—
Wetherby	3	2	—	5	—	8	6
Whatton	—	—	—	—	2	7	—
Winchester	9	5	3	5	33	45	2
Wormwood Scrubs	120	20	195	174	206	238	105
Wymott	10	19	11	41	16	20	16

[1] From 1 July.
[2] To 31 May.

New Prison Fazakerley

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will defer any steps towards building a new prison at Fazakerley near Liverpool until the results of a public inquiry are known;

(2) what plans he has to hold a public inquiry into the proposed new prison at Fazakerley, near Liverpool.

Mr. Mellor: The construction of a new prison at Fazakerley will not proceed until the objections raised by Liverpool city council have been dealt with. Assuming that it is not possible to resolve the differences between the Home Office and the city council, the matter will be referred to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, who will decide whether it is desirable to hold a non-statutory public local inquiry.

Prison Staff

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whow many assaults on prison officers occurred in each prison establishment in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Mellor: The readily available information for 1988 is given in the table "Charges of assault on which prisoners were found guilty on adjudication in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales in 1988: by establishment and type of assault", a copy of which has been placed in the Library. Figures for earlier years could be provided only at disproportionate cost. For these years published annual statistics of offences punished at each establishment give the information on gross personal violence to an officer but that on assaults does not distinguish between assaults on officers and assaults on others (table 9.9 to 9.12 of "Prison statistics England and Wales 1987" (Cm. 547), copies of which are in the Library). However, the information requested is summarised by type of establishment (tables 9.13 to 9.15 of the 1987 volume).

Ticket Touts

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make it his policy to seek to make the touting of tickets illegal.

Mr. John Patten: We have no plans to make ticket touting generally illegal. The activities of ticket touts are regarded by most of us as offensive and disreputable, but they are not of such a nature as would justify legal prohibition. The tout will have paid the standard price for his tickets, so the promoter will not have lost, and his customers will generally be aware that they are paying above the ticket's face value and are willing to do so to watch the event in question. Most of the more objectionable aspects of ticket touting are already covered by the criminal law and promoters of events can take their own steps to deter touting; for example the organisers of the Ryder cup, by attaching conditions to tickets were able to use the force of the criminal and civil law to make ticket touting very difficult.

We are considering separately Lord Justice Taylor's recommendations to meet the specific problem of ticket touting at football matches.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

COCOM

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the changes in export trade opportunities arising from the agreement at the Co-ordinating Committee on Multilateral Export Controls (COCOM) meeting in Paris on 6 and 7 June.

Mr. Redwood: An outline of the changes agreed is given in a press briefing paper, a copy of which has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

The most significant export trade opportunities for industry are likely to arise from changes in the three priority sectors of computers, telecommunications and machine tools, although further opportunities are presented in other areas.

The changes to the controls on computer equipment will be reflected in relaxations on many other types of computer-controlled equipment. It should be noted that some of the relaxations on telecommunications equipment apply only to Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, plus the German Democratic Republic which benefits from a special new licensing regime.

The 30 whole-item deletions and reduced levels of control in about 25 more items, will provide further opportunities across a wide range of goods and technologies. Details on many of these are currently being worked out by COCOM.

There will be an open general export licence for 28 of the 30 deleted items which came into effect on 1 July. The other changes will be brought into effect by means of further amendments to the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1989.

Further publicity will be given to these changes when amendments to the order are issued. The Department's "Security Export Control" guidance booklet will also be reissued as soon as possible and will reflect the deletions of or changes to some 70 items, out of 126, including others currently subject to COCOM's regular review process.

My technical staff in the Export Control Organisation are available to answer questions from industry about these changes.

Import Restrictions

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his answer of 11 May, how many complaints were made to the Commission *(a)* by and *(b)* against the United Kingdom Government during 1989 alleging illegal or unjustified restriction of imports; and if he will indicate the percentage of complaints upheld in each case.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 16 May 1990]:* The Government made 11 complaints against practices in other member states in 1989. The Commission is either still considering those complaints or is pursuing them with the member states concerned.

My Department does not hold information on complaints made to the Commission against the Government; such complaints come to our notice only if and when the Commission decides to pursue them formally. The Commission records annually in its report to the European Parliament on the control of the application of Community law, figures for infringement proceedings against member states. I understand that the figures for 1989 are not yet available but will appear shortly in the Commission's seventh report. This will be published in the *Official Journal*, copies of which are available in the Library.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Foodstuffs (Chemical Residues)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his Department's policy as regards the control of pesticide residues in foodstuffs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The Government operate a rigorous statutory registration procedure, backed up by continuous monitoring to ensure that any pesticide residues in foodstuffs are at entirely safe levels.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action is being taken by his Department to reduce the amount of *(a)* organophosphates, *(b)* methyl bromide and *(c)* ethylene bisdithiocarbamate present in foodstuffs (i) domestically produced and (ii) imported into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean: Maximum residue limits have been set for all these substances under the Pesticides (Maximum Residue Levels in Food) Regulations 1988, which apply equally to imported and to home-grown produce.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his Department's policy in respect of the incidence of the fungicides dithane, manzate, mancozeb and dinoseb in foodstuffs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Dithane and manzate contain ingredients such as mancozeb which belong to the group of fungicides known as ethylene bisdithiocarbamates (EBDCs) which are under review by the Advisory Committee on Pesticides. The committee published an interim report in January; it concluded that intakes of EBDC and their breakdown products were at safe levels for all age groups and extreme consumers.

Dinoseb was reviewed by the committee in 1987, as a result of which all approvals for its marketing and use have been revoked.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his Department's policy in respect of the safety in foodstuffs of the fungicides captan, benomyl and chlorothalonil; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: All these substances are currently under review by the Advisory Committee on Pesticides.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made on achieving common European residue levels for chemical residues in foodstuffs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The European Community has partially harmonised standards for maximum pesticide residue levels and for contaminants which may arise from materials and articles in contact with food, and is considering further harmonisation in these areas.

The Community will be setting maximum limits for veterinary medicines in foodstuffs of animal origin following the adoption of a framework directive by the Agricultural Council in June.

The European Commission has announced its intention of bringing forward proposals for legislation to establish Community rules on chemical contaminants in food not already covered by other Community legislation.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has to reduce the levels of chemical residues in foodstuffs entering the United Kingdom from *(a)* European Community countries and *(b)* third-world countries.

Mr. Maclean: Chemical residues in foodstuffs, both imported and home grown, are continuously monitored to ensure high standards of safety for consumers.

Food Labelling

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has as to the proportion of foods which contain mechanically recovered meat being labelled as such.

Mr. Maclean: I do not keep the information that my hon. Friend requests.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to implement the European Community directive on nutrition labelling; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: This directive received its second reading in the European Parliament on 12 June and following consideration of the Parliament's amendments by the European Commission should shortly be presented to the Council of Ministers for adoption. Full implementation will not take place until three years after notification of the directive to member states and regulations will be introduced to that effect. I am however encouraging manufacturers and retailers to adopt the main provision of the directive.

Aflatoxin

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made in adopting an EC policy of aflatoxin limits in crops; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: There are no proposals for Community limits on aflatoxins in crops; there are however limits which already apply in the case of feedingstuffs under Council directive 74/63/EEC controlling undesirable substances and products in animal nutrition. In addition, the Commission has announced its intention to bring forward proposals shortly for framework legislation on contaminants in foodstuffs which would enable limits to be set for aflatoxins in food for human consumption in due course. We shall expect the public health aspects of any proposals in this area to be based on consultation of the EC's scientific committee for food.

ENERGY

Oil Rigs

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will introduce legislation to make it compulsory for all safety officers working offshore on oil rigs to be given suitable training in offshore safety methods; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Existing statutory requirements under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Mineral Workings (Offshore Installations) Act 1971 place duties on employers and owners of offshore installations to provide such training as is necessary to ensure the health and safety at work of their employees, and to ensure that only competent persons are made responsible for the control and safety of operations.

Electricity Prices

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his estimate of the proportion of the cost of a unit of electricity which is accounted for by the cost of the fuel used in generation.

Mr. Baldry: The Electricity Council's annual report and accounts for 1988-89 showed that fuel costs represented about 41 per cent. of the average unit price of electricity.

Environmental Damage

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has in regard to the proposals put to the European Parliament by Mr. Enrico Ferri for European legislation to require energy industries to take out full insurance against damage caused to the environment by their operations.

Mr. Wakeham: My Department has received no information about Mr. Enrico Ferri's proposals.

European Energy Year

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the Government's policy on the proposal put forward by the European Community Energy Commissioners to declare 1992 European energy year.

Mr. Wakeham: Only the European Commission has the right to initiate formal proposals to the Council. We are unaware of any such formal proposal in relation to a declaration for 1992.

DEFENCE

Hawk Trainer Aircraft

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has yet replied to the letters dated 16 June 1989 and 8 August 1989 from J. B. Moffatt, assistant secretary of the Celtic League, concerning Royal Air Force Hawk trainer aircraft operating over Wales and the Isle of Man.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Copies of both letters have now been traced and will be answered as soon as possible.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether all the Hawk trainer aircraft currently based in Wales have been subjected to the turbine fan modification ordered some years ago.

Mr. Alan Clark: There are no problems outstanding on the Hawk engine.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether all the Hawk trainer aircraft currently based in Wales have now been re-sparred.

Mr. Alan Clark: There is no programme to re-spar the Hawk trainer. Under the programme to re-wing the Hawk, new wings will be fitted as the existing wings reach the end of their fatigue life. Nine of the 85 aircraft based in Wales have been so modified.

St. David's Airfield, Pembrokeshire

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many representations have been received by his Department on the proposed over-the-horizon radar station near St. David's.

Mr. Alan Clark: In addition to questions tabled in this House and in another place. I have received representations from many right hon. and hon. Members and from members of the public.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all those companies which were invited to tender for the contract to carry out any environmental impact assessment of his Department's proposals to install an over-the-horizon radar system at St. David's and Cricklade.

Mr. Alan Clark: In view of the particular circumstances of our proposal to install an over-the-horizon radar transmitter at St. David's airfield and the need to complete the environmental impact assessment by late summer, only one company—W. S. Atkins of Epsom Surrey—was invited to tender for the contract to carry out the environmental impact assessment. At Blakehill, the proposed over-the-horizon radar receiver site, we are not yet in a position to proceed with the environmental impact assessment. This will, however, be by competitive tender.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received concerning the effect of the proposed over-the-horizon radar on birds and animal life in the St. David's area of Pembrokeshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: I have received no representations concerning the effect of the proposed over-the-horizon radar on birds and animal life in the St. David's area of Pembrokeshire. But my Department has had initial discussions with the Pembrokeshire Coast national park authority about this and the matter will be fully addressed in the environmental impact assessment.

Excalibur Exercises

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans exist to hold exercises in the Excalibur series in the United Kingdom in the current year.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Exercise Excalibur VII is planned to take place in the United Kingdom on 20 July 1990.

Belize

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has on how many incursions by *(a)* Guatemalan military personnel and *(b)* other Guatemalans into Belize there have been this year; and what was the response in each case.

Mr. Sainsbury: I have been asked to reply.

We are not aware of any incursions by Guatemalan military personnel. A group of Guatemalan civilians established an illegal settlement in March in Belizean territory at Santiago Jalacte close to the border with Guatemala.

The Belize authorities gave the Guatemalans three months' notice to leave so that they could harvest their crops before departure. But we understand that the settlement was abandoned in May following incidents involving local Belizeans.

NATO Meeting, London

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals he intends to introduce to the NATO meeting in London on 5 and 6 July.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has discussed a wide range of issues concerning European security with colleagues at the NATO summit meeting.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) which states currently possess a nuclear weapon capability that could pose a threat to the United Kingdom; which states currently possess a nuclear weapon capability that could not pose a threat to the United Kingdom; and which states are currently seeking to acquire a nuclear weapon capability that could pose a threat to the United Kingdom;

(2) under what circumstances it is judged that the possession of nuclear weapons by another state poses a threat to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The possession of nuclear weapons combined with effective means of delivery by any state poses a potential threat to the United Kingdom, but of course account has to be taken of intention as well as capability. The assessment the hon. Member requests of particular nuclear capabilities is classified. In general terms the United Kingdom attaches great importance to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty as a means of preventing nuclear proliferation.

Defence Industry

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Clackmannan of 2 July, on what criteria he decides whether the timing of discussions with the defence industry is commercially confidential.

Mr. Alan Clark: The commercial-in-confidence caveat is applied to any information relating to a commercial undertaking's, processes or affairs which may be of commercial value to its competitors or to speculators. Disclosure of such information would damage the relationship of trust that must exist between commercial undertakings and the Government.